

Mission as Encounterology – a Kenotic Approach

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own work and that I have not previously in its entirety or part submitted it at any university for a degree. All sources that I have employed and referenced have been acknowledged by means of completed reference list.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigate the role of *kenosis* in the Christian missiological encounters with other religions. We shall begin with a brief history of the missiological approach employed in Christian mission in their efforts of reaching out to other religions. This will be followed by a detailed study of *kenosis* as recorded in Philippians 2:5-11 and how Christians can practice this concept in their encounters. The next section will be about the Old Testament where God is revealed as the One who elected Israel, and such election came with what they had to do in return, such as to serve and care for those who were marginalised, such as the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor. In the Old Testament we will observe that God from the very foundation of the world He has been the greatest initiator of mission (*Missio Dei*). The very acts of God in both the Old and New Testaments attest to this. The following section is the New Testament, where God Himself is revealed through the incarnation of His Son. The *kenosis* of the Triune God is displayed in its fullness, as the Son emptied Himself to the point of death on the cross, reconciling the Triune God with human beings. Providing us with an excellent example of how we should interpret the *kenosis* of Christ within the context of loving people who differ from us. Finally, the last chapter will be about how can the church reflect the virtues of Jesus Christ in its encounters, bearing in mind that the deeds of Jesus Christ are inseparable from *kenosis*. It seeks to propose that, humility and teachings of Jesus Christ during his ministry should be the yardstick to measure what we are doing in God's name.

Keywords: Transcendental, Commission, Mission, Encounterology, *Kenosis*, Interreligious, Indigenisation, Contextualisation, Acculturation, Adaptation, Inculturation, Africanisation.

ABBREVIATIONS

OT	Old Testament
NT	New Testament
WMC	World Missionary Conference
IRM	International Review of Missions
ER	Ecumenical Review
EC	Edinburgh Conference
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
IMCM	International Missionary Council Meeting
WCC	World Council of Churches

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Chapter One

Introduction of the study

1.1 Introduction

The intention of this chapter is to introduce the background to the dissertation, the rationale and methodologies, together with the critical questions that will be addressed.

South Africa is a country that consisted of numerous religions even before the inauguration of apartheid. The ideology of apartheid, which was state, instituted prevented non-whites from making a better living. Apartheid stripped non-whites of their human dignity. Furthermore, because of such a divisive ideology non-whites and whites were precluded from understanding each other's religion(s), due to the segregation, such as the Group Areas Act, that was an integral part of the apartheid regime. Even though non-whites and whites could meet at some point in town and elsewhere, they were mostly acquaintances rather than close friends, as their meeting was mostly about the business of the day (Wilson 1972:1-2).

The ideology of apartheid was the cause for social ills to escalate. People were segregated according to their racial groups based on the Group Areas Act. Non-whites were prohibited from living in towns, and thus were relocated, even by means of force, to various residential areas that were determined by their racial groups. Some of the other laws that were legislated by National Party were (1) Mixed Marriages Act, which prohibited whites from marrying other races, (2) Immorality Act, which prohibited whites from engaging in sexual intercourse with other racial groups, and (3) Population Registration Act where a person's race was recorded. These laws mentioned above, among others, also affected the Christian Church, which resulted in churches being segregated according to different racial groups, even within the same denominations in South Africa (Wilson 1972:3-5).

With the downfall of apartheid and its oppressive laws no longer in use, non-whites had an opportunity to regain its dignity and pride. As a result of the dismantling of apartheid, new opportunities emerged for non-whites. They were now able to migrate from rural areas to urban areas where they were nearer to their workplaces, where

they could enrol their children in better schools, and have access to better amenities. This implies that all racial groups were now living together and gradually some became close friends and some engaged in mixed marriages. With the dismantling of apartheid, the walls of segregation that were built around races, religions, and culture finally ended. The new era of democracy and freedom for all people, made equal opportunities available to all people, albeit crime, unemployment, poverty, informal settlements escalated during the post-apartheid era. Therefore, the church now finds itself in such predicaments and should learn new ways to change the social ills. What is most fundamental for the church is that it exists in a country of diversity, be it language, religion, culture, and traditions. The church now more than ever should learn how to deal in its encounters with these diversities especially concerning non-Christians (Kritzinger 1995:5-7). Therefore, the mentality of superiority of Christianity as a religion over other religions in South Africa, especially with South Africa being declared, as a secular state now in the post-apartheid era, has to be reviewed by the Christian church and a new 'approach' to missions be adopted. This approach must seriously consider the approach of *kenosis*, which Jesus Christ expressed when He took upon Himself the form of man. Chapter 3 will discuss the concept of *kenosis* in greater depth.

For Bosch (1991:513) the death of Jesus Christ on the cross must be understood in the light of his life. He further qualifies that Jesus' self-emptying (*kenosis*) is initiated from the day he was born. And it was because of his identification with those on the periphery and his refusal to act according to the convention of the day that he was crucified. Therefore, from Bosch's understanding of Jesus' birth, life and death it becomes clear in John 20:21 that the great commission was about Jesus revealing who he truly was since he had accomplished the mission he was entrusted with by his Father. Therefore, Jesus commissioned his disciples to do the same. Jesus' self-emptying act of love was in John 20:21 entrusted to be continued by his disciples and their successors (Bosch 1991:513-18).

As mentioned above, the dismantling of apartheid-era can be seen as a form of a paradigm shift in the missiological approach in South Africa. The researcher of this dissertation aims to employ *kenosis* as a model that will draw us closer to the example of the ministry of Jesus Christ, by virtue of following his teachings and deeds. Most missiologists that the researcher has interviewed indicated that God's essential love

is kenotic; hence Jesus Christ emptied himself to the point of death, where kenotic love of the Trinitarian God was expressed. It is fundamental to understand the theory of *kenosis* as a theory that echoes from the incarnation of Jesus Christ who was fully human and fully God. By virtues of the incarnation, Jesus, as the Son of God, emptied himself and became a human being. Nevertheless, when Jesus became flesh that did not limit God's character of divine nature in him. Although Jesus subjected his divine characteristics to the point of his death, in his humanity he intended that humankind be reconciled to the Father and that, it might become acceptable to the Father (Philippians 2:5-11). Interestingly, *kenosis* is a word derived from a Greek word *kenown*, which means to pour out or to empty. Missionaries and those who participate in the mission of God should copy the virtues of Jesus Christ in missionary praxis. The researcher endeavours to make a clear distinction that without understanding the kenotic love of Jesus Christ, we will always be precluded from effectively interacting with non-Christians (McCall 2010:149-155).

1.2 Problem Statement

The mission of God has been misunderstood and perceived to be only about the movement that intends to convert heathens to Christianity. It is fundamental that we state that such preconceived ideologies have partially blurred the mission of God's people and for that reason, the original strength and vision for the mission has not been very effectual. For instance, in South Africa during apartheid, the church was a tool for the apartheid agenda and lost its true calling to the world, especially the Dutch Reformed Church, which failed to holistically demonstrate the love of God because of upholding the apartheid theology. Although the Dutch Reformed Church made tremendous changes in building church structures, the racial segregation, which was theologized, hindered missionaries from practicing kenotic love. Furthermore, in post-apartheid South Africa, new churches emerged, and new theologies developed, such as prosperity gospel, where we find churches being money driven. Therefore, *kenosis* challenges all theologies that are not about self-emptying and looking up to Jesus' virtues when doing God's mission. Thus apostles, as well as the Early Church, practiced the virtues of Jesus' kenotic love, by spreading the good news even though they were persecuted. They emptied themselves in a way that they were willing to die for the gospel of Jesus Christ. How, therefore, must mission of God's people be

founded upon the concept “*kenosis*” in order to spread the good news to all? This research intends to answer this question by focusing on the importance of *kenosis* as an integral component in the mission of God, especially in encounters with non-Christians (Pathrapankal 1999:9-10).

This research will deal with the fact that mission is a task that is given to the church by God, and those participating in God’s mission (*Missio Dei*) should always look up to Jesus, on how he emptied himself when he encountered the Gentiles and Jewish religious people (Wright 2010). For Jesus Christ did not, in his ministry, judge individuals based on who they were or what they were doing, but he would interact and care for them as if he knew that kenotic love is the only method that could preclude him from being judgemental (Muck & Adeney 2009:32-44).

Historically Christian mission always assumed a status of superiority over other religions, and was therefore not open to learning about other religions. Its encounters with other faith traditions assumed a position of superiority reaching out to faiths of inferiority. In Africa, the African Traditional Religion (henceforth referred to as ATR) has relegated heathenism and thus the worshipers in ATR were regarded as barbaric. *Kenosis* assumes the posture of emptying of prejudices and adopting the willingness to listen, not because of anything else but because of the love for God’s people even though they may not know Jesus Christ. God’s people in this context refers to John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

1.3 Research Gap

After examining diverse opinions of different authors in relation to the researched subject, we can state that they provide a new theory “*kenosis*” as one of the few approaches in missional encounters. In South Africa during apartheid missionaries referred to those, they ministered to as non-religious, evil and cursed in need of conversion and enlightenment. Therefore, missionaries believed they had the Spirit and Word; those they had encounters with were sinners as well as heathens, desperately in need of conversion (Knitter 1996:4-5). Knitter picture is such model as missionaries were being loving doctors and others were suffering patients (Knitter

1996:4). It is clear that missionaries perceived themselves as superior to those they had encounters with.

Such a mentality and approach represented Christianity as a superior religion, and as the only religion that possessed the truth. Nevertheless, many scholars have developed remarkable theories in the comparative study of religions in an attempt to neutralize conflicts and intolerances among Christians and non-Christians. However, the most important aspect within the missional dimension is *kenosis*, which brings us to the essence and understanding of God's mission, which was demonstrated through Jesus Christ's kenotic love (Well 2006:174-155). The above-mentioned points drive us to what has been a blinkered understanding of Christianity because for a long time Christianity had been understood as a religion about supremacy and superiority. Although Christianity is about self-emptying, getting rid of any preconceived ideologies about someone's religion can hinder us from understanding their religion and engage in fruitful encounters. What has been neglected is the fundamental principle of Christianity which is self-emptying, in order to serve others. Christ interacted and cared even for those who were outcasts according to Jewish customs, such as the Samaritan woman found in John 4:4-26. Therefore, the understanding of *kenosis* as demonstrated by Jesus in his incarnation into the world provides us with an excellent example of *kenosis* is relevant in mission of encounters with other faith traditions.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

The limitations that are confronting this study are the scarcity of sources published on *kenosis* as a missionary method of encountering other religions. Perhaps it is because recently many scholars tend to focus more on the comparative study and theology of religions. Even though there are a number of sources on Christianity encountering other religions; Christian mission and their responsibility, all such theories are helpful to this study but they are not driving to the same direction of this study. Nevertheless, this research will solemnly seek to employ *kenosis* (self-emptying) as a missiological approach in encountering with non-Christians (Block 2007:32-41). In this research, the teachings of Jesus Christ will be employed as someone who enlarges the horizons of religion(s) of his time (Pathrapankal 2010:9-13).

This research will not focus on (1) comparison of world religions, traditions, cultures, and beliefs, nor (2) the diversity of Christianity such as the variety of denominations and their understanding on how mission should be done, nor (3) addressing other religions missionary epochs (Ivanhoe 1996). Although this research seeks to focus on how missionaries should encounter non-Christians by employing “*kenosis*” to avoid ungrounded hubris and for a better understanding of non-Christians, in order to present the Gospel message (Kelsay 2012:13).

1.5 Research Question:

In the midst of countless critique in opinions and views on missional work, this research aims at understanding *kenosis* as an integral tool for mission, and to urge missionaries to imitate the mission of the Son of God, who emptied Himself for the redemption of the world.

1.6.1 PRIMARY QUESTION

In the discussion thus far in encounters with other faiths and due to the world now shrunk into the confines of a global village the primary question of this dissertation is, how should the 21st century Christian church understand and employ *kenosis* (self-emptying) in their missiological encounters with other religions, and still uphold their Christian faith?

1.6.2 SECONDARY QUESTIONS

- In what way can *kenosis* be an approach to missional work?
- How does the incarnation of Jesus signify or equate to self-emptying (*kenosis*)?
- What were the missional position in the Old Testament and the New Testament in comparison to the 21st-century Christian church?
- Do church denominational doctrines and systems limit God’s mission in its kenotic encounter with other faith tradition?

1.7 Methodology

Methodology, being the most fundamental aspect of the research, seeks to examine the reliability and procedure of the entire literature. In this dissertation, the researcher thrives to bring about *kenosis* as a missional approach for Christians to be employed in missiological encounters. The nature of research that will not be employed in this

research is quantitative research. Because of its deductive nature and quantifying characteristic this method of research will not be adopted rather the qualitative research method will be employed since it has features of discovering as well as understanding the meaning that groups or individuals assign to, as a human or social predicament (Creswell 2009:22). Qualitative research is most likely to favour this research because it possesses responses to the how and why enquiry, since this research seeks to elucidate why *kenosis* should be employed as a new approach by every Christian when encountering non-Christians (Creswell 2009:22-23). Furthermore, the research will move from the 'why' part to seek 'how' an individual in missional encounters can embrace a *kenosis* as a missiological tool (Kung 1991:20-34).

Coupled with the qualitative method the phenomenological approach will be adopted. In the phenomenological approach, the researcher will be examining how people can employ *kenosis* in their daily life experience since phenomenology seeks to investigate people's experiences and what impact do those experiences have in life. The nature of this research will be descriptive, as it attempts to present a clear picture of *kenosis* as a fundamental principle of Christianity. Therefore, in the *Missio Dei* establishing *kenosis* as a concept for socializing/encountering non-Christians eliminates the perception of regarding Christianity, though a legitimate religion but as superior over 'others' religion(s). Therefore, striving for a better understanding of non-Christians (Hick 1973:13-20). In doing so we build up relationships with non-Christians before we proclaim the incarnate, crucified, resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ, because *kenosis* entails that we humble and love non-Christians in the course of entering into their shoes, with an intent to understand them instead of seeing ourselves as superior (Bosch 1991:518).

1.8 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

CHAPTER ONE

1.8.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

This chapter will consist of a broad view of the research. This consists of an introduction, the aim of the research and the methodological approach relevant to this research (Creswell 2013:13).

CHAPTER TWO

1.8.2 A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE MISSIOLOGICAL APPROACH EMPLOYED IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

This chapter will deal with the meaning of mission and how it has developed and understood during the course of time (Bosch 1991:55). This chapter will place emphasis on the mission as strictly about God sending people, which is embedded in all missional epochs or concepts that are about God's mission (Bosch 1991:389).

CHAPTER THREE

1.8.3 *KENOSIS* AS A MISSIOLOGICAL TOOL IN SOCIAL SPHERES

This chapter will address the role of the local congregations on how to deal with the social predicaments, simple because *kenosis* is about putting ourselves in the shoes of those who are suffering from an intent of bringing change to them as Christ cared for the downtrodden. This dissertation will be summed up at this chapter, closing remarks and suggestions will be stated (Bentley 2009:32).

CHAPTER FOUR

1.8.4 Mission in the Old Testament: Israel's encounters other nations

In the Old Testament, God is revealed as the One who elected Israel, and such election came with what they had to do in return. Therefore, Israelites were expected to serve and care for those who were marginalised, such as the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the poor. At any given time where Israelites had to renew their covenant with God/Yahweh, they would realise that their obligations to serve those who were victims of the society was also being renewed. In other words, the compassion of God is even felt by other nations and not only confined to Israel. As Bosch (1991:18) states that: "there is an ambivalent attitude toward the other nations in the Old Testament. On the one hand, they are Israel's political enemies or at least

rivals; on the other hand, God himself brings them into Israel's circle of vision. The story of Abraham is an illustration of this." God promised Abraham that he will be the father of nations, and be a blessing to all nations. This allegory of Abraham illustrates the relationship between the nation of Israel and other nations. The holistic history of Israel reveals to us God's involvement with other nations continued. The Creator and the Lord of the universe are the God of Israel. Therefore, because of that reason Israel can only understand its history in continuity with the history of other nations. The Israelis do not only feel God's kenotic love but also other nations, God propels the people of Israel to be kind to other nations. God in his kenotic love would raise a prophet to warn other nations to repent from their sins or God will punish them, He would do the same with Israel (Tillich 1963:14-20).

CHAPTER FIVE

1.8.5 Mission in the New Testament: Disciple's Proclamation about the Gospel of Jesus Christ

This chapter will look at the context in which Jesus Christ was born, and how He challenged the theology during his time. Furthermore, most of His followers, such as Paul the apostle, sought to build communities in which the Jews and Greeks, free and slave, rich and poor, would worship together, learn to love one another, and learn to deal with difficulties arising out of their diverse social, religious, cultural, as well as economic background. Therefore, this chapter will deal with "why" Christians need to build relationships with non-Christians, and why *kenosis* is imperative in this process in a Christian mission.

CHAPTER SIX

1.8.6 CONTEMPORARY CHURCH IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

When studying other religions it does not matter how much of religious materials we read, because it is extremely hard to understand the meaning of their doctrine as well as ethos without engaging them (Knitter 1996:4). Thus, this chapter will deal with the fact that Christian church's message should always be about Jesus Christ, and the mission must reflect Jesus Christ's virtues, also keeping in mind that the deeds of Jesus Christ are inseparable from *kenosis*. Therefore, if Christians seek to embark on God's mission, *kenosis* becomes an essential factor to execute God's mission.

Furthermore, this chapter will look at Muck who argue that Christian mission should be in a gifted manner, simply because God has offered Christians salvation as a gift through Jesus Christ, which implies that Christians have no right to dictate to whom they have to embrace Jesus' kenotic virtues (Muck & Adeney 2009:34-41). There is a tendency in protestant to stress the vertical relationship between God and the person in such a way that it is distinct from the horizontal relationship between people; however, the "vertical line" is also a covenant line with the community (Smith 2007:35-8).

CHAPTER TWO

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF MISSIOLOGICAL APPROACH EMPLOYED IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will examine the meaning of God's mission, how it has developed during the course of time, from the decisions by mission conferences and contributions by missiologists in endeavours to pursue missions and its encounters with other faith traditions. This chapter will also aim at underpinning the necessity for Christians to participate in Jesus Christ's Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. The Great Commission is a call to global mission, and Christians should be the custodians of God's mission. Nonetheless, what is startling is that Christians do not exceptionally participate in the global mission. Perhaps, Christians' failure to be part of the global mission is because they presumptuously perceive God's mission as a burden for the missionaries. The essence of mission today should be about self-emptying (*kenosis*), by means of imitating Jesus Christ as the true epitome of God's mission. The objective of the researcher is to employ the word '*kenosis*' as found in Philippians 2:7 as an approach that Christians should adopt for their encounters to be transformative. In the kenotic missiological approach, Christians are propelled to empty themselves of any superiority and misconceptions of people of other faith. Nevertheless, the researcher will briefly discuss God as the missionary God and suggest why Christians must be missionary minded, and willing to create a space for others.

Raiter (2005: 10-14) rightly posits that the word 'mission' is not found in the Hebrew Bible nor in the New Testament. The word 'mission' is originally a Latin word which means "to send". This word was employed to give meaning to the act of God in sending different people, in order to make Christ known to non-believers. This act is prominent in the New Testament. God sending (mission) was referred to as "to go forth to establish" the mightiness of the triune God. In this respect, the apostles were given the same 'mission', which was to make Christ known in the places where Christ was never proclaimed. The missionaries have been trying to practice what was handed over from generation to generations, and the different meeting took place in trying to find a new way of witnessing to other religions and culture. This chapter will focus on

some of the conferences that took place with efforts of bringing Christianity to other religions, and cultures. The reason for the conferences to take place was to discover new ways of witnessing to other religions. This dissertation also aims at providing Christians with a Christ-centred example of witnessing to other religion.

2.2 Encounterology

The word encounterology simple means the 'study of encounters.' However, in this dissertation, the focus will be on *kenosis* as a missiological approach in our encounters. According to the Merriam-Webster's dictionary the word 'encounter' means: to meet as an adversary or enemy, to engage in conflict with, to come upon face-face, to come upon or experience especially, a particular kind of meeting or experience with another person. Nonetheless, the word encounter is mostly explained as 'to meet someone unexpectedly'. It is from this word (encounterology) that this dissertation builds up its premise that Christians should be kenotic (empty themselves) in their encounters with non-Christians.

According to Kritzinger (2008: 01) encounterology is an "approach that requires: a) a holistic and reflexive process that considers seven different dimensions of the encounter; b) a dialogical approach in which a Christian enters into a journey of mutual witness with a follower of another faith." Over the years, missiologist has investigated a different kind of encounters such as interreligious dialogue and pavements encounters (where theologians meet with the homeless and together they share their insights on scriptures and enjoy meals together). Nonetheless, genuine sharing could only take place when partners in dialogue encountered one another in a spirit of humility, honesty, and mutual respect, ready to take risks in becoming exposed to one another and sharing one another's the view of life, its meaning, and purpose (Philip 1999:40). This is the aim of this dissertation to give new meaning to what it means to be the witness of Jesus Christ and investigate the available missiological perspectives.

2.3 Christian Mission Survey

The challenges in the relationship between other religions and Christianity is a perennial one in the history of the church. Niebuhr (1975:11) rightly says, "Christianity, whether defined as church, creed or ethics or movement of thought, itself moves between the poles of Christ and culture." Christianity finds its roots from the Greco-Roman worlds and most importantly within Judaism. These worldviews played a

significant role in shaping the character as well as influencing its history. Thus, Philip (1999:260) states that 'To Greece, it (Christianity) owed its theological formulations, to Rome its organisational and practical matters, and its religious impulses came from Judaism'. Since Christianity has its roots in Judaism, it is inevitable that the earliest presentation of Christian had been expressed through Jewish terms. This also challenged the church because it had at the same time challenge the beliefs and practices in the world. Philip (1999:260) correctly states that, "it was not very long, when Christianity crossed the borders of Palestine and a wider area of the Greco-Roman worlds of different religions and cultures and was faced with the question of presenting the Gospel to a culturally pluralistic world and accepting the Gentiles into its fellowship."

The church was challenged by two questions. The first question had to deal with the nature of Christian fellowship. What is acquired in both ritual and moral that should be practiced by the Gentile converts? The second question dealt with the gradual growth of Christianity among the Gentile nations thus referring to the racial or ethnic homogeneity of Jewish Christians and Palestinian fellowship. This resulted in what is called the 'Jewish-Gentile controversy'.

The Gentile world raised the question about the attitude of the church towards the pagan society and culture. The church's attitude to the pagan worship of many idols was unequivocally negative, and on the other hand, a creative encounter occurred in Christianity and Greek philosophy and culture. Tertullian, Tatian, as well as some of the early church fathers took a negative attitude, while Clement of Alexandria, Origen Adamantius and others in their efforts they applied themselves to reconcile the pagan philosophy and culture with what the Gospel demanded. Through the early church encounters with Greek culture and philosophy, Indian, and Central Asian cultures, the church realised that the gospel is universal.

In the Middle Ages, the church in the west encountered the Greek philosopher Aristotle, through the work of an Islamic scholar which resulted in the formation of the theological enterprise that is identified as Scholasticism. To Dominican Thomas Aquinas the pagan philosophy was an effective tool to build up a theological edifice, which was employed for centuries in the Roman Catholic Church as official teaching. The work of Aristotle had an influence on European thinking to such that it became the

necessity to reconcile the theism of Christians and the truth of Aristotle (Philip 1999:250).

For centuries, Christianity had the challenge of how it should immerse itself in different culture, religions, and philosophies without losing the meaning of the gospel of Christ. Philip (1999:259) rightly states that:

Throughout the history of the church, the church in missions was always faced with the question of the relationship between Gospel and culture. In the case of the modern missionary movement, the question was seriously raised in the mission fields in Africa, and especially in Asia. The coming of the Portuguese at the end of the fifteenth century marked the beginning of a period of western colonialism in Asia and also, on a large scale, of western cultural influences. Christianity, both in its Roman Catholic and Protestant forms, was part of the western cultural influences. The alliance between colonialism and the missionary movement had in many ways influenced the process and the nature of the encounter between Christianity and Asian cultures and had served to distort the nature of the church and its witness.

It is undeniable that missionary attitude to African religions, cultures, and race was negative. The missionary attitude to South African religions and cultures especially during the apartheid regime was not always uniform. Perhaps these were the effects of the medieval Christendom of Europe, which had no room for any sort of pluralism, therefore, portraying itself as superior to any form of religion, culture, and race. The missionaries who came to Africa from society and church of this background of superiority were incapable of relating meaningfully to African religiously pluralistic condition. At the end of the 18th century, Europe was experiencing great economic growth, which resulted in social reform as well as evangelical revival. Economic and social changes were the results of the Industrial Revolution that provided the Europeans with a different pride in their culture and religion. This surfaced in Britain's relations with India, Britain was perceived as a progressive and advanced civilization, while India, on the other hand, was condemned as being superstitious and barbarous. Britain was absolutely on the march of civilization in the 19th century, and the new self-assurance spirit that led to an attitude of aggressiveness in the Britain relations with India. In the book by Mill (1817), '*history of British India*', he was mercilessly criticising

the Indian religions. To Mill (1817), the real character of the Indian religion was merely based on superstition and priestly despotism. According to Grant (cited by Philip 1999:260), it was not only the unborn weakness that made the Hindu religion to degenerate but also the nature of their religion. He believes that they did not only fail to uphold and teach virtue but also it positively encouraged immorality. During the 1813s, Wilberforce, who was the champion of the evangelical movement cause in England, stated, "Our religion sublime, pure, beneficent. Their (Indian religion) is mean, licentious and cruel" (Metcalf 1964:25).

In the middle of the 19th century the Scottish Presbyterian missionary in India, Duff, whose ideas can be acknowledged as representative of the majority of the protestant missionaries at that time, thought that though Hinduism possessed very lofty terms in its vocabulary, what the conveyed were only foolish, wicked, and vain conceptions. According to Duff (1835:100-101), Hinduism spread out before us like a universe "where all life dies and death lives". The only solution was to do everything possible as Christians to demolish so gigantic a fabric of superstition and idolatry.

The thoughts of Mill, Grant, Duff, and others about the society of Indian and religion had a great influence on the missionary thinking of the period. The early protestant missionaries were children of the evangelical awakening during the 18th and early 19th centuries. In Asia, they divided humankind into two categories that were results of their gloomy pietistic theology:

the converted and the unconverted, the saved and the lost. The main object of the Christian mission was understood as saving souls of the heathen from damnation and hell. Moreover, there was for a long time, real ignorance on the part of the westerners as well as Asians, of the history and the rich traditions of Asian cultures (Philip 1999:250).

The negative attitudes and ignorance of the early protestant missionaries caused controversies and conflict between Asian religions and Christianity mission fields. The period between 1830 and 1865 religious conflict became a norm between Hinduism in India and Christianity. The publications in missionary work during this period was mostly in the direction of Christian apologetics and most of them were polemical in character. On this subject Buyers (cited by Philip 1982:69), an LMS missionary stated, "Christianity appeared in this country too much in the character of an Ishmaelite,

whose hand is against every man". In the late 19th century there was a gradual change in this attitude, as the result of the Western Oriental scholars work and the Asian nationalism that was on the rise became imperative factors. Colebrooke and Muller in the paper of Philip (19882:69), deals with their rediscovery of India's past as Oriental scholars among Asian intellectuals alleviated Asian cultural heritage and nationalists assisted both Asian Christians and missionaries in developing positive attitudes towards Asian cultures. At the Edinburgh Conference, the change in attitude reflected during the discussions.

2.4 Edinburgh Conference 1910

The main purpose of this World Missionary Conference was convened to discuss the problems involved when Christians present Christ to the non-Christian world. The extensive surveys were conducted among the missionaries in the field before the conference began, and the responses they provided were available for discussion at the meeting of the commission. Some of the questions at the WMC (1910:2) that were brought forward included:

- What do you consider the chief moral, intellectual, and social hindrances in the way of a full acceptance of Christianity?
- What attitude should a Christian preacher take toward the religion of the people among whom he labours?
- What are the elements in the said religion or religions that present points of contact with Christianity and may be regarded as a preparation for it?
- Which elements in the Christian Gospel and the Christian life have you found to possess the greatest power of appeal and which have awakened the greatest opposition?

The Edinburgh Conference was cognisant about the urgency and unique opportunity of carrying the message of Christ to all the non-Christian world. It said that the world was ready for the Gospel of Christ. In reference to Japan, it stated, "The leaders of the nation and thoughtful men are feeling the need for a new moral basis, and many of them are looking to Christianity to furnish it" (WMC 1910:6). In reference India, they concluded that non-Christian religions were losing their hold on some people,

especially the educated classes. The breaking away from old faiths because of their failure to satisfy the highest aspirations as well as the deepest longings of certain classes of people imposed a crucial responsibility to the church of Christ. This called for evangelism as something urgent, because “the danger is that, released from the restraints of their old religions, these people will give themselves entirely to irreligious and demoralising practices” (Duff 1835:101).

The conference was overwhelmingly confident that Christian missions were going to be successful. This was not because they were unaware of the obstacles and difficulties that Christian missions had. The report of Commission was very optimistic in that the eastern cultures and religions would soon phase out for the Gospel to triumph. The Commission was aware of the revival of the Hinduism in India, Buddhism in Japan, Ceylon, and Burma, which meant more challenges to the Christian mission. Nevertheless, the Commission strongly believed that the revival was the result of the people who were alarmed by the progress of Christianity, and as in the case of the Roman Empire, it would serve to hasten the progress in the Christian mission. Therefore, the Commission saw the revival of Hinduism as being the result of the progress of Christianity and thus preparing the way for Christian missions. The Commission had this to say to the Arya Samaj (the reform movement and revival of Hinduism in Punjab), “the ideas which the Arya Samaj raises, without the ability to satisfy them, and the manifest contradiction of its system, mean not a remote collapse into the arms of Christianity” (Duff 1835:18). The report about India says, “this vast empire is the greatest trust given by God to any Christian nation. Clearly, the deepest reason for this gracious responsibility is that the kingdom of Christ may be established in India. It is Britain’s greatest responsibility; and it is likewise the greatest opportunity for the Christian churches of all parts of the world” (Duff 1835:138).

The Edinburgh Conference was overwhelmingly echoing the 19th-century missionary ideas and interpretation of colonialism. Duff (1835:25-29) in his work, *India and the Indian Missions*, posed a question: What is the purpose of God in British colonialism? In his response, he said: “Can it be without a reference to the grand design of providence and of grace that Britain so endowed has been led to assume the sovereignty of India... A decree hath gone forth and who can stay its execution that India is the Lord’s” (Duff 1835: 25-29). He suggested that the colonial wars became the preparation for Christian mission.

The theme “Preparation for the Gospel” is familiar in the history of Christian mission. The writers of the New Testament interpreted Judaism as being the preparation for the Gospel or Christianity. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the Alexandrian Fathers perceived Greek philosophy as a preparation for Christian message. However, the theme “preparation for the Gospel,” to Edinburgh Conference meant two different senses. Firstly, it meant to loosen to the hold of non-Christian religions on the lives of people by means of western Christianity and especially Eurocentric education. Secondly, their sense of preparation meant the dismantling of African and Asian religions and cultures in order for Christianity to be planted in their place. The Commission I had a report, which says:

While thus far there may not have been many positive results to show, the negative effects have been nonetheless helpful in spreading the Gospel. They have helped to weaken the strength of heathendom. Even in the most difficult field, such as sections of the Mohammedan and Hindu communities of India, the work of the past one hundred years has been that of disintegration, and today we see the beginning of the breaking up of these gigantic systems. Were the Christian Church now to advance in the spirit and power of Christ, results could be achieved far surpassing anything accomplished in the past (The Report of Commission IV 1910:42).

Nevertheless, the Commission IV on ‘The missionary message in relation to non-Christian religions’, promotes a sympathetic and conciliatory attitude to other cultures and religions. The report says, “A supreme need of the missionary teacher is a thorough knowledge of the religions of the people among whom he works. He should find out the elements of truth and error in each, and seek to understand the beliefs and customs of the people” (The Report of Commission IV 1910:42). The Commission report references Fraser saying, “In short the missionary will recognize the work of logos in every land; but since the logos has become flesh he must recognize the truth as it is in Jesus Christ as the standard of all” (The Commission of IV 1910:54).

The Edinburgh Conference was more concerned about how missionaries could win the non-Christians to Christ, rather than working out how to build a transformative relationship between Christianity and other religions and cultures. The Conference suggested that:

The comparison does not impoverish Christianity, it does not result in our subtracting anything from the great bulk of Christian faith on which we have laid hold.., but there is a sense in which non-Christian religions, while they are encumbrances upon the religious life of man, are also expressions of that religious life, as we bring our faith over against them. We shall not bring back into our faith what was not in our faith before, but we shall discern what we had not discovered was there before (The report of Commission IV 1910:326).

It was more about Christianity against the other religions of the world. Cairns (cited by IRV 1916:210) stresses this when he said, they need a world-conquering Gospel, and asked, “what suggestions have these non-Christian religions to offer us in developing the latent elements of Christianity?”

2.5 The 1928 Conference in Jerusalem

Jerusalem conference paid greater attention to the relationship between Christianity and other religion(s). This greater attention to other religious tradition by missionary movement began in the Edinburgh conference. Their aim was to probe the crux of what was alive in other living tradition in contrast to what was traditional and formal, as well as what elements of the gospel of Christ that possesses a greater of appeal to other religious tradition. A large number of articles in the International Missionary Review (IRM) presented a positive attitude as well as constructive approaches to the non-Christian. Although others took an exclusive approach of Christianity, Richter’s inaugural address in Yates (1994:96) work suggests, “Christianity is an exclusive religion. Wherever Christian missionary enterprise comes into contact with the non-Christian religions it sets itself to oust them ...in the conviction that this is necessary to the salvation of their adherents” (Yates 1994:96). Richter strongly believed that Christian missionaries had to be convinced that Christianity is a superior religion over all other religion(s), “a conviction all the more necessary in view of the prevailing ‘history of religion’ school of the day which threatens to level down the religious conception of humanity to an unrelieved relativism”. Frick (1994: 97), also maintained that ‘fragile and treacherous’ as the Christianity offered might be, the superiority of Christian mission is based upon their message and conviction and if they are too honest and sound Christians must not surrender their conviction of superiority.

The views about non-Christians and cultures, both negative and positive were aired during the Jerusalem Conference. Macnicol (1916: 210), in his paper, expressed a very positive contribution of Hindu tradition. He said, “as Christ enters the Hindu milieu will make what He finds there that is fair, far more fair, taking away only what is unworthy.” However, Macnicol (1916:208-9) was not unaware of the caste and its evils, impersonal pantheism as well as all sort of evils perpetrated by Hindu religious systems, nonetheless, he avoided to present Christianity as superior.

Soderblom (1928:144-146), on the other hand, pointed out that Christianity is unique and, the absolute truth in Christianity has the shape, not of rule, law (Dharma), theologies or ideas, but the shape of a man: God reveals himself in human life. Christ is no avatar, nor a divine messenger, but he is the unique Son of God. He addressed that:

This claim of uniqueness, of absolute truth itself, belongs to the originality of the biblical revelation. The claim was inherited from Judaism ...We do not find anywhere in the great religions that claim of being unique which characterizes authentic Christianity from the very beginning. The other great religions are not only tolerant, but they are also eclectic, in principle if not in fact ...Christianity puts up against all such ideas, its own truth.

Jones (1928:273) paper titled, *Secular Civilization and the Christian Task*, assisted the delegates at the Jerusalem Conference to understand that mission could not be fully defined under geographical terms. He stated that:

We go to Jerusalem then, not as members of a Christian nation to convert other nations which are not Christian, but as Christians within a nation far too largely non-Christian, who face within their own borders the competition of a rival movement as powerful, as dangerous, as insidious as any of the great historic religions. We meet our fellow Christians in these countries, therefore, in terms of equality, as fellow workers engaged in a common task.

He strongly asserted that the extreme rival for Christianity was not Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam, but the secular worldview of life as well as the interpretation of the nature of things. Challenged by this universal phenomenon, Christians must be able to view other religions as attacked by secularism, as witnesses of man’s need for God

and allies in our quest for perfection. According to Jones (1928:273), the conflict was not between Christianity and other religions, but between secularism and Christianity.

The Jerusalem Conference distinct from its predecessor the Edinburgh Conference, as it focuses on the Christian message and motivation for doing mission. Christianity, as challenged by the ideologies of other religions and secularism, the most pressing question to be addressed, was: is there a Christian life and a Christian message that is distinctive, universally valid, sufficient and authoritative? (Mathews 1929:20). There was antithesis between those who were mainly Continentals (Frick (WMC vol, 1-9); Richter (WMC vol.1-9)) who strongly believed the absolute uniqueness of the gospel revealed in the persons of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, some of the Anglo-American (Macnicol (WMC vol, 1-9)) who were predisposed to the comparative study of religions, were not willing to overlook the religious values in the non-Christian religions. Their views differ on social responsibility and concern of the church in the world. The task fell on Temple, where their message on divine light in other religions says:

We rejoice to think that just because in Jesus Christ the light that lighteth every man shone forth in its full splendour, we find the rays of that same light where He is unknown or even is rejected. We welcome every noble quality in non-Christian persons or systems as further proof that the Father, who sent His Son to the world, has nowhere left Himself without witness (Report of the Jerusalem Meeting Vol. I:490-494).

The message called on all the followers of non-Christian religions to join the Christians in the study of Jesus Christ as He stands before us in the Scriptures, to hold fast to faith in the unseen and eternal in the face of growing materialism of the world; to cooperate with Christians against all the evils of secularism; to respect the freedom of conscience; and to discern that “all the good of which men have conceived is fulfilled and secured in Christ” (Report of The Jerusalem Meeting Vol. III:144-146). This message stressed that Christianity was never a western religion, therefore, all people of different walks of life are called to equally fellowship in Christ. To come to Christ always requires or involves self-emptying or self-surrender. The Jerusalem Conference message was to make Christ known to the world, as it says, “He himself is the Gospel and the Gospel is the message of the church to the world ...Christ is our

motive, and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less, and we cannot give more” (Yates 1994:92-93).

Nevertheless, Baker (1934:308) acknowledges that there are things or symbols that we hold on to as a human race. He says, love, joy, peace, courage, righteousness, the elevation of women, the right of children for a fair start in life, the sense of being home in the universe, we bear these whether we are Buddhist or Christian. “Therefore, so long as human lives are actually being enriched by these values and by this sense of reality, the specific auspices under which this was being accomplished whether Christian, non-Christian, or scientific, are matters of secondary importance” (Baker 1934:308).

2.6 Madras (Tambaram) Conference 1938

In the Madras Conference Kramer’s book and his presentation at the Conference on the topic, “Continuity and Discontinuity” made an impact in Madras. Kraemer was invited on the International Missionary Council to write a book focusing on “the fundamental position of the Christian Church as a witness-bearing body in the modern world, relating this to different conflicting views of the attitude to be taken by Christians towards other faiths, and dealing in detail with the evangelistic approach to the great non-Christian faiths” (Kraemer 1956:95-96). Kraemer’s research and findings were meant to be employed at Madras Conference as preparatory volume. The report from Madras meeting says, “What he produced was a searching critique of the entire missionary approach to the non-Christian religions and the world in which they are set, based upon certain clear cut theological positions” (Kraemer 1956:2). Kramer’s book pointed out from the outset that the church’s concern for the non-Christian world was inspired by its prime apostolic obligation of bearing witness to the world; for the essential nature of the church is that it is an apostolic body.

Kraemer’s book and his presentation at the Conference were concluded in the following:

To sum up, from the standpoint of Biblical realism the attitude towards the non-Christian religions, and likewise, the relation of the Christian Church to the world in all its domains is the combination of a prophetic, apostolic heraldship of truth for Christ’s sake with a priestly apostolic ambassadorship of love for His sake. The right attitude of the Church, properly understood, is essentially a missionary

one, the Church being set by God in the world as an ambassador of His reconciliation, which is the truth that outshines all truth and the grace that works faithful love (Kraemer 1956:128).

After the Madras Conference, there was a realisation that the Conference was a milestone as it stressed that spreading the Gospel to the world of other religion(s) did not only acquire the practical concern (something that Edinburgh Conference thought) but a required a theological response. Devanandan (1958:23-27) at New Delhi made his remarks concerning the new ferment in the non-Christian world, he pointed out that:

There can be sociological and psychological explanations for this phenomenon of the renaissance of other religions. But if religious faith is to be regarded also in the terms of response it would be difficult for Christians to deny that these deep, inner stirrings of the human spirit are in response to the creative activity of the Holy Spirit.

Thomas (1967:99-100) asserted that Devanandan (1958:25) strongly believed that salvation history covered all parts of humanity and that he was prepared to look for salvation history or the new creation in Christ even within renascent Hinduism and secular humanism. Devanandan (1962:10) states that "if God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ is a fact with which we should reckon in every human situation, it is not so much by total destruction that he manifests his power but by the radical renewal of what we cherish as valuable. That is why the Gospel we proclaim is the Good News of the Resurrection, the hope of the New Creation."

In this chapter, there will be no further discussing other conferences after the Madras Conference. However, we will allude to some remarkable insight from other later Conference than that of Madras. Different conferences stressed the importance of Christian relation to the non-Christian world. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) states that:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and Holy in these religions. She has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching,

nevertheless often shed a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth, and life (John 14:76). In him, God reconciled all things to himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), and in whom I find the fullness of their religious life.

The Roman Catholic Church is remarkably open to dialogue with non-Christian religions than the Protestant Reformers. Karl Rahner (cited by Philip 1999:240) among other Roman Catholic theologians contributed to the ecumenical movement.

Ajaltoun Conference in 1970 took a significant stance against a shallow form of syncretism. It said:

We are agreed that the Great Commission of Jesus Christ which asks us to go out into all the world and make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the triune Name, should not be abandoned or betrayed, disobeyed or compromised, neither should it be misused. Dialogue is both a matter of hearing and understanding the faith of others and also of witnessing to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They strongly opposed any type of syncretism that had to do with human attempts to form a new religion made up of different religious beliefs and values.

Vancouver assembly in 1983 and Canberra assembly in 1991, report on the topic, 'Witnessing in a divided world' states:

Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes and symbols and presuppositions. And is celebrated in art, music, drama, literature and the like. It constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations still to come.

The report asserted that there is a greater need to address the whole issue of Culture and Christ in the present historical context.

Nevertheless, the world mission conference at Salvador in 1996 rose to the occasion, as it dealt with cultures and referred to all elements of human activity and belief including religion. They said it is impossible to be a human without participating in any

culture because it is through a culture that one can obtain identity. Kanyoro (1996:102) from Evangelical Lutheran church in Kenya rightly said:

Yet in missiological discussions, a kind of dualistic thinking developed in which culture was for a long time simply seen as a concern of the South. Discussions about inculturation, indigenization, and contextualization, wherever they took place, were aimed mainly at addressing issues and theologies of the former missionized churches. It is interesting for those of us who come from these churches to see the issues of culture now being brought to the forefront of global church discussion. Not only are we reminded of the various condemnations of our cultures throughout history which stripped us of our very identity, but we vividly remember the WCC seventh assembly in Canberra (1991), where the keynote address Prof. Chung Hyun Kyung of Korea sparked controversy.

All the conferences that were discussed above contributed greatly to the missionary challenge. In the past, and still is in some areas, the Gospel was/is understood within the western culture, because the western missionaries imposed their culture upon the converts. In many churches, baptism was a rite that became an act of separation of the baptised converts from their culture. The South African churches and theologians have to deal with the gruesome deeds done by western missionaries. Therefore, below the researcher will deal with the concepts that have been enormously employed to understand religion(s) and cultures.

2.6.1 Theological Trends in Mission

The mission of the church has been studied from the western or metropolitan perspectives. Recently most churches are gradually realizing that it is imperative to study the trends of mission in the non-western perspectives. The scholars in their efforts are interpreting the trends of mission from an indigenous point of view. Nevertheless, over decades inculturation is a concept that has been employed as a priority in theological discourse, especially in the continent of Africa and beyond. The Second Vatican Council that took place on 11 October 1962 at St. Peters Basilica, a strong case was made for Christianity in Africa to practice cultural adaptation. The idea of cultural adaptation of Christianity in Africa has led to the formulation of many other concepts such as, 'Inculturation', 'Acculturation', 'Enculturation', 'Transculturation', 'Africanisation', 'Indigenisation', 'Incarnation', 'Adaptation', 'Assimilation',

'Accommodation', and 'Contextualisation' of Christianity in the continent of Africa. We shall briefly examine some of the concepts mentioned above under the sub-headings below.

2.6.1.1 A Survey of Inculturation

The concept 'enculturation' was introduced by Pierre Charles within the cultural anthropological platforms, adopted in missiology. Although, inculturation, as we know it today, was coined by J. Masson in the phrase 'inculturated Catholicism' (*Catholicism culture*) in 1962, from which Pierre Charles followed pursuit with 'enculturation' (Duncan 2014). For decades these concepts have been examined by scholars and theologians. Some of the scholars have argued that the concept inculturation in the continent of Africa seeks to safeguard the essential message of Jesus Christ and to deal with the contemporary challenges (Mbiti 1969, Mbefo 1981:1 & Ezechi 2011:220-222). John Paul II suggested that "A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, not thoroughly thought through, not fully live out" Ezechi (2011:221). In other words, Ezechi (2011:222) perceives Christianity as a religion that should transform people's lives. To this point, the work of Mbiti (1969) is insightful; he suggests that Christianity must embrace individual's thought patterns, social relationship, attitudes, fears, philosophical disposition, and language, in order to create lasting impact in the community and individuals. Hence, over decades the process of inculturation of Christianity in Africa aimed at creating a home for the church in Africa, as well as making Africans feel at home in the church. The declaration of the Second Vatican Council shares the same light in that the church "is not tied exclusively or indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern" (Mbefo 1981:1).

Many who became Christians in Africa due to foreign Christian missions were consciously aware of their double standards of the western missionaries. Many Christians could not completely denounce their fore-bearers' primal religion as beliefs and values. Hence, they had a very unbalanced double allegiance; when things are smooth in life, they became good Christians, but when life is tough and unease, they resorted to African traditional religion. This gave rise to pertinent questions by Africans. Mbefo (1989:4) mentions some of the questions that a typical African may ask, especially an average Igbo man in Eastern Nigeria:

Does being a Christian mean that I cannot take the Ozo title? That I cannot bury my dead in the traditional way? Why should I change my name that arose out of my matrix and which has meaning and relevance in that matrix for a foreign name which people find difficult to pronounce; foreign names which are truly foreign? What does a celibate priesthood tell a polygamous culture? Why does the liturgy of the church bypass the liturgy of traditional religions that have always mediated transcendence to our people?

The imperative question to an African is what happens to the ancestors who lived, cared, loved, as well as died, which are 'never gone' according to the words of Birago Diop? The questions that Christians in Africa poses mostly hinge on the core of the cultural values, which are expressed in the symbols that Africans find appealing to their world of experience as well as realities. On the other hand, European missionaries did not understand the meaning of these things (symbols, values, and rituals) that were meaningful to the African. In the words of Mbiti (1969:15), "this, among other things, has resulted in the tragedy of establishing, since the missionary expansion of the nineteenth century, only a very superficial type of Christianity on African soil." Mbefo (1989:28) strongly believes that "with the experienced massive defections from the church, one is disposed to affirm that Christianity, as rendered by the Europeans, has been found wanting." The inculturation in Africa aims at covering deep and wide areas, such as theological, liturgical, and doctrinal issues, which must be addressed as delicately and sensitively.

2.6.1.2 Africanisation or Indigenisation of Christianity

The concepts *Africanisation* or indigenisation of Christianity is a process that attempts to root Christianity in the diverse cultures of the world. Duncan (2014) correctly says that the process of indigenisation is "whereby cultural values are transformed as a result of their exposure to the gospel of Christ and through introducing Christianity into different indigenous cultures." These concepts became necessary as a result of the failures of European missionaries to "root the gospel message solidly unto the African word of meaning, reality-structure, survival thrust or the African conceptual framework" (Husani n.d.). The failure of European missionaries made Christianity be a religion that promoted estrangement and alienation of the African cultures. This failure resulted in Africans finding it difficult to "separate the gem of Christianity from the chaffs or accidents of it" (Madu 2004:59). According to Wambutda (1978), Christianity as an

imported religion from America and Europe contains sometimes disgusting and strange features of alienation that made most Africans be uncomfortable. Most of Africans did not feel at home in the Christianity that was presented by the European culture as pre-eminent. Pope Paul VI in the year 1975 had few interesting questions to ask about the Eurocentric Christianity, he asks as thus:

Does the church in Africa retain a certain Christian religious form that was brought in from outside and which makes her, as it were, a stranger or pilgrim among her people? Should new and more suitable means be sought in theology and in pastoral practice? (Mbefo 1989:9)

Perhaps what prompted Pope Paul VI to ask such questions was the need to introduce Christianity in the indigenise culture. The process of introducing Christianity in African culture or Africanisation will not take place without a dynamic relation between the local culture and another worldview, understanding of history, ways of thinking, the impact of modernity, and group solidarity (Yung 2014). Furthermore, indigenisation is pertained to “the necessity of promoting indigenous church ministers in every locality” (Walligo 1986:11). Although this concept is only limited to its goal of raising the clergy in the continent of Africa when this goal is satisfied the concept becomes irrelevant.

2.6.1.3 Contextualisation of Christianity in Africa

The word “contextualisation” was coined during the early period of the 1970s by Theological Education Fund. Contextualisation of Christianity in Africa is a process in which the church has to adapt to the local cultures. This calls for Christian faith to be made more real in the African context or situation. According to Ebelebe (2009:153), “scholars generally agree that theology has always been contextual, but only recently has such perception been consciously identified and acknowledged.” Ezechi (2011:236) strongly believes that “the Christian faith is one, but the manner of expression varies from time to time, from place to place.” This is the reason why Christian faith has to be contextualised according to the local culture. The contextualisation is the process that responds to the existential realities within the cultural milieu. The challenge for contextualisation of Christianity, demands a serious caution.

2.6.1.4 Adaptation of Christianity in Africa

The adaptation is a process that is fundamental to the missionary enterprise, as the model that determines what is inconsistent and consistent in the gospel that is presented by the church. Adaptation is a theological and missiological issue as it extends and promotes the incarnation of Jesus Christ or the Word, the adaptation of God to humanity. Although, the European missionaries did not practice adaptation, the African evangelists, in their efforts, assimilated themselves to different traditional cultures. Ludwig Krapt (cited by Gathogo 2013:42) in Kenya established a tradition during the 19th century. In this process, African pastors, teachers, and evangelists played a seminal role. The revival movement in Madagascar initiated in the year 1948 as a lay-led Shepherd (*fifohazana*) provides evidence of cooperation between the mainline mission churches and African evangelists, which resulted in them obtaining legitimacy. Skeie (2011:157-158) explain it as:

Local Christianities are always appropriations based on already existing concepts and notions, results of complex interactions between actors who are empowered and constrained by social and historical contexts. Thus, all local Christians in Africa are genuine 'Africa', both from a theoretical and empirical point of view.

The failure of missionaries was in the belief that, in order for them to evangelise black people, they had to make black people denounce their own religious culture and traditional heritage. The only way to be a convert was after the denunciation of one's religious culture and traditional heritage and adopting a new. Nevertheless, black people resisted to easily give up their religious culture and traditional heritage, because this meant forgetting who they are. The resistance was grounded on 'the creative genius of the blacks from which arose a synthesis of development that met their needs in their oppression' (Bolt 2013:245). Their experience was crucible from which the black people's faith was forged. Blyden (cited by Gatwa 2013:90), the Pan-Africanist recognised and asserted on the superficial impact of Christianity in Africa. Although that could be the case with the evidence presented to us, it had resilience. And new epistemologies emerged from it, such as African theologies, focus on contextualisation and adaptation through discussions that varied from 'Ubuntu, hospitality, dialogue and mediation, humanness, solidarity', and what we now call black theology of liberation (Gatwa 2013:91).

2.6.1.5 Acculturation of Christianity in Africa

Acculturation is a process of an individual's transition from their own cultural norms into a lifestyle of another culture. They must acculturate through observing and adapting to the new culture's language, customs, behaviours, and values. The concept 'acculturation' also vary depending on the vantage point of the definer's field of study or discipline. The use of this concept appears during the early 1880s, however, we can pinpoint the earliest classic formulation in the work of Linton, Redfield, and Herskovits (1936:149):

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.

The Social Science Research Council in 1954 formulation in their efforts to define acculturation they said:

The culture change is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value system, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors (SSRC 1954:974).

It is imperative to understand that this process aims at bringing change to occur, not only to the immigrants but also to the host society. Nevertheless, some perceive acculturation as a process that is "monistic", as changes only occur primarily to the immigrants, not to the host society. Marden and Meyer (1983:36) illustrated this approach as "the change in individuals whose primary learning has been in one culture and who take over traits from another." Certainly, over time, both the immigrants and the host society will inevitably experience change, although the immigrants will experience the greatest change. Young Kim (1982:380) definition of acculturation from a perspective of communication believes that:

The acculturation process is an interactive and continuous process that evolves in and through the communication of an immigrant with the new sociocultural

environment. The acquired communication competence, in turn, reflects the degree of that immigrant's acculturation.

Although, some scholars have ignored the aspects of communication in acculturation. Keesing (1953) and Spiro (1953) in their comprehensive work wrote summaries of acculturation literature. They concluded that acculturation from their anthropological perspective was not employed consistently in the literature. The terms that were sometimes employed that are not necessarily equivalent to acculturation were, 'assimilation,' 'accommodation,' 'cultural integration,' 'self-identification,' and 'absorption', but they generally refer them to the process of "acculturation". The aspects of communication in this process of acculturation do not feature at all.

Nonetheless, the acculturation process that is centered in communication competence is obviously the one that learns to communicate by communicating. As Kim (1982:378) states that, "acculturation occurs through the identification and the internalization of the significant symbols of the host society." This suggest that the immigrants learn a new language and immerse themselves into the culture of the host society, although over time they both start learning from each other.

After exploring different perspectives on the concept of acculturation, we can conclude that, the European missionaries were supposed to orient themselves in understanding the host society first. The European missionaries made a blunder of treating the Africans as people who acquired European lens to understand and study the Bible. European missionaries had to understand that culture illuminates the gospel. There was a greater need for the mutual interaction between the cultures and Gospel, the Gospel had to function as the inspiring and new principle, giving rise to the renewal of cultures as the result of the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. The transformation is a process where the Gospel becomes incarnate in cultures in which the Gospel is proclaimed, as the Word became incarnate in human form. The transformation that is brought by the Gospel may be depicted as a lamp the provides light to all that is in the house. Through the human cultural activities, the Gospel of Christ may be understood at a deeper level and accessible. "To affirm that culture illuminate the Gospel is to hold that culture, manifested in art and other forms of human activity, enlightens and enhances our understanding of the gospel" (Duraisingh 1998:35).

The European missionaries have often misused the gospel to crush people's identities, marginalize and segregate. In South Africa marginalization occurred through political, cultural, religious, and economic forces. South Africans were marginalized as well as their identities distorted because of their gender, race, caste, age, ethnicity. Kanyoro (1996:104) rightly says the following concern African women:

For generations, African women have unquestionably obeyed all that society prescribes for them in the name of culture. Child marriages, female circumcision and the rites of passage from birth to death, whether useful or harmful, are imposed on African women simply because it is "our culture". This might be taken to mean that what is culture is natural, good and unavoidable. Culture has silenced many women in Africa. It has hindered them from experiencing Jesus' liberating promise of abundant life for all (John 10:10). Cultural hermeneutics seeks to demystify the abstractness of "culture" by calling for analysis of and reflection on culture and its effects on people.

The mutilation of people's identities was experienced by different groups: African in the diaspora, women, indigenous peoples, children, refugees, migrants, religious minorities as well as others. Kanyoro (1996:104) correctly mentioned in her address that neither culture nor Gospel will be good news unless it is liberated.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the contributions made by mission conferences and missiologists as well as mission strategies employed in missions. This chapter did not comprehensively address all the conferences and strategies, as such an attempt will constitute an enormous undertaking. Nevertheless, suffice to mention that it has provided a brief insight into how approaches to missions were discussed, rationales suggested for mission approaches and encounters with other faiths.

Christianity is gradually confronted by challenges that are sometimes foreign to its doctrines. The biggest challenge is how can we have transformative encounters with people who differ with Christian beliefs? It is imperative that when we participate in God's mission, we should always bear in mind that *kenosis* has to play a vital role, lest we think of ourselves as superior to those we encounter. As mentioned above, God's mission is about imitating Jesus Christ who was revealed by God to humanity through

the power of the Holy Spirit. Christian mission must be highly engaged with *missio dei*, and understanding what is happening within the communities, in order to be the light and the salt in the world (Hendriks 2013:524-826). Nevertheless, in order to become the light and the salt of the world we must first understand the '*kenosis*' of Jesus Christ, who did not consider equality with God as something to boast about, but He emptied Himself until His death on the cross. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is about self-emptying (*kenosis*), therefore, as we become the light and the salt of this world *kenosis* should inform the way we encounter with the ever-changing, complex, global world around us (Niemandt 2014:40-41).

CHAPTER THREE

KENOSIS AS A MISSIOLOGICAL TOOL IN SOCIAL SPHERES

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at the role of the church in its approach in encountering communities with the gospel and solving problems in the communities. The approach should be one of a self-emptying (kenotic) church that imitates Jesus Christ by deeply caring for the non-Christian, the downtrodden and the marginalised. In the previous chapters, the author briefly touched on *kenosis* as a missiological approach to the interreligious dialogue. However, this chapter will put an emphasis on the self-emptying (*kenosis*) as a method of encounters with other faith traditions, the downtrodden and marginalised just as Christ cared for the communities during His earthly sojourn. This study seeks to argue that self-emptying (*kenosis*) is a vital component as a missiological approach when encountering communities of all walks of life with the message of the gospel which brings salvation, hope, love, which should result in transformation.

For decades, the mission of God has been perceived as doing something or going to a particular place. Nonetheless, today we understand that the mission of God cannot be understood without a Trinitarian foundation. In the 21st century, mission is not merely about 'doing' or 'going,' but it is also about transformative encounters such as interreligious dialogue, creative engagement with life-giving mission, and being Christ like-minded. It is a call for Christians to bear in mind that Christlikeness led Christ to be crucified on the cross. That is the reason why self-emptying in Philippians 2:7-8 is not cheap but costly. Nonetheless, in order for one to understand *kenosis* in Philippians 2:7-8 must at least have knowledge about the mind of Christ.

3.2 What does *Kenosis* Means.

In this dissertation, the word '*kenosis*' (self-emptying) does not mean physical emptiness, but it is a metaphor and a concept deeply embedded in the expression of love and humility. *Kenosis* originates from the Greek verb *kenoo*, which is translated as "emptied" in Philippians 2:7. This word "emptied" refers to the act of Jesus Christ who voluntarily restricted to employ His divine attributes from birth unto death on the cross. Nevertheless, Jesus never ceases to be God, because while He was on earth

He was fully human and fully God. It was not only erroneous to think that the incarnation of Jesus made Him lose the divine attributes, but was regarded as heresy, especially in the Protestant school of thought. The hypostatic union which is the doctrine of the two natures of Jesus Christ maintains that Christ was both fully human and fully God. The *kenosis* theory does not imply or suggest that Jesus Christ lost his divine attributes or became less than God. Jesus Christ did not empty himself of any divine attributes, because God cannot, shall not, and will not cease to be God, but rather his divine attributes were veiled. Jesus Christ, throughout his ministry on earth, relied on the Father and the Holy Spirit, yet He never ceased to be God (Clark 2016:1-2). He willingly humbled himself and took upon himself a second nature, that of a man. Christ Jesus had a body like any other human expect he was without sin. Jesus Christ took a form of a servant as He only did what the Father commanded him to do (John 5:19). For this reason (Jesus obedience to the Father), we are also called to imitate Jesus Christ. Therefore, this is a call to those who are witnessing for Christ to sacrifice their own interests and prejudice for the sake of others.

3.3 The Incarnation of Jesus Christ as the Undergird for *Kenosis* Doctrine

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is best explained as the divine Logos that limited itself in taking the form of flesh, although not losing its divine aspect in the act. In the attempt of responding to the question 'who is Jesus?' The gospel according to John 1:1-5&14 reads as thus:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him, nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John's intentions were to make the readers and hearers of this gospel realise that indeed Jesus Christ existed before the foundations of the earth, and everything was made through Him. Furthermore, John states that Jesus Christ as the Word became flesh and lived among the people. John reveals Jesus Christ as both fully human and

fully divine. Nevertheless, John was determined to give a defence that Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God.

On the other hand, the gospel according to Mark is claimed to be the earliest among the synoptic gospels, Mark introduces Jesus Christ as “the one who announces the coming reign of God, the one who is acknowledged as the Son of God and is anointed by the Spirit of God” (Goheen 2000:119). Jesus Christ is the Son of God, sent by His own Father and anointed by the Spirit of God to let all nations know about the kingdom of God. However, the doctrine of the Trinity in the gospel of Mark was underdeveloped. It was until the first three centuries that the theologians' efforts shaped the Trinitarian doctrine, specifically Athanasius, who developed the doctrine of the Trinity. The Athanasius's doctrine of the Trinity found expression particularly in Augustine's work, who created a completely new notion of the Trinitarian doctrine that would be the framework for European history.

The incarnation of Jesus Christ is impossible without the ultimate truth, which is the Trinitarian God, and without the Triune God mission will be a futile praxis. The Father Himself was a missionary, especially in the Old Testament that aspect is explicit (as mentioned in the previous chapters). In the New Testament, the Father sent the Son in order to reconcile the whole of creation to Himself. Together the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to equip Christians or church to participate in Christ's redemptive work. The Triune God is always wrapped around the mission that the church is sent to do, and without the Triune God, that mission would be impossible.

During the first centuries, the term *kenosis* was coined as the church fathers employed Philippians 2:6-7 as a hymn. Furthermore, *kenosis* is a term employed in defining Christological doctrines that led to the meeting in 451 A.D called the Council of Chalcedon. A considerable number of both Reformed and Lutheran theologians developed a *kenosis* theory that is derived from Paul's epistle to the church of Philippians (2:6-7), and numerous theories that are related to Christology addressing the divine nature of Christ in the act of incarnation. Kenoticism is mostly regarded as a concept that was developed by the group of German theologians during the mid-19th century, scholars such as Thomas G. (1802-1875), Von Frank F.H.R (1827-1894) and Gess W.F (1819-1891). On the other hand, a group of theologians in Britain during the late 19th century and the early 20th century dealt with the same concept, such as

Frank Weston, Mackintosh H.R., Charles Gore (1871-1924), Quick O.C & Forsyth P.T. (1885-1944). Although German kenoticists perceived the self-emptying of Jesus Christ beyond the voluntary self-limitation of His divine nature, they believed that in the process of incarnation the divine nature of Jesus Christ ultimately self-restrained itself, not volitionally. The *kenosis* theories were numerous and differed, to the point that Thomassius did the separation of the metaphysical attributes, omniscience, omnipotent and omnipresence, from the moral attributes, holiness, and love. The divine Logos lost the former divine nature while taking the latter form. German kenoticists such as Gess and Frank took a daunting and a negative position, stripping Jesus Christ of any divine attributes and placed under scrutiny the concept of 'incarnation' (Clark 2016:1-2).

Nevertheless, the British theologians had a positive understanding of the *kenosis* theory. The British theologians' positive picture of *kenosis* theory was criticized as being a means of underpinning the possible human ignorance about the persons of Jesus, under the influence of reading the gospels in a more historical manner, which led them to conclude that traditional Christologies was unjust to the human life of Jesus. Thus, it was the limited knowledge of humans and the gospel records about Jesus Christ that the British kenoticists were propelled to assert against the strongly docetic dogmatic tradition. Among British kenoticists, certain individuals asserted that the divine self-emptying of Jesus Christ should be understood as something that had occurred variously. However, the emphasis was generally about the gracious character of Jesus' divine condescension and not so much on the metaphysical description of Jesus' divine self-emptying (Clark 2016:1).

Nonetheless, the current position of *kenosis* theory is complex to evaluate. The *kenosis* theory is still not popular as a theory to be employed in explaining the act of Jesus' incarnation among the so-called 'conservative Christians'. It should be acknowledged that most of the essential kenotic themes composed by the British kenoticists were later incorporated into a modern evangelic Christologies. The reality of the temptations that Jesus Christ had to go through, Jesus Christ' single consciousness (opposed to double consciousness), also the deepness of anguish as Jesus cry of dereliction at the cross were and still are universally professed today. Nonetheless, during the 19th century, such kenotic teachings and writings were considered as heretical innovations. In the interim modern evangelicalism was justified

for being skeptical about any metaphysical assumption regarding the act of Jesus' incarnation, and perceives kenotic language employed as a reason why metaphysical speculation keeps on surfacing in the kenoticism (Clark 2016:2).

A kenotic theory should always be grounded in the biblical accounts, as it is believed to be a remarkable Christological doctrine in the pool of many Christologies. The self-emptying of Philippians 2:7 is not about the pre-existence, rather about the incarnate Logos, which means that Jesus Christ refrained voluntarily to make use of the divine nature interconnected to His human nature. Furthermore, there was a necessity for Jesus Christ to undergo the human experiences such as, suffering, temptation, and death at the cross, for God to reconcile the whole of creation through Jesus Christ who had to be fully human and fully divine. Although Jesus Christ had to occasionally allow His Divine nature to be glimpsed, it is plausible to acknowledge that Jesus Christ' human and Divine nature was really united in Jesus Christ (where the Logos had to be the centre of His personality), as each nature reserved its essential attributes. For one to understand the concept of *kenosis* in the act of incarnation, one may need to tap into the mind of Christ.

3.4 What is the Mind of Christ?

Paul in his letters unswervingly represents Christ as the true source of authority for Christian life, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In Paul's letters, the mind of Christ is introduced and self-emptying (*kenosis*) is at the centre. According to Paul's letter to the Philippians, self-emptying should be a Christian lifestyle. The mind of Christ that is expressed through self-emptying in Philippians is the important source for Christian ethical discernment. The moral outlook of Jesus Christ is observed in what He was doing, and in His character and disposition. In order to be able to imitate Jesus Christ, there must be a willingness to know and share his mindset. In sharing Christ mindset means that one must align his/her desire, doing, and thinking with the mind of Jesus Christ. To Paul, the mind of Christ is being kenotic as one accommodates the needs of another person, mainly the weak and the poor in the society.

In Philippians, the mind of Christ is centred on *kenosis*, which should be practiced by Christians as moral implications. Although many may conclude that self-emptying mind-set is meaningless in the world that is highly individualistic, nonetheless as Paul urges the church of Philippians to be mindful of what Christ did for the world, therefore,

they should also strive to imitate His attitude of respect and meekness toward other people (Philippians 2:3). The self-emptying in Philippians 2:6-11 is vividly and dramatically expressing what led Christ to do what he did, the unswerving practice of humility and sacrificing his own life for humanity. Some scholars allude that self-emptying text (2:6-11) is among the oldest hymns sang by the early church community:

Jesus, though equal to God, did not claim his rightful divine privilege and power but rather gave it up for the good of humanity even to the point of being crucified on the cross.

The core of this hymn is the notion of *kenosis*, which should play a critical role in missiological encounters. As Christ took an unexpected attitude in order to reconcile humanity with God, Christians should be ready to practice the same standard of morality as determined by scriptures. According to Paul the self-emptying of Jesus Christ is not just a mere notion among many other notions of virtuous attitudes, it is rather a decisive and solitary one that demanded the complete person of Christ, his privilege and power as Son of God including his crucifixion. *Kenosis* is the surrendering of oneself, simply because without giving up pride, self-centeredness, prejudice, and other things that will hinder one to display the love of Christ, will ultimately disqualify such a person from being a true follower of Christ or Christian. As Lee (2017:3) rightly put it when dealing with *kenosis* that inevitable result with humility, he posits that “humility is more than a mental attitude; it takes action by the conscious replacement of self-serving with serving others and sharing one’s entire life to the benefit of others.” This is not an easy thing to do, and that is the reason why we are constantly in need of the Holy Spirit to empower us. Humility must be reflected in our attitude towards God and man. The manner in which we treat people of other faith should reflect the love of God in us. Christian should imitate Jesus Christ as the true epitome of what humility is all about. The self-emptying love of Christ that is expressed through humiliation and suffering for the benefit of others. The humility that we have towards God has to be experienced by those we encounter on our daily basis. The humility of Jesus Christ was not only directed to God, but it was also felt by those who were following Him.

Interestingly, the *kenosis* message of Paul was directed to the entire Philippian Christian church, but more specifically to those who were respected within the

community because of their status and power (Migliore 2004:101). Paul urges them to practice servanthood through 'creating space' for others as Christ did rather than exercising his privilege and power to belittle those He encountered. Paul is adamant that the church as the body of Christ will be truly united when it endorses the kenotic mind of Jesus Christ. The message of Paul resonates very well with Christ' own message to His disciples at the Last Supper: "You call me 'teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:13-15).

3.5 Doxological Function in Philippians

As mentioned above, the life of the historical Christ was to reconcile humankind with God and restore humankind to former glory. The purpose and the function of Christ are to bring humans to glorify God as Christ glorifies the Father (Heb. 2:10 & 1 Pet. 5:1-4), therefore, both Christ and men are to glorify God (2 Corinthians 4:15). The prayer of Christ was for all those who believe in him to be where he is, that is, to be unified with the believers and God the Father, to witness the glory that the Father has granted to Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Jn. 17:22-24). Paul in his epistle initially mentions the word 'glory' in Philippians 1:11, where Paul positions his message to lead to the "glory and praise of God." Again in Philippians 2:11, Paul at the end of his kenotic hymn that begins at 2:6 with "to the glory of God the Father," stresses the significance of the doxological function in the hymn. Paul concludes his epistle with "to our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Paul in Philippians 3:19 explores a different kind of glory that is enmity with the cross of Christ, it is a vain glory that leads to destruction. To this Cabanne (2016:107-108) rightly says, "this is a deluded state of mind in which one's appetites are for all intents and purposes one's god while God's glory is displayed by the will of earthly mindedness." This is something that Paul eagerly warns the church to refrain from in 2:3 "do nothing out of selfish ambitions or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves." It is the warning against "kenotic glory" that is individualistic in nature, which seeks to display God's glory in order to favour individuals glory (Cabanne 2016:107-108).

In the contemporary church, we have people who are highly esteemed by their congregants, and to this Paul say it is a 'vainglory' that ultimately leads to destruction. Paul's emphasis is about considering others before ourselves in humility, and bearing

in mind that none is more important than others, but only Christ as the head of the church (Philippians 2:3 & Col. 1:18). What is presented by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 is the radical following of Christ that lead one to metanoia with metamorphosis as the final phase (Cabanne 2016:111). To be completely born again in Christ there is a prerequisite, that is, metanoia followed by metamorphosis. For this reason, Paul says, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is a call for metamorphosis to take place after metanoia ensuing the radical *kenosis* of Jesus Christ in one's life.

3.6 The Theological Importance of *Kenosis*

Does *kenosis* reveal and enforce the mind of Christ in its essence? Is *kenosis* significant in the world where the majority is constantly marginalized and oppressed, as pointed out by the liberation and womanist theologians? How can *kenosis* liberate the oppressed and marginalized, if its goal is to promote self-subservience that seems to dismantle the moral agencies raised by liberation and feminist theologians? These are a few of many questions that come to mind when dealing with *kenosis* as a missiological approach in encounterology.

Kenosis plays a crucial role in Christian theology. The communion of the triune God is best explained in the *kenosis*, as it refers to the very disposition of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The trinitarian God finds the meaning of existence in love and communion through *kenosis*. The triune God can be best understood through *kenosis* as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit emptying-themselves for the benefit of others. The triune God is not only kenotic in a soteriological way but also in an ontological manner; just like love, God's eternal disposition is to create space for mankind. Migliore (2004:101) rightly mentioned that “God is eternally disposed to create, to give and share life with others. The welcome to others that is rooted in the triune life of God spills over, so to speak, in the act of creation.” The creation itself is the example of the triune God's kenotic act of love, as God allowed everything to exist and thrive alongside Himself. *Kenosis* is one of many plausible ways of understanding the triune God, who revealed Himself through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The Father had to empty-Himself and sacrifice His only Son, and Jesus had to obey the will of the Father although He was God Himself, and the Holy Spirit had to obey the Father and the Son to descend and live among humanity. Therefore, Christians are also expected to be kenotic in all that

they do if they ought to participate in God's mission, as the triune God sends the church to spread the gospel.

3.7 The Accommodative Power of God

The meaning of the word 'accommodate' means "to fit in with the wishes or needs of," and "to provide lodging or sufficient space for." The word accommodation in the peripheral of this study can be best explained as the kenotic work done by God through Christ who redeemed the world. Jesus Christ emptied Himself in order to accommodate humanity to His own divine life and provided for our very need for salvation and healing. He transferred His very being to us through giving us bliss, wholeness, and goodness as an exchange for our brokenness and sin, in order for humanity to be reconciled with God. Bosch (1980:67) rightly posited that mission finds its meaning in "God giving up himself, his becoming man, his laying aside of his divine prerogatives and taking our humanity, his moving into the world, in his Son and Spirit." The salvific meaning of *kenosis* is all about the mission of God that opposes individualism and elevates communalism, as expressed through the relational essence of the triune God (Park 2012:199-200).

To some *kenosis* can be counterintuitive and self-defeating because of its antithetical to the cultural make-up that promotes and glorifies self-assertion, power, and bourgeoisie. The *kenosis* is a sign of weakness in the contemporary world that is competitively minded, as it seeks to demonstrate the inner spiritual strength. *Kenosis* expresses that God is able to suspend his own privilege for the purpose of saving and empowering mankind. The kenotic love of God is not sentimental or powerless but rather powerful and life-giving. In 1 Corinthians 1:20, Paul preached about the kenotic power in Christ's life revealed throughout His ministry, especially on the cross the true wisdom and God's salvation for the world is exposed. The kenotic subversive nature revealed in Christ makes it very relevant to our world, because it seeks to serve and transform everyone. In the life of Christ *kenosis* combats against all evil forces of the world, and bring about restoration in humanity and life in abundance (Jn 10:10).

3.8 *Kenosis* and the current form of global economics

The current form of the economic system and globalization is driven by profit motives and cruel competitions that are the cause of millions of people living in the margins of society while focusing their inordinate amounts of wealth on the very few multinational

corporations and powerful nations. However, *kenosis* provides some critiques to this ruthless economic system that has caused a severe gap between the rich and poor. The message of self-emptying teaches that in order for us to imitate Christ, requires our power and wealth to be shared, including our knowledge. Pickett and Wilkison (2009), rightly posit that the severe economic gap between the rich and poor is the reason for the increase of the social ills, which undermines the well-being of people in the communities, be it the rich and poor. The 'Mission in the Context of Empire' which is the statement posited by the Council for World Mission, shares the same light that "the reign of God is in direct opposition to the Empire. In the political sense, if the world operates on the principles of the reign of God rather than the principles of Empire, then there will be less of a need for power and control, and more a sense of shared power or even a relinquishing of power." This is where Jesus' kenotic act emptying himself provides a glimpse of what the reign of God is all about (Philippians 2:1-11). Further to this, as opposed to the individualism expressed through Empire, the mission of God is community, as expressed in the relational essence of the Trinity. In the kingdom of God, the fullness of life is more important than archaic rules. We see this consistently throughout the gospels. Empire, on the other hand, stands in direct contradiction to "fullness of life" (Park 2012:199-201).

3.9 Understanding *kenosis* through the lens of dominion

Furthermore, the kenotic attitude is urgently needed to combat the human self-centeredness that has caused the ecological crisis. As Jesus Christ emptied himself, there is a greater need for humankind to restrain their power and privilege as the dominant species. We need to bear in mind that we have to share our environment with other creatures in order for them to survive and thrive. As Lee (2017:05) correctly says that, "our environment has been brutalized by our reckless consumption and ruthless exploitation, so other species are losing their habitats as the result of human aggression and violence." He continues and posits that, "*kenosis* tells us that we cannot be anthropocentric any longer as we adhere to the mind of Christ-like the image of God-bearer, mankind should reflect God's humility, compassion, and care for every life, especially the vulnerable ones." Being kenotic in this sense means, we should care for the whole of creation.

In Genesis 1:26 God said "lets us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the

cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon earth“ (KJV). As the cosmic LORD, the triune God made mankind in his image carrier to be the “ruler” of creation (Psalm 8:5-6 & Genesis 1:26). The word “dominion” is translated in numerous terms such as the expression of mastery, authority, power, and rulership. Interestingly, the word “dominion” does not mean to dominate in a sense of treating God’s creatures anyhow, but mankind’ dominion is intended to be in stewardship for the LORD, the form of rulership that leads to development, not domination. Dominion is found in the political arena (1 Kg 4:23-24), at some cases in the possession of Israel’s enemies (Nehemiah 9:28), as well as people who are chosen by God to rule over creation as king (Psalm 72:8). In Micah 4:8 the dominion is about the messianic restoration, dominion over all supernatural beings (Ephesians 1:20-21), and Christ’ ultimate dominion over all in Colossians 1:15-20. In the book of Romans 5:14-21 and 6:9-14 sin and death are subdued by the dominion of Christ, that is, His sovereign grace and salvation. In Daniel 4:34; 1 Peter 4:11 and Jude 25, the dominion of God is his sovereignty over both the creation as well as redemption (Longman 2013:452). All in all, humans are not doing very well when it comes to taking care of other species. The only command that humans have obeyed with excellence, is to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28).

3.10 The Need of *Kenosis* in Our Social Spheres

Kenosis is the concept that has an astounding relevance that will result in the demise of social ills, especially at a time when communities are in disarray, families have disintegrated, and marriages have broken down. *Kenosis*, as perfected by Jesus Christ, is needed in the troubled times to restore the brokenness of humankind, as relationships are being reduced to mere utilitarian contracts. The genuine long-term relationships that are cemented by affection and trust are people’s greatest desire in our current age. In the age where women and child abuse are trending in news and social media, religious fanatics are killing innocent people because they do not see eye to eye, all such predicaments cannot, shall not, and will not be solved by power (judicial aspects or military) alone or money, but it can be solved by genuine love. Therefore, the idea of *kenosis* has a genuine love quality, that is, to go all out of oneself for the benefit of the significant and ordinary other. The kenotic love is able to restore trust in the relationships and can bring change in any society that practices self-emptying, because any society that has people who are self-centered will be self-

destructive. Those who imitate the self-emptying attitude of Jesus Christ will realize that in a highly intolerant world, tolerance, privacy, individualism, and self-assertion cannot build up the community, because communities are more than just a cluster of individuals. The society that is made up of self-centered people will be self-destructive, even harmful, no matter how advanced is its technology, accumulated information, or military. To build healthy relationships in the institutions of the society there must be at least a minimal degree of self-emptying posture among the members of the society. In order to build a community, there is a need for the community to move beyond self-centeredness and create space for others in their hearts through *kenosis*.

3.11 Is *Kenosis* a Duty For Christ Followers?

The self-emptying message as addressed by Paul reminds Christians that their ruling ethos or mindset is different from that of the world. The church of Christ should represent the destitute and the powerless, as it is a place where the rich should share their possession with the less fortunate, where the powerless are empowered by the powerful. The church has to bear in mind that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the mind of Christ should be imitated by the church. Christian's *kenosis* is made possible through the reign of God, which leads us to submit our lives through the work of the Holy Spirit when the hearts of man are filled with conviction, and self-emptying love of God takes place in everyone.

Self-emptying or *kenosis* cannot be coerced, and it is not a duty as it was voluntary even in the case of Christ. Furthermore, *kenosis* is the act of love, and the overflowing love of God revealed through the ministry of Jesus Christ. *Kenosis* is the ultimate response to the love of God by which we are to share our lives with others, where the horizontal relationship with man validates the vertical relationship with God (1 John 4:20). *Kenosis* cannot serve as a theory because of its practical qualities that emulate the very life of Christ. Therefore, it will take some time for one to consistently practice *kenosis* and for it to mature in our minds and hearts. In order for the kenotic patterns to mature in our lives, we have to expose ourselves by practicing such examples. The message of Paul instructs the church in Philippi to live according to the examples set by himself (Paul), Epaphroditus, and Timothy, but above all, they are to imitate Christ. Encouraged by the examples set by Christ and the Apostles, and people around us, one may start practicing the kenotic love among the circle of his/her friends, neighbours, and small church gatherings. The mind of Christ is the message that

seeks to challenge our cultural ethos, materialistic lifestyle, self-centeredness, and individualistic mindset. The message of Paul on *kenosis* is a call for us to reorient our lifestyle from self-centeredness to caring especially for those in need, and the creation of God. The transition from self-assertion to self-emptying will require a transformation in our desires, values, attitudes, and thinking, that is, “the renewal of the mind” (Romans 12:2).

As mentioned earlier, *kenosis* may sound foolish or irrational to people who think highly of themselves, but one of the components of the gospel of Christ is *kenosis*. In our society, for one to practice *kenosis* will require strong courage and faith, because in many aspects being kenotic will become countercultural. According to Ruparell (2002:243-246), *kenosis* leads to a radical contextualisation, he calls it “hybridisation,” the model that forges one to identify with others. The radical contextualisation means that one has to willingly engage in interreligious dialogues, social-political sphere, and inculturation.

3.12 Does *Kenosis* Weakens the Devine Nature of Christ?

The message of Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 has been interpreted by some to imply that Jesus suspended certain divine qualities through the incarnation (John 1:14). On the other hand, some claim that the divine attributes of Jesus Christ were at work in a “potential” reality. However, it is better to scrutinise the context and the meaning of incarnation. Paul believes that *kenosis* of Jesus is a transferable practice: Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4). The readers of Paul’s letter during the 1st century would have made a comparison between Christ and Nero, the current Roman emperor who boldly upheld his own deification, infallibility, and his life was all about pleasure-seeking. Although this form of desire to be like God date back to Genesis 3:5 in “the garden of Eden”, Christian and Jewish tradition attests that the fall of Satan was because of the desire to be like God. Nonetheless, the Son of man did not seek to be seen as God to man, but rather He emptied himself and became man among man. Those who were around Christ did not realise that he was God because he did not appear or proclaim himself as God, rather Christ humbled himself. Even though John, James, and Peter were permitted to witness the glorified nature of Jesus Christ at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; John 1:14 & 2 Peter 1:16-21). Nonetheless, *kenosis* is a model that seeks to exhort Christians to have the mind of Christ, which is expressed in his humility, that will cause

Christians to put others first before themselves, as participants in the glory of the Lord (Ephesians 2:1-20). This does not imply that self-emptying will make one lose their identity, as Ruparell (2002:245) correctly says, “As I understand the doctrine, *kenosis* is not a self-denial in the sense of complete eradication, but rather a conscious opening up to the other, in order to partially become the other.”

The model of *kenosis* according to Levinas means “subordination of [God’s omnipotence] to man’s ethical consent,” that is, transcendental and diachronic self-emptying that does not apply in immediate real-time analogue. Levinas’s claim that *kenosis* does not adhere to real-time analogue is based on its enactment as it takes place beyond any period in history and time, in other words, there is no man who can pinpoint the exact time and date where God’s kenotic gesture started or ended. Furthermore, Levinas’s understanding of “*kenosis* is not merely tied to the conceptual unreachability of YHWH but relies rather upon Elohim’s ongoing ability to associate with the worlds – itself a result of humans’ ethical observance of Torah” (Baird 2007:433).

3.13 Rahner’s Understanding of *Kenosis*

Karl Rahner who lived from 1904-1984 was among most of the influential theologians during his time. He wrote most of his work in the form of essays, dealing with different kind of subjects within the field of theology and philosophy. The major work that will be employed below is from his book “Foundation of Christian Faith,” because in that book he was more comprehensive when he dealt with Christology. One may posit that by reading this book (Foundation of Christian Faith) compare to other works he wrote, the “late Rahner’s” understanding of Christology or *kenosis* of Christ is elucidated. There are numerous perspectives that one can unpack in Rahner’s transcendental Christology, but mine is strictly on *kenosis*. Since the 17th century and the term *kenosis* was exploited in numerous by scholars in their efforts to explain the how of Christ self-emptying of some of his divine attributes. The work of Karl Rahner made a difference in the *kenosis* debate, as he strongly believed that self-emptying is the act of giving as well as receiving (Baird 2007:433-434).

3.14 Rahner’s Transcendental Approach to Theology

As Rahner is well-known for his transcendental method in dealing with theological issues, he recommended that there was a greater need for transcendental Christology.

The term transcendental according to Immanuel Kant refers to the search for subject's constitution make-up, such as what comes before knowing. The results of the search are taken as transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience, which may be referred to as "horizon behind experience" (Røsok 2012:51). The premise for Kant is that nobody can access the knowledge that is beyond space and time, therefore, transcendental as a horizon behind our own experience plays a role in creating a barrier for anyone obtaining another type of knowledge. However, for Rahner, the term transcendental is something that can be employed in numerous ways but often seems to be the reverse of Kantian meaning. For Rahner's the etymological meaning of 'transcend', is not about barrier but "an invitation to transcend the categorical and to discover that particular objects are gifts pointing towards an infinite horizon beyond all particular, whose source is given already with the constitution of the human being in creation. Although Rahner also uses the term transcendental in the formal. Kantian sense, we need to keep in mind this material sense, referring to our inner openness, reaching out beyond all infinite" (Røsok 2017:52). Rahner perceives humans as transcending, as they are always striving to reach out to God. The Christ-event such as his death on the cross and the resurrection is the power that draws people to reach out towards God. The human being's own 'natural' revelation is conditioned by the kenotic love of Christ. According to Rahner the *kenosis* of Christ will bring us to radically follow Jesus Christ, and prevail against the sin that is committed through lack of love, pride, and constant rejection of God. As we imitate the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ, we will realise that it is challenging and radical, often daunting to our relational and personal aspects.

Interestingly, Rahner employs Ignatian spirituality as a lens to unpack the issues related to human *kenosis*, which had its own criticism from von Balthasar as he accused Rahner of reducing faith to a mere 'bland and shallow humanism'. Von Balthasar argued that the universal God's self-communication theology presents the theology of the cross as superfluous, therefore, in this regard; Rahner's approach falls short to provide a defence for any type of readiness for suffering as a result of the radical following of Christ. Although von Balthasar criticism of Rahner's transcendentalism may be acceptable to some, it limits Rahner's transcendentalism to a single perspective. In a nutshell, I am adamant that Rahner's theology should not be studied separately from his theology of the cross and spirituality. It is worth noting

that Rahner employs the word *kenosis* as a means to express the radical following of Christ. The radical following of Jesus Christ implies that one is to be prepared to go wherever God is sending one, and one has to be ready for suffering and persecution to the point of death. According to Rahner *kenosis* is not to be limited to unthematized, transcendental relinquishment to the mystery, but rather an encounter with Jesus Christ which will bring a concrete challenge for one to radically follow the historical Jesus Christ. Rahner strongly believes at this point that self-emptying of Christ is not just about Him surrendering divine attributes, but it is about the way we treat those we encounter, and the attitudes we obtain from the life of Jesus Christ in the Gospel narratives. The primary key for one to understand the self-emptying of Christ is by understanding his humility; who, even though he was God he became a man in order to sympathise with us, and became a servant as an act of love.

The *kenosis* is deeply rooted in God's self-communication which ultimately reached its climax in the persons of Jesus Christ. It becomes ontological and an essential unity between the divine nature and human nature because of the Christ-event. This type of unity cannot be a necessity or static but a relational unity that only depends on one's free commitment. Endean in his essay titled, *Rahner Christology and Grace*, he expresses how Rahner in his theology of grace enforces this radical unity of the two natures as reflected in the writings of Rahner's Ignatian Spirituality. Rahner posits that in our growth in grace will result in having a great transformation on the entire unity, even on the persons of Jesus Christ, meaning that those we encounter will begin to see Jesus Christ manifesting in us. Endean (1996:288-289) realise the significance of taking the incarnation of Jesus Christ serious as he rightly says, "if the incarnation is the central event in the world's history, it determines our understanding of everyone's else's identity." In Rahner's and Endean's (1996:289) writings, there is a sense of realising that we share life with Jesus as the incarnate Son of God, and when we share the kenotic love of Christ with others that enriches and pleases God. Endean continues to study the incarnation in Rahner's *Spiritual Exercises* as he quotes this passage (he translated from Germany to English):

In the incarnation, the Logos emptied himself into his human nature, which is essentially orientated to the 'thou' of other human beings. If human persons are to find their own existence, they need those who are human with them genuinely to be other, to be different, i.e. precisely not clones. Human beings

find their own perfection only in the otherness of those who are human with them, an otherness acknowledged, affirmed and sheerly loved. This applies also to Christ, indeed especially so. Of him too we must say: through the word made human loving human beings [sic!] as others and because they are others, he too attains to the fullness of this nature. He becomes what he is meant to be in his humanity, in a true historical presence, only- really only through his being our brother and affirming our validity as others.

This passage concurs that the self-emptying of the Logos was an act of God's love for humanity, and expresses the essence of the unity of Christ as the head of the church and with all humanity. Self-emptying of Christ is the act of love because the essence or meaning of being a Christian is accomplished through loving others. As mentioned above, through loving others ultimately enriches Christ's humanity; because in Christ humanity is assumed as well as fulfilled as the continual process. This concurs with Rahner's understanding of the unity between God's love and love of the neighbour. Human *kenosis* to Rahner is about accepting the love of God volitionally, which turn out to be the source for one to surrender in unconditional love to others. The unity of the love of God and the love of neighbour expresses two significance of human *kenosis* according to Rahner: the first is the basic surrender, the acknowledging of God as the infinite ground, and the acceptance of our human finiteness leading to death as the final surrender to God. Secondly, through this basic surrender, the person is empowered by God's grace, enabling a genuine love for neighbour (Røsok 2017:60).

3.15 Contextualising *Kenosis* of Christ

All in all, the self-emptying of Jesus Christ is practical and cannot be ruled out as impractical in some context, especially that of Christians. The self-emptying is not foreign to the African context that prides itself in the notion of "Ubuntu," as Christ became a man. Ubuntu (humanness) is a notion that seeks to bring individuals together as one for the betterment of the communities. It is a notion that breaks cultural, racial, socio-economic, and religious barriers for people to advance one another. In the Zulu culture that is called, "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" which translated as: a person is a person because of other people. As Mangaliso (2001:24) rightly posits that, "humanness is a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony, and hospitality, respect, and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for

one another. Ubuntu is the foundation for the basic values that manifest themselves in the ways African people think and behave towards each other and everyone else they encounter.” African Christianity draws its identity from the self-emptying that seeks to see the betterment of the other.

In the same light, Mbiti (1990:106) rightly asserts in his work that, “only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own dies, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people... Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: “I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.” This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.” This is an incorporate resilience of the whole group that results in the unity of the African society. On the other hand, the *kenosis* of Christ to the point of death on the cross is about reconciling man to God and bringing Jews and Gentiles as one new man. The ambition of Christians should be to make Christ known to the entire world, with self-emptying as a missiological approach.

3.16 Conclusion

The analysis of the self-emptying in Philippians 2:6-11 led us to explore different perspectives from a variety of scholars and theologians. They all in different remarkable perspectives expressed that it is imperative to recognise that the church is always in constant need for metanoia, that is leading to renewal, conversion, and reformation. At least scholars that belong to the protestant tradition are aware of the Latin phrase that is translated as thus, “the church must always be reformed” (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est?*) (Bosch 1988:136-138). Christians must be willing to imitate Jesus Christ as the head of the church and must learn to love others regardless of their differences. This work aimed at defending the premise that people should feel free to choose what they believe, as long as that does not violate other peoples rights and comply with the law. Therefore, that is the reason why self-emptying of Jesus Christ will have to play a vital role if we ought to treat others with the respect they deserve, finding it in our hearts to understand that their religious convictions are sacred. *Kenosis* is a tool that can augment our encounters to be more meaningful and life-giving in a transformative manner. This work serves as a reiteration that we are commanded to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit in peoples lives. As a matter of fact, the gospel

of Jesus Christ ceases to be grounded in God's love when it is foisted on anyone or take for granted the very image of God.

The following two chapters, chapters four and five, will focus on evidence of mission in the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively and chapter five will address mission in the contemporary milieu.

CHAPTER FOUR

MISSION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: ISRAEL'S ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHER NATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the Old Testament mission, and also look at how the mission was understood during the Old Testament period. It will further deal with how God's mission was constantly frustrated by Israel. The Old Testament will be employed as a primary document to address Israel's encounters with other nations. The Old Testament also presents God who ushered in an inclusive form of mission. Yahweh, who was impartial, promoted a form of mission that did not exclude other nations, because he intended to reveal himself to all people, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or cultural background (Goheen 2011:40-44).

4.2 The Meaning of Kenotic Love of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible

The mission can be a vehicle that will drive us to a state where there is harmony among people who differ in many regards. Such a state cannot be possible if those who are engaged in mission fail to express the love of God to those they encounter. The mission should be understood as doing the will of God, we become God's instruments when we do his mission. That is why we need to constantly "empty ourselves" (*kenosis*) of any thought that is potential to hinder us from expressing the kenotic love of God. We will observe from the Old Testament that God love the whole world and everything in it. If we can deeply understand that we were created by God to love and care for one another just as He did and still doing, we will be able to embrace a kenotic posture in our encounters, only then will God's love be felt by those we encounter. The iconic ballad during the 1970s by John Lennon titled "Imagine", he dreams about a better world, a world without strife, war, poverty, brokenness, inequality, pain, racism, and injustice he observes around the world. Lennon identifies himself with people who shared his dream of a world with people living in peace and harmony with each other. An example is a countercultural movement during the 1960s and 1970s, a group of people of which he believed displayed and upheld justice and peace he yearned for. The idea of identifying with others is what the researcher also want to emphasise as being one of the characteristics of understanding *kenosis*, which is about doing the will of God for the benefit of others. This includes taking care of the sick, widow, downtrodden, orphan, the marginalised in the community. Therefore, *kenosis* can also

be construed as breaking down the barriers that hinder us from doing the will of God (Goheen 2011: 1-4).

4.3 Is Mission In The Old Testament Centrifugal or Centripetal?

The controversy among scholars is the issue of whether the mission in the Hebrew Bible is centrifugal or centripetal. In a nutshell, we will attempt to give accounts of scholars that have spoken about this issue. In a pool of many scholars with an equivalent view as that of Bosch (1996:17) and Peters (1972:12), as they both concur with each other that mission in the Hebrew Bible is centripetal. They strongly reckon that there is no account in the Old Testament where God sends Israel as a nation to go out to other nations and proclaim the supremacy of Yahweh with an intention to convert them to have faith in Yahweh. Although Kaiser (Winter 1981:25-26) attests that Israel had a God-given missionary call, he believes that in the Hebrew Bible there are three fundamental texts where Yahweh sends Israel's individuals or an entire nation with a motive of converting other nations: (1) Genesis 12:1-3 (to make known of His intent to bless all nations); (2) Exodus 19:4-6 (Israel had to be an integral part in Yahweh priesthood as representatives of His blessings); (3) Psalm 67 (Israel had to share the will of Yahweh that was to bless all of the earthly nations). Although, the intention here is not to hermeneutical exegete these texts, but to posit that it is generally putative that mission in a sense of sending is not clear in the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, Kaiser (cited by Winter & Hawthorne 1981:29) rightly acknowledges that probably Abraham and Israel "were meant to be entirely passive while God was the whole actor in the Old Testament". The mission both in the Old Testament and the New Testament is portrayed in the figure below.

4.3.1 Concept of Mission as Centripetal and Centrifugal.



Figure 1 demonstrate the notion of mission as centripetal and centrifugal (Sukdaven 2006:55).

As argued in the above figure, mission in the Old Testament is understood as centripetal, nations coming to worship together with Israel, although mission in the New Testament is centrifugal, as the church is sent by God to go out to the nations. Nevertheless, this understanding of mission fails to integrate mission as firstly an act of Yahweh and secondly the reaction of people to Yahweh's mission. It is plausible to say both centrifugal and centripetal concepts are always intertwined and inseparable. For example, Yahweh sends Himself, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the church and instantaneously Yahweh gather His people to a nation, temple, city, land and essential to the Messiah Jesus of Nazareth. The calling in (centripetal) and the going out (centrifugal) are both always together throughout the whole biblical history of God's mission (Sukdaven 2006: 53-54).

It is imperative for us to employ both the Old and the New Testament in search for God's mission since in the Christian theology there is no New Testament separated from the Old Testament. Though the Old Testament has no trace of the mission, as we understand it today, as the sending of missionaries to distant places, whether by God or the church, there are accounts in the Old Testament where nations are acknowledged as recipients of God's grace. In the New Testament, we see Jesus Christ unequivocally align his mission with that of the Old Testament, as the One who was prophesied by the prophets. That is why Rzepkowski (1974:80) was correct when he alluded that: "The decisive difference between the Old and the New Testament is

mission. The New Testament is essentially a book about mission.” Therefore, even the book of Jonah is not about God’s mission as we understand it today. The prophet Jonah is sent by God to Nineveh not to proclaim salvation for non-believers but to announce desolation. Neither do we find Jonah concerned about mission, but he eagerly waits for God to destroy Nineveh after he indifferently announced God’s judgment upon Nineveh. Furthermore, what earlier scholars have deemed as a book about mission in the Old Testament, Second Isaiah is contrary to the message of the book (Rzepkowski 1974:80-84).

Nonetheless, the Old Testament is imperative for us in order to understand the mission(s) in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, there is a decisive discrepancy between the faith of Israel, and that of the surrounding religious nations. The religions of the surrounding nations were expressed at a particularly holy place (hierophanic in nature), where people have encounters with the divine world. The encounter between the human world and the divine world occurs in rituals or cults, in which the intimidating chaos and desolation powers can be neutralized, as well as the wellbeing of the nation can be sustained. However, that is not the case with Israel, because their faith is solemnly the conviction that their God has redeemed their mothers and fathers from the Egyptians, led them for forty years through the desert to Canaan the promised land. The story of Canaan has its ramifications because it seems as if the God who cares for mankind is a mass murderer, but bearing in mind that the fallen angels had sex with the people of Canaan and resulted in Nephilim, God did everything to preserve the lineage that led to the coming of Jesus Christ (Bosch 1991:17).

Furthermore, Israel as a people became a nation only because of God’s constant involvement. God also made a covenant with them through their God-chosen leader Moses, at Mount Sinai. The covenant between God and Israel determines their entire future. Therefore, the near future of Israel was determined by their obedience to the covenant they had with God. If in any way they break God’s covenant, God punishes them until a particular prophet (Amos 3:7) or leader (Kings, Priests, etc.) urges them to repent from their sins. The Israel focal point was based on the things that God has done, was continually doing and is yet to do as He has intended. Since God is a dynamic being people of Israel were aware and expected God’s dynamic changes in their life (Bosch 1991:17).

The Old Testament surely convey that God is present in worship and prayer, although the main focus is in God's revelation and His historical acts. As a God who revealed Himself in history, He is still that God of promise. We can easily understand the Old Testament revelation if we scrutinize the history of Israel and other nations. God reveals himself as the God of Israel's forefathers, such as Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac, by stating those forefathers implies that God has been active in the past history, and He will always be their God even in the future. People of God celebrated the exodus from Egypt, and the covenant received from Mount Sinai, they also remember that God will be involved in their future, even to their descendants. They understood that God did not merely focus on the present times but He was working on their future as well (Knitter 1985:30-40).

In the Old Testament, God is revealed as the One who elected Israel, and such election came with what they had to do in return. Therefore, Israel was expected to serve and care for those who were margins of society, such as the widow, the orphan, the sick, and the poor. At any given time where Israel had to renew their covenant with God, they would realise that their obligations to serve those who were victims of the society was also being renewed. In other words, the compassion of God is even felt by other nations and is not only confide to Israel, but Israel also becomes God's extended helping hand to the downtrodden. Bosch (1991:18) states that, "there is an ambivalent attitude toward the other nations in the Old Testament. On the one hand, they are Israel's political enemies or at least rivals; on the other hand, God himself brings them into Israel's circle of vision. The story of Abraham is an illustration of this." Abraham was promised by God that he will be the father of nations, and be a blessing to all nations. In one way or another, the allegory of Abraham illustrates the relationship between the nation of Israel and other nations. The holistic history of Israel reveals to us that God's involvement with other nations continued. The Creator and the Lord of the universe are the God of Israel. Therefore, because of that reason Israel can only understand its history in continuity with the history of other nations (Bosch 1991:18-45).

Furthermore, the dialectical tension in the Old Testament between judgment and mercy occurs, where judgment and mercy are subjected to both other nations and Israel as recipients. Perhaps most relevant accounts are second Isaiah (40-55) and Jonah illuminates both sides of the same coin. Prophet Jonah depicts Israel as those

who uphold their election by God as their privilege and pride. Jonah does not qualify and understands God's compassion to the feared nation of Nineveh, who were terrifying other nations including Israel. Bosch (1991:18) allude that "the booklet does not aim at reaching and converting Gentiles; it aims, rather, at the repentance and conversion of Israel and contrasts God's magnanimity with the parochialism of his own people." In other words, God was working on redirecting the people of Israel in a manner in which they perceived themselves as privileged, and the only recipients of God's magnanimity. Perhaps if we look at 2 Isaiah the account about Israel being depicted as a suffering servant, where we find Israel humiliated because of God's judgment and wrath over them as the recipient, and at a state of lowliness and weakness, Israel becomes witnesses of God's triumph. At the time of Israel's great humiliation and misery, we witness other nations interacting with Israel and confess: "This is what the Lords says... Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel... has chosen you" (Isaiah 49:7). In Isaiah 49:6 God utters these words to Israel: "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Therefore, in the aftermath when the people of Israel endured great suffering, God restores the nation of Israel (Isaiah 49:8-23) (Bosch 1991:18-21).

It gradually becomes clearer that Yahweh's compassion is granted to Israel and beyond, thus confirming that God is not only concerned with Israel but also with other nations. Perhaps if we examine the faith in the people of Israel, there are two fundamental conclusions that arise according to Labuschagne (1975:9):

since the true God has made himself known to Israel, he is to be encountered only in Israel; and since the God of Israel is the only true God, he also is the God of the whole world. The first conclusion emphasizes isolation and exclusion from the rest of humankind; the second suggests a basic openness and the possibility of reaching out to the nations.

Israel did not usually approach other nations, with a motive of trying to win other nation to have faith in Yahweh. If other nations do come to Israel, it is the acts of God that are drawing them to Israel. Therefore, all the nations would go to Jerusalem and

worship the Lord there together with Israel, His covenant people, if we trace “mission” in the Old Testament, it is God himself who is doing mission, by drawing people to Himself (Bosch 1991:9-20).

Furthermore, according to Jeremias (1958:57-61):

The nations are waiting for Yahweh and trusting in him (Isaiah 51:5). His glory will be revealed to them all (Isaiah 40:5). All the ends of the earth are called upon to look to God and be saved (Isaiah 45:22). He makes his servant known as a light to the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). A highway is constructed, from Egypt and Assyria to Jerusalem (Isaiah 19:23); the nations encourage each other to go up to the mountain of the Lord (Isaiah 2:5), and they carry precious gifts with them (Isaiah 18:7). The purpose of all this is to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, the sanctuary of the entire world, together with the covenant people (Psalms 96:9). Egypt will be blessed as God’s people, Assyria as the work of his hands, and Israel as his heritage (Isaiah 19:25). The visible expression of this global reconciliation will be the celebration of the messianic banquet upon the mountain of God; the nations will behold God with unveiled faces, and death will be swallowed up forever (Isaiah 25:6-8).

In addition, God is not only revealing himself to Israel but also to other nations. God is not only confined to Israel but to all the nations of the world (Jeremias 1958:57-62). However, although we have a positive picture where God acknowledges other nations, and involves himself in their history as he does to Israel, Israel remains the main nation that receives the wealth of other nations (Isaiah 60:11). We can trace Israel-centeredness in the 2 Isaiah which sought to be the high-water mark of the universe in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 47 we witness the announcement of the judgment of other nations, although it is not explicit if they were judged because of refuting the merciful overtures of God, or perhaps it was for the mere fact that they were characterised as enemies of Israel. It is not puzzling, then, that the negative attitude towards other nations tends to gradually grow during the course of time. Where we see the conditions in social and politics weakening, people of the old covenant increasingly hope that God will soon send a Messiah who will overthrow the Gentile nations, which will subsequently be Israel’s restoration. Israel’s expectations of Gentile nations being conquered by the coming Messiah was wrapped around their ideology

of perceiving themselves as superior to other nations, where all other nations were Israel's subject (Bosch 1991:19).

In the book of Deuteronomy 7:7-8 Moses made a statement in the name of God that: "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." Therefore, among other numerous biblical texts, Deuteronomy attests that God only made a covenant with Israel. In Exodus 6:7 the account about God stating that "I shall take you as my people and I shall be your God," is an emphasis that God is indeed for Israel as a people. God is depicted as a core protagonist in Israel early wars, as seen in the invasion of Israel to the land of Canaan in order to make unhindered space for Israel. Furthermore, God commanded Israel in Deuteronomy 7:3-4 announcing that Israel as a nation, "shall not make marriages with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly". A text among numerous text verses that gives impetus about God's concern or love for other nations, is Deuteronomy 10:18-19 where God commands Israel saying, "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore, love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." The text calls for Israel to love the strangers as God himself loves the strangers, as they were once strangers in the land of Egypt (Bosch 1991:20-24).

Although there are texts in the Hebrew Bible that seem to create some sort of "ethical Yahwism," and endeavour to elevate the image of God from the so-called national agendas, yet we still have in the Hebrew Bible some prophetic tradition segments that continually portrayed God as partial to Israel, and somehow unfair or unjust to other nations. Even some late prophetic oracles, Israel salvation was often intrinsically highlighted by the judgment upon their enemies or other nations. For instead the trito-Isaiah 60:12 convey that "For the nation and the kingdom which will not serve you will perish, And the nations will be utterly ruined." Also in Psalms, we find what we call war-dance liturgy. Psalm 149:5-8: "let the godly ones exult in glory; Let them sing for

joy on their beds. let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!" There are numerous accounts where Israel hope for the destruction of other nations, such as Joel 3:9-12 and Ezekiel 38-39. In Daniel 7:27 "Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him." "the people of saints of the Highest One," that is the divine beings who formed the council of Yahweh. This is an indisputable "Israel-centeredness" in sections of the Hebrew Bible allegory. Although one of the contentions within the book of Daniel is that it should not be read in parameters, in conjunction with the internal transformations of the tradition that designate Israel election as embedded with missionary intention (Okoye 2006:2).

4.4 God's Mission Reaching to other Nations

If we hermeneutical examine the Hebrew Bible's literature, it is overwhelmingly clear that Israel's tradition shows Yahweh's love and care for all mankind and the whole of creation. In the Hebrew Bible, some of the texts give the impression that Israel election was for enabling welfare and salvation to the universe. Therefore, that is the reason why God consistently emptied Himself by being loyal to the constantly unfaithful Israel. God in His sovereignty would send a warning to Israel as a people to repent from their sins, as elaborated above. Although God could have demonstrated his superiority to Israel by destroying the whole nation, he decides to care and nurture them and keep his promises that he made to Israel's forefathers. It is prospective that Genesis 1, the story of creation portrays God as a creator who cares for all humanity. Abraham is chosen to be the father, not only of Israel but of all nations (Genesis 17:5). "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations." God in Genesis 17:5 reveals to Abraham what he has destined him for. God also intended to use Abraham as an extension in blessing not only Israel but also other nations. In Genesis 12:2-3 God said to Abraham, "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you, all the families of the earth shall be

blessed.” Therefore, the choice of Abraham functioned as a “blessing” for all humanity. In reference to Exodus 12:38, it is inevitable for a reader to conclude that when Israel left Egypt the “mixed multitude or mixed people,” Jews were with different ethnic groups from Egypt who were enslaved. They became as Israel the beneficiaries of Yahweh’s salvation and assembled with Israel at Mount Sinai. As Israel, the other ethnic groups had to obey Yahweh’s covenant, and both Israel and “non-Jews” were both bound together by the covenant. The events at the Mount Sinai occurred as a hinge of initiating the oneness of God’s people (Exodus 19-24). Israel became more of a covenant community rather than mere heredity related by blood. Norman Gottwald (cited by Okoye 2006:4), even posits that Israel as a nation was formed in Canaan when the revolution of oppressed peasants came under the influence of Moses’s group, coming from Egypt and thus under the banner of Yahweh as the liberating deity. Even though such a theoretical statement raises many unanswered questions, it vividly reinterprets Israel notion of election. Therefore, Israel become the covenant community with a task to reveal the nature of Yahweh, and to share the benefits of a life lived under Yahweh. In this case, Israel election become intrinsically linked with mission (Okoye 2006:3-4).

4.5 Yahweh’s Affiliation With All Nations

The book of Psalms has many hymns about the universal and the impartial reign of Yahweh. Which reveals the concern of Yahweh’s for the whole of creation. In Psalm 82 God demoted the erstwhile mortals, heavenly rulers and dismissed them from ruling the nations, perpetuated by their failure to “Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute (Psalm 82:3).” The end of the chapter of Psalm 82, the Psalmist concludes with a request: “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations (Ps 82:8).” In the following Psalms: 47; 93; 96-99 and 100 the impartial just rule of God is celebrated and anticipated during the liturgy of Yahweh’s enthronement. It is clear that these Psalms are not Israel-centered, but rather they place an emphasis in the act of Yahweh’s just rule to all nations (Okoye 2006:4).

4.6 Commission for The Nation of Israel and Gentiles

Furthermore, unknown prophet, during the exilic period, presents to us Yahweh assigning His servant in Isaiah 49:6 by saying, "It is too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of

Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth." The Yahweh's commission to His servant to be the light to other nations is aligned with an earlier commission "to restore the preserved ones of Israel," and to bring them back to their homeland. The word "servant" mostly equates to "Israel" in Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 41:8,9; 44:1, words like "Jacob, my servant"), although in so-called "Servant Songs" appears to be addressing a certain individual who is representing Israel (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). The servant, whether referring to an individual or the people of Israel is not the issue because they are both given a commission that is not only for Israel but also meant for other nations (Okoye 2006:4).

4.7 Wisdom Literature

The wisdom literature of Israel seems to be universal and international as Gunkel and Begrich (1998:294) suggest in this: "the God who is revealed in wisdom is the 'teacher of the nations'." In wisdom, literature themes such as covenant, *Torah*, and election do not feature. The wisdom religion appears to be solemnly grounded upon experience and human life, not as a revealed religion. In the book of Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction," is not primarily the instruction of Yahweh's covenant with the people of Israel only, rather an experience of the Holy in a universal human response, not only confined to Israel as a nation. Although in Sirach 24 the wisdom literature is later linked with *Torah*, the wisdom literature's path seems to universalise human lifestyle or experience as a living faith arena. Therefore, when wisdom places other nations and Israel on the same strata with respect to the practice of true religion and experience of God (Okoye 2006:4).

4.8 Mission as God's Universal Purpose

There is a gradual growth in Israel's conviction about God's universal purpose. Israel as a people appeared to have somehow, in Isaiah 2:2-4 (parallel in Micah 4:1-4), opened doors for other nations during the exilic or postexilic period. Isaiah 2:2-4 portrays Israel witnessing other nations in the final days on the pilgrimage to Zion, to worship the God who elected Israel. Furthermore, a number of texts dating to this period illustrate other nations sharing the faith of Israel or being instructed to share the Israel covenant inheritance. For instance, the text in Isaiah 11:9 conveys that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." Rowley

(cited by Okoye 2006:4-5) interprets Isaiah 49:6 as an emphasis “that Israel in active worship shall share the faith which is her glory with all people.” In the above mentioned, God is clearly not only concerned with Israel as a nation but He is also concerned with all nations. The kenotic love of God is not only felt by Israel but also by other nations as well. This chapter brings to the fore why are we to ultimately empty ourselves (being kenotic) in our encounters with non-Christians or those who differ with our beliefs. Below I will continue to convey how Israel election caused them to perceive themselves as superior to other nations (Okoye 2006:5).

4.9 Impartial God

Perhaps from the initial point, it is substantial to mention that God during the Old Testament period mostly opted to reveal himself to Israel. For that reason, most Jewish believers perceive Yahweh in the Old Testament as partial, and only concerned with Israel as a people. Nevertheless, we have to consider one implication of looking at other nations as inferior to Israel. Especially theologians should perceive other nations as beings whose souls God himself created in his own image and inscribed with the law of God. Look upon them as beings who are endowed, like no other creature, with the capacity to know God and, in fact, will know God enough to perish by or live by. We should contemplate this as we study other nations, that they were also involved in the promise that God made to Abraham. In the book of Isaiah 43:6-7 says “I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring My sons from afar, And My daughters from the ends of the earth, Everyone who is called by My name, And whom I have created for My glory, Whom I have formed, even whom I have made." The texts declare that God has sons and daughters not only in Jerusalem but to the ends of the earth, He created everyone for His glory. Therefore, God is not only glorified by Israel but by other nations as well. Other nations should not be taken for granted, or trifled with, or neglected. In this dissertation it is imperative to perceive non-Christians in this way, which will enable Christians to build relationships and provide a better understanding about non-Christians, bringing us to the glorious privilege and responsibility of joining God's inner work to bring non-Christians up into Christ and make God known and loved (see chapter three) (Muck & Adeney 2009:32-44).

In the Old Testament, there are no instances where the word “partiality” or “impartiality” of God is employed. Although, as Piper (1998:5) suggests that:

The idea in the Old Testament is that God does not "receive face," they would say, that is, he is "impartial" he is not moved by irrelevant external appearances. He sees through them and goes to the heart of the matter and is not partial to appearance and circumstance. Nobody breaks the rules and gets away with it, no matter how powerful or clever or wealthy or networked. All are judged by the same measure.

Perhaps if we dwell on Piper's views about God's impartiality, we get the idea that God is profoundly just, in a manner that his mercy is equivalent to his just nature. Israel and other nations are both God's mercy and justice recipients. When God has to judge the nations the Law of Moses was only employed to judge those who knew the Law of Moses, however, the Law of Moses was not employed to judge those who had no knowledge about the *Torah* when they committed sins. Israel had to obey the Ten Commandments, in fact obeying the Law of Moses is what made them to be prosperous and disobeying the Law of Moses brought desolation. Unless they repent and turn away from their sins God would not restore the nation of Israel. Probably the question that arises in the mind of an inquisitive person is how did Yahweh judge those who had no access to the Law of Moses? Perhaps such question brings us to the notion that both those who had access to Law of Moses and those with no access to the Law of Moses were both able to differentiate between what is evil and righteous. Therefore, what matters to God is how much or little you were enlightened between right and wrong, and the imperative is how did you live? If they knew the Law in their minds, the undergird is how did they respond by means of conduct? Such questions will be addressed in the following chapter because the New Testament explicitly deals with these questions in details, although the Old Testament does respond to such questions the New Testament invent new notions and words that reveals the true kenotic nature of God and his impartiality (Piper 1998:5-6).

What is fundamental is that in our encounters with non-Christians we should always reflect God's kenotic love. In the Old Testament, God's kenotic love is revealed where God does not only constantly forgive Israel for their inequities but also we see Yahweh being concerned with the affairs of other nations. In fact, from the beginning of the Old Testament to the last book of the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh's kenotic love is felt not only by Israel but by other nations as well. Furthermore, the

loyalty of Yahweh never ceased to prevail over the disloyal/disobedient people of Israel and other nations. It is indisputable that some of the Hebrew Bible narratives can leave the reader with an idea that God had no interest to other nations, as we frequently see Israel waging wars against other nations (Numbers 13). This means that God was always faithful to Israel, even when they frequently failed to understand God's kenotic love for them and other nations, for example, Jonah the prophet could not understand God's compassion for the Ninevites (Jonah 4:11). Perhaps, the message in the book of Jonah illustrates that even if Ninevites did not have access to the Law of Moses, they could understand that they are sinners and had turn to away from their wickedness. Therefore, the researcher agrees with Piper's proposal that we should "speak the truth in love and God may be pleased to make the connection between what non-Christians know by nature, and what we tell them from the Word of God." Precisely, that is the method that will enable Christians to empty themselves from any perceptions of superiority over other religions (Piper 1998:10).

4.10 Conclusion

The Old Testament portrays Mount Zion not as the national center for the people of Israel, but instead as a "mountain of Yahweh's house." For instance, Isaiah 2:5 reads as thus, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD." As mentioned above, we can attest that in the Old Testament there are passages where the nations of the world are on their pilgrimage to Mount Zion volitional. The reasons for other nations to go to Mount Zion was to seek teachings of the *Torah*, peace, and welfare. Therefore, Mount Zion became a spiritual center that the deepest human desires could be obtained and sustained. The Old Testament reveals that world peace cannot be instigated by legal laws only, but requires an internal commitment to the paths of peace and reconciliation to its core. In the book of Isaiah, the *Torah* does not function as a legal law but rather as instructions of Yahweh that were revealed through the prophet. In addition, the people of Israel had to obey the *Torah*, in doing so, they become what God intended for them to be, a light to the nations. It is from this point that we should also learn as Christians to understand and to love those from other religions. That means we should empty ourselves of any ideologies that can impede them from feeling the love of God through our godly gestures. We become the "light

to the nations” when we learn to do the will of God, and that is, to love everyone just as God loves us (Okoye 2006:133).

CHAPTER FIVE

MISSION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: The Good News to the Nations.

5.1 Introduction

In this dissertation the objective(s) is not necessarily to argue about certain individual epistemologies, rather it seeks to underpin the importance of not drifting away from Jesus Christ as a true epitome of what mission is all about. In this chapter we will look at the period in which Jesus Christ was born, and how he confronted the Jewish teachings during the 1st century. A critical analysis of Matthew 28:19 as a biblical text that has been employed repetitively to support the Great Commission or disciple-making. The New Testament as the book that is essentially about mission will be imperative throughout this chapter. The New Testament becomes imperative in the sense that Christianity is embedded in the New Testament. In the previous chapter we looked at how other nations found themselves in the story of God's redemptive acts; however, in this chapter, the emphasis will be plainly on how that one chosen nation became a light for all nations to benefit. This chapter seeks to posit that the context of church missionary identity should be the reflection of Jesus's kenotic love. We will examine the disciples of Jesus Christ in their efforts to break the walls between Christianity and other religions of the first century. Furthermore, the objective of this chapter is to reveal how Jesus Christ and His disciples applied mission praxis, and how in all of them we can observe a pattern of self-emptying posture.

5.2 The Oral Tradition.

It is clear that Jesus Christ unequivocally understood that his mission had to be in relation to the authentic Old Testament tradition. Although, fairly recently the custom of Christians has perceived Jesus in purely idealistic terms, particularly the missionary circles. During the course of time, the argument has been about this entire world, social, historical and national features of the Old Testament were sort of overthrown and a new way paved for a religion that is intended for all nations. The new form of a religion that was universal, that did not clearly surface in the Old Testament, reached perfection in the teachings and actions of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus were purely about God's reign, and explicitly about something higher than the Old Testament and had not to be confined only to the people of Israel. He is made known to us, particularly

the Gospel according to Matthew, as the One who will fulfill the promise made to the ancestors of faith. It was not clear though to His first disciples that the Gentile nations would soon be openly invited to have faith in God, and the kingdom of God would be opened for all nations, and Jesus Christ as the gateway to God's kingdom (Bosch 1991:20-26).

5.3 Mission of the Trinitarian God in the New Testament

In the previous chapter, we mentioned that Israel as a people did not understand the concept of a universal religion that God intended to initiate through them. However, that latently universal religious tendency in the Old Testament came to its perfection in the teachings of Jesus Christ. It is through the ministry of Jesus that the Supreme God who was perceived as only for the people of Israel was no longer confined to them but to all nations. It is for that reason that the ministry of Jesus Christ during the 1st century was almost exclusive from the framework of Jewish faith and religious life. Perhaps it is imperative to mention that Jesus Christ is introduced to us in the gospel according to Matthew as the One who had to fulfill the promise that was made by Yahweh to the ancestors of faith. The climate of this chapter will be about Jesus as a gateway to the kingdom of God, in order for all nations to be recipients of God's love (Goheen 2000:116).

The term "missio Dei" (from Latin translated as God's mission/mission of God) is the most important concept when dealing with the subject of mission, and if we can disregard this term, any mission work becomes a very daunting exercise. It is imperative that we understand mission as a praxis where the Triune God imprints are inculcated. The moment we fail to inculcate to those we encounter, the love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we are not fit to participate in God's mission. The fundamental aspect of *missio Dei* is that it vigorously brings into fore the kingdom of the triune God. *Missio Dei* has explained as the kingdom of the Father that Jesus Christ alluded to during his ministry, the very mission of Jesus Christ (Son), as well as the witness of the Holy Spirit. It is imperative that we understand *missio Dei* as a concept that is validated by the Trinitarian God. The work of the Triune God must be the context from which we draw our understanding of the ministry of Jesus Christ. As Goheen (2000:115) rightly says, "the kingdom of the Father forms the context for the work of the Son." He continues and says, "Jesus Christ reveals and accomplishes the

kingdom.” He concludes the formulation of the Triune God by saying, “the Spirit witnesses to the presence of the kingdom in Jesus Christ.”

Furthermore, Wilhelm Anderson comments on Willigen (1955:47): “if we wish to sum up, with systematic precision, Willigen’s approach to a theology of the missionary enterprise, we must say that it is Trinitarian in character. In the Willigen statements, the triune God Himself is declared to be the sole source of every missionary enterprise.” This is the most important aspect of mission that emphasizes the redemptive work of the Triune God for the whole of creation. First and foremost mission will always be God’s mission, because mission was initiated by the Triune God, and those who participate in God’s mission need to depend on Him for guidance. When we understand mission as the redemptive work of the triune God, we get to know what mission is all about.

5.4 Understanding the Sayings of Jesus Christ

It is well-known that we have no direct access to the stories of Jesus Christ and his first-century followers, particularly the apostles of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the only access we have to the story of Jesus Christ as researchers or readers are the books of authors in the New Testament, specifically those who composed the first four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). Although there is historical criticism about the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus within these gospels, redaction criticism has alleviated us from being stagnant by attempting to figure out the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus, but rather to concentrate on the evangelists’ witnesses of Jesus ministry. Furthermore, we realise that it is impossible to separate the Jesus of history from the Christ of faith. Precisely, it is plausible to conclude that the sayings of Christ the Messiah in the gospels can, therefore, be the sayings about Jesus Christ (Goheen 2000:116-120).

5.5 The Incarnation of Jesus Christ

The most significant element for missions to be effective has to take the incarnation seriously, which means the Word has to take the form of the flesh in each and every context. This is the task for the contemporary theologians to proclaim the Lord who emptied Himself to the point of death, which is not distinct from the task of the New Testament authors. Nevertheless, we are also expected to listen attentively to the past, speak to our present era, and to our future. Although, our task is much more

difficult compared to that of Matthew, Mark, Luke, Paul and other disciples of Jesus. Since the first-century followers of Jesus Christ encountered predicaments that we have no absolute knowledge about, as much as they did not have any idea about the challenges that we are facing today. Furthermore, they employed concepts that their audiences cautiously understood but to us they are foreign, be it, language, cultural background or the way of living. Therefore, we have to interpret those concepts in our own context without discarding their very own context, and that is the task of a 21st-century theologian. To emphasize boldly the humility of Jesus Christ, having to empty Himself to the point of His death. The incarnation of Jesus Christ according to John 1:14 alleviated in Philippians 2:5-11 will be significant, and a cornerstone to the last chapter (Nissen 1999:33-35).

5.6 The Calling of the Disciples of Jesus Christ

When Jesus Christ had assembled some of his first disciples, he said unto them, “I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17), because of what he said the synoptic gospels concur that Jesus Christ gave them a missiological task for the future. Jesus Christ’ figurative language created an imperative connection that still continues to hold together the Christian mission. The task of the earliest disciples that followed Jesus Christ was for them “to become fishers of men”. Jesus Christ had to soon give His disciples’ a detailed commission. Meanwhile, Jesus had to journey and share with them the things that the Father was revealing to Him. Jesus Christ had to lead his disciples to the task that was soon be handed over to them. The manner in which Jesus Christ addresses his disciple was instructive. In the gospel according to Mark 1:15 states what Jesus said, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand,” He said this to announce God’s reign that He came to reveal to us (Skreslet 2006:01).

The phrase employed by Jesus Christ “fishers of men” was used when He was calling His disciples, Andrew and Simon Peter to be His followers to assume a missiological task. In Mark 1:16-18 and Matthew 4:19 it states that “As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ At once they left their nets and followed him”. Just as Simon Peter and Andrew had to use specific equipment as fishermen, they had to be equipped with something different in order to be fishers of men. In a nutshell, when fishing we need to know the type of a fish we are looking for, and to make a catch we need to know the kind of the bait

that will attract the fish. What is profound about the phrase employed by Jesus Christ is that it was familiar to Simon Peter and Andrew, although the task that was given to them was distinct (Goheen 2011:123).

Furthermore, we must know the depth of the water and the habitat that exist in the water we are fishing in. When we understand the dynamics of being a great fisherman, we can unpack what it means to be fishers of men. Jesus Christ called Simon Peter and Andrew to follow Him as they will soon learn of Him, understand the message and mission of Jesus Christ. It is only through the process of journeying with Jesus Christ and observing His ministry that they grasped the meaning of being fishers of men. They had to seek Jesus Christ' guidance and wisdom for their fishing expeditions. Although, we later see their failure to execute the task of being the fishers of men after the ascension of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate guide and strength for them to be fishers of men. It is imperative to bear in mind that there is no one who can be a fisher of men without the Trinitarian God. Jesus Christ came to save humanity from the bondage of sins, and for Him to call Simon Peter and Andrew to be fishers of men, we can postulate that fish and water represents humanity and sin respectively. It is a proven fact that a fish cannot live for a very long time without water so it was with humans to sin, they could not live without sin, and therefore, that was the reason there was constant animal sacrifice performed by priests. The original sin that dates back to Genesis 3 was still haunting the whole of humanity and Jesus Christ had to be the final sacrifice for the sin of the world. Nevertheless, Simon Peter and Andrew were soon to understand the message and mission of Jesus Christ (Goheen 2000:119).

5.6 Understanding the disciple-making in John

The disciple-making, as recorded in the synoptic gospel's perspective is different compared to that of John's gospel. In John's gospel, Jesus Christ called the disciples individually. Although on the other hand, we observe the self-initiated enrolment of some followers of Jesus Christ. There is at least one scenario where the Johannine' Christ called the disciple to Himself. This is recorded in the barest terms in the Gospel of John 1:43-44, where Philip encounters Jesus Christ. There is no indication in the story of Philip in this Gospel where he is given instructions to leave everything and follow Jesus, like that found in the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus Christ' first disciple was given a command to abandon everything and follow Him. The Samaritan woman

when it had finally dawned on her that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, she went back to her people and shared the news. John 4:39 states, “many Samaritans from that city believed in [Jesus] because of the woman’s testimony”. We may observe a similar reaction to the call of Philip. Philip who possessed much great testimony about Jesus Christ to compare to that of the Samaritan woman, was questioned by Nathanael if it was possible for “anything good to come out of Nazareth?” Perhaps, if we examine these both early witnesses of Jesus Christ, we may realise that the way they convey their witness about Jesus is by focusing on what Jesus said to them. It is imperative for us as the believers in Christ, to understand and know that Jesus said we should love one another just as He loved His early disciples. Furthermore, there is no one who can become Jesus Christ’ disciple unless he/she understands that Jesus was perfect in humility, therefore if they wish to participate in the kingdom of God, humility is the crucial prerequisite (Skreslet 2006:88-92).

5.7 The Mission Praxis of Jesus Christ

What is the mission praxis of Jesus Christ? Perhaps, this is the imperative question that a person should ask before engaging in ministry. There are things that one need to consider futile in order to succeed in participating in God’s mission. In the Gospel according to Matthew 4:1-11 indicates to the readers that before Jesus Christ began His ministry refused to do three messianic mission as He was tempted: (1) “feeding the hungry”; (2) “being spectacular” and (3) “pursuing political power”. Jesus Christ had to do the will of the Father not that of the religious community. Jesus Christ’s mission was to fulfill the mission of His Father who sent Him for the redemption of this world. Dunn (1977:192-194) states that:

what came out are certain parameters for mission, his and ours. We know that Jesus turned water into wine and that he fed thousands of people with five loaves and two fish. Yet in the wilderness, he refused to turn stone into bread as a characteristic of his mission. We also know that Jesus once walked on water. But he would not jump to safety from a high place in order to offer a spectacular demonstration of his mission. In order to draw the world to himself, Jesus did bow his head. But only on the cross, not in front of the offerings of power and wealth. Today we may not find it easy to contextualise these parameters. But that there are parameters for mission is something the churches must recognize.

It is imperative that Christians should understand the required parameters for mission. What is it that God expects from us as Christians? We have to understand that as Christians we should do mission in Christ's way, therefore, if anyone does mission out of personal ambitions it is inevitable for such mission to fail. It is for this reason that we have the phrase "missio Dei" as a reminder that mission does not exist without the Sender (God) (Wright 2010:23-24).

Aagaard (1991: 45) rightly says, "Churches are free to choose the ways they consider best to announce the Gospel to different people in different circumstances. But these options are never neutral. Every methodology illustrates or betrays the Gospel we announce. In all communications of the Gospel, power must be subordinate to love". Perhaps these words strongly critique what we know as 'colonial missions' which employed Matthew 28:18-20 as its motto for doing mission, and still after the post-colonial era the same text is used. The colonial mission has been embedded as an integral part of doing God's mission, no matter how good the qualities of commitment and compassion each missionary may embrace. They become too focused in treating people as if they are objects in need of conversion and fail to treat each and every person as created in the very image of God. It is imperative, then, as Christians to consider that we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord, and to bear in mind that without Christ we are nothing. In realising that without Christ we are nothing we, therefore, begin to imitate the life of Christ, His humility and be Christ-like. Furthermore, we must always understand that Matthew 28:18-20 is a commission given to those who were witnesses of Jesus Christ, taught by Him and basically understood Jesus Christ's parameters of mission. Koyama (1980:157-170) rightly says, He "believes (Matthew 28:18-20) it calls for 'Christ-like-going'." He reminds us to take note that it says "not to just 'go' but 'go, therefore', that is to say, go on the basis of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, his love, his self-denial, his hope, his death, his resurrection. Only so are we to make disciples of all nations".

5.8 The Theology of the Cross

It is fundamental that we understand the theology of the cross as a place where Christ had to suffer because He had to execute the mission He was sent to do. Perhaps, if all Christians understood the anguish that Jesus Christ had to endure on the cross, we will make Christ a center in God's given mission. On the cross, we find true God who is the crucified Jesus Christ is revealed to us. It is a place where we see Christ

not seeking vengeance against those who nailed Him on the cross, but rather forgiving them for their transgressions. As Luther in the work of Thomsen (2004:17), profoundly states, “as Jesus lived in weakness and was subjected to suffering, the Christian should expect the same in life; and suffering is God’s way of driving humans to the foot of the cross; Jesus Christ who lives in persons through faith creates good works within and through them”. When the Son of God hung on the cross, in what seemed to be the weakness of Jesus Christ is where the saving power of God is revealed. It is from the theology of the cross where we should volitionally cling to our Christ-like praxis. The theology of the cross should be able to address the social ills of the 21st century. When Saul was persecuting the believers in Christ, we find him being asked by the Lord “why are you persecuting me?” Saul’s journey to Damascus underpins that in our suffering we are not alone for He suffers with us. In a nutshell, the theology of the cross will never be outdated because it deals with the suffering in each and every context.

5.9 The mission of the disciples: Jesus Christ as a prototype for doing God’s mission.

The first four Gospels in the New Testament are clear indicators of who really Jesus was, even though they are not sometimes explicit about the life of Jesus. Nevertheless, they are quite informative about the crucial missional parameters of Jesus Christ. For instance, the Gospel according to John underpins the centrality of Jesus as a prerequisite for every Christian to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is the reason the researcher concurs with Skreslet (2006:96) when he says, “Jesus Christ is the vine and His disciples the branches; he is the single shepherd to all his sheep, even those not of the original fold”. The disciples are not left alone to do mission on their own accord even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but there is continual guidance through the Paraclete. That is the reason there is a consistently divine initiative in the mission throughout the Gospels, which is more explicit in John’s Gospel, the disciples are addressed as purely autonomous witnesses of Jesus Christ and doers of what Jesus instructed them to do. Jesus Christ said in John 15:16, “you did not choose me, but I chose you.” He said this referring to His disciples and to those who were invited by others. Jesus also said in John 6:65, “no one can come to [Jesus] unless it is granted to him by the Father.” During the time that Jesus Christ spent with His disciples, it is not recorded whether the disciples imitated Jesus’s model of

disciple-making by means of command. We can rightly say that the disciples of Jesus Christ did not convert anyone to believe in Jesus as the Messiah in His lifetime. It is explicit that the disciples of Jesus Christ were soon to emulate all that Jesus did and taught them as Luke refers to Act 1:1.

The most disregarded crucial authenticator of mission is the Holy Spirit. The concept *Missio Dei* has really embodied the whole notion of what mission is all about, and if one fails to understand this concept holistically one will not be able to do the work of God. Goheen (2011:122) strongly believes that “Mission is a work of God: Jesus working by the Spirit.” Starting from the first disciples of Jesus to the modern day Christian we are called and chosen to prolong the ministry that Jesus initiated. It is important that we do not forget that Jesus had to be baptized and the “Spirit of God descended down on him” (Matthew 3:16c). Shortly after his baptism Jesus was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” as recorded in Matthew 4:1. Nevertheless, although the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness is significant, what is imperative is that Jesus Christ totally depended on the Spirit of God. The coming of the Spirit of God precedes the inaugural speech that connects the mission to the Spirit of God, which is affirmed in the scripture (Luke 4:16-21 and Act 2:14-39). Among other intentions for Luke to write the Act of the Apostles was to indicate how people/apostles continued the mission of Jesus Christ.

5.10 The Mission of the Disciples

The mission of the disciples or apostles was to emulate the ministry of Jesus Christ. The apostles of Jesus Christ understood that they cannot participate in God’s mission without the guidance of Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God. They knew that whatever they were doing was for the glory of the Lord. The apostles emptied themselves in such a way that they only preached out of love for Jesus Christ. Their mission was to obey the Spirit of God and do what Jesus commanded them to do. This is the reason why Paul of Tarsus said in the book of Romans 15:17-24,

“Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. It has

always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written, "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to visit you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to see you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there after I have enjoyed your company for a while".

Paul in this piece of his letter to the Romans conveys clear remarks that it is through Christ that he was doing mission. In fact, Paul strongly adhered to do what Christ was instructing him to do through the Spirit of God. As Kgatle (2018) suggests that "to announce a gospel that is not proclaiming and demanding this 'highest justice' and that ignores or postpones the highest priority of love in God's action is a serious departure from the 'Great Commission,' which sends us back to 'everything Jesus commanded'." We cannot be able to be true Christians unless we are able to understand the parameters of Jesus's mission. It is imperative for us to know that Jesus did the will of the Father not his own will, as John 12:49 states, "I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak." This is the type of mission that is handed over by Jesus Christ to his disciples in John 20:21: "peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you".

One of the greatest apostles of Jesus Christ was Paul of Tarsus as Allen (1956:3) attests to this as follows:

In little more than ten years, St Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire: Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia. Before AD 47 there were no churches in these provinces; in AD 57 St Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far west without anxiety lest the churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support.

Paul, the apostle was able to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in a period of more than ten years. Paul's intentions were to lead people to faith in Jesus Christ. The message of Paul confronted the Jews to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the promised

Messiah in the Hebrew Bible, the teacher who was hanged on the cross, and whose death will bring God's climatic salvation to humanity from sins that could not be accomplished either by Abraham or the Law of Moses. Paul was preaching Christ who was raised from the dead as a vindication of his entire mission. The message of Paul to the Gentiles meant they should denounce their tradition of worshipping deities and turn to the God of Israel, their rituals that were performed in the pagan temples had to be abandoned for them to serve the only Mighty God. Gentiles had to believe in Jesus Christ as the only true Son of God who died on the cross in order to rescue mankind from the anger of God, atoning for sinners. This meant that Gentiles had to live according to the Hebrew Bible and by the teachings of Jesus and those of the apostles, while in the business of believing in Jesus Christ they had to wait for His second coming (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 1:18 & 2:5).

5.11 Summary of Mission in the Bible

In the Bible, we have many texts that inform us about how one should engage in the mission of God. Jesus Christ's ministry had an indestructible connection with the Old Testament as we observe him in his first public mission speech in the synagogue of Nazareth. The ministry of Jesus Christ central aspect is connected with the Old Testament quotation that describes the mission of the Servant of the Lord:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. (Luke 4:18-19, quoting Isaiah 61:1-2)

The intention for Jesus Christ to quote the text from the Old Testament was to assert that He was sent by God to bring good news. When Jesus had spent time in Capernaum the citizens insisted that Jesus stay in town a little longer, but Jesus responded and said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43). Jesus Christ was mindful of what the Father had sent Him to accomplish. It is for that reason that Jesus Christ was constantly doing everything for His Father to be glorified.

We cannot participate in the mission of God unless we empty ourselves and understand God's perfect will for us. The scripture is the voice that should be obeyed by every Christians. For instance, in the Old Testament, God told Abraham to go from

his country to the land that he will show him (Genesis 12:1), and from that land Abraham had to declare God's glory to other nations, let all people know about God's great works. Abraham had to obey the will of God by means of going to a place that he knew nothing about. The story of Abraham is somehow not distinct from that of the disciples of Jesus Christ, who were told to follow Him in order to be transformed and to "fish for people" (Mark 1:17). Jesus Christ gathered around the twelve disciples and "began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits" (Mark 6:7). Jesus Christ refers to the disciples as the "light of the world... a city built on a hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14); Jesus said them to "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 set the climax that mission is all about making disciples. What we do as Christians and label it as the "Great Commission" has to be aligned with the teachings and the mission of Jesus Christ as entrusted to His disciples. Numerous literatures have been written concerning the Great Commission, and annually there are many new references that are produced on evangelisation. The Great Commission is all about preaching the good news, witnessing about the relationship with God, and through that relationship, we are able to touch and change the life of others. Although without being empowered by the Holy Spirit we cannot be participants of *Missio Dei*, because it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can be able to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. The person who ought to be a disciple of Christ must bear in mind that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, we are not sent to convert anyone but to proclaim the gospel. Perhaps, that was one of the major stumbling blocks for the failure of God's mission, because missionaries thought it was their burden to convert people to Christianity. It is only the Holy Spirit who can change the heart of a person to believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Redeemer of the world (Kgatle 2018:3).

In the book of Acts, it is written: "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The disciples when they were at Antioch, the place where they were called Christians for the first time, Paul was instructed by God to preach good news even to the Gentiles. The command given to Paul by God propelled a radical change in His understanding of the Jewish God, who was perceived as a God who had nothing to do with the Gentiles as His salvation was for Israel as a

people, that was the Jewish teachings, although God's plan was to be God of the Gentiles not only the Jewish God (Brueggemann 2001:96).

It is imperative that we understand that God's mission is not isolated from the economic and social issues. In the book of Acts, Luke underpins the connection between the teachings of the disciples or apostles and the church for the needy. Apostle's love for the restoration of social and economic conditions in the church was not relegated in their mission. This is the reason there was a rapid growth within the church as the community of Jesus-disciples deepened their quality of love and care for one another (Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-35). In fact, the meaning of being a church according to Acts 2:42-47 is a church that takes care of the needy and adheres to the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. It is clear in the book of Acts that the Apostles also had to bear the pain of the needy, as we read about Paul's crucial offering for the needy in the community of Jerusalem (Romans 15:25-33; Acts 11:27-29; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9). The disciples of Jesus Christ did their best to imitate what they had witnessed and heard while Jesus was with them (Acts 4:20). Therefore, in the current setting Christians are expected to imitate Jesus Christ and the Apostles of Christ.

5.12 Conclusion

To sum up the mentioned above, it is imperative for us to understand the parameters of Jesus Christ' ministry as a prerequisite of making disciples. To be a participant in God's mission we need to talk about the love of God and quit to judge those who are not Christians. The whole notion of being a disciple is about preaching Jesus Christ who was crucified and rose again on the third day. The humility and teachings of Jesus Christ during his ministry should be the yardstick to measure what we are doing in God's name. We are to preach solemnly the message of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we observe in 1 Corinthians 2:2, where Paul the pioneer of mission said his preaching focus is about "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." We have to constantly remind ourselves that as Jesus Christ depended on the authority of His Father to deal with the challenges of doing the Father's will, therefore, Jesus Christ expects his disciples to imitate his obedience to his Father's will. The disciples had to depend on the authority of Jesus and the power of the Spirit of God to enable them to fulfill the mission entrusted to them (Schnabel 2008:112).

The 21st century Christians must always endeavour to imitate Jesus Christ in every distinct context and bear in mind that disciple-making will never be accomplished through their own power but through the Holy Spirit. The church has to move beyond a typically Christian way of studying religion and theology, in order to advocate for a sympathetic outlook and approach with regard to other religions. It is from this standpoint that we have to empty ourselves of any prejudice and proclaim the gospel that is not corrupted by our philosophical disposition. In advocating for a more sympathetic outlook and approach with regard to other religions we need to uphold who we are in Christ and be grounded firmly in the Spirit of God (Schnabel 2008:112).

CHAPTER SIX

CONTEMPORARY CHURCH IN DIALOGUE AND OTHER RELIGIONS

6.1 Introduction

The world that is often changing demands the church to change its ways of doing mission. It is a necessity for the church to re-imagine how it can be engaged in the redemptive mission of God in the world. It propels the church structures to be transformed by means of uncompromised commitment as people of God to participate in His mission. The church has to be the light and the salt of the community; therefore, it has to imitate the kenotic life of Jesus Christ. This chapter will deal with the premise that the church has to be kenotic in its missiological approach, which must be able to validate the contention that *kenosis* becomes an essential factor to execute God's mission. It is also the contention that mission encounters, employing the *kenotic* principle, should never accommodate the idea that the basic tenets of the Christian faith and beliefs, as it relates to its core existence, be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.

6.2 Church and encounters with other faith traditions

The contemporary church finds itself in the midst of many religions that exist around it. The church has to find new ways of doing mission as dictated by its contextual make-up. The interreligious dialogue is one of many ways for the church to learn from other religions, and other religions to learn from the church. The church should pay attention to the following questions in their encounters with other religions: Can the church be able to be involved in an interreligious dialogue that acknowledges all religions as a way to salvation? Can the church be able to understand the possibility that other religions are as important and valid as Christianity ought to be, and are not in need of conversion? If the church is willing to have transformative encounters with other religions, the answer to the questions mentioned above should be astounding yes. Although, the church does not feel comfortable enough to say yes to such questions as much as the church would like to bridge the gap between the church and other religions. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the church should always maintain that Christ is the only way, truth and life, as recorded in John 14:6 which is fundamental beliefs of Christian faith. Although, that should not cause Christians to see themselves

as superior to other religions, because people of other religions are also created in the image of God. Christians must practice *Kenosis* in their encounters as Jesus Christ did not boast about His equality with God. Therefore, Christians should not boast about Christ as being the only way to God in our encounters with other religions, but rather show the love of Christ for humanity that was displayed in His death on the cross.

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the center of the church belief seems to become a stumbling block in the interreligious dialogue that seeks to possibly see all religions as able to be or are equally valid. This implies that seeing other religions as equally valid as that of Christianity calls for their founders and religious figures to be possibly recognized as revealers and saviours. But that can lead to the possibility for the church to perceive Jesus Christ as 'one among many' revealers and saviours in the world. This is one of the pressing matters confronting Christian theology, that is, creating a theology of world religions, to provide a kind of a Christian interpretation that aligns itself with the scripture and the unfolding history of tradition in human experience. The theology of world religions should be provided in light of what the scripture says about other religions, that is, the value and the nature of other religions. Although, this will necessitate theologians to learn about other religions, even if it means they must be acquaintance with someone from other religion. The *kenosis* must be at the center of the church's encounters with other religions. Although self-emptying may be deemed as foolish in a world that is highly self-assertive and individualistic to its core, the church must be kenotic in order to present the mind of Christ to the world of religions (Knitter 1985:18-20).

It is important that the church must acknowledge the theology of 'other religions' within the Christian doctrine that is informed by the gospel. It has to find the meaning and value of other religions and non-religious people in the gospel and the knowledge of theologians concerning the study of the theology of religions. Beyers (2017:1) rightly posits that:

Isolation is something of the past. A growing number of communities are linked to a widening network and exposed to influences far outside their traditional range. Homogeneous communities are becoming the exception and plural communities rule. Our world is changing into one huge plural society. This

plurality applies to all levels of existence, such as religious affiliation, race and culture, social and economic status and even world view.

This is the reason why the church or theologians will have to give an account about other religions, and also should give a new account about the meaning of being a church in the midst of different religions. It is not about being experts of other religions, but it is about learning from other religions and them learning from the church of Christ. Nonetheless, the church is faced with the “traditional self-understanding of Christianity as unique, exclusive, superior, definitive, normative, absolute” (Knitter 1999:18).

6.3 The Identity of the Church

After the story of salvation, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ the small community was commissioned by Jesus Christ in John 20:21, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” The small community or the ‘church’ as we know it today was commissioned by Jesus Christ to proclaim what God has done for the world through Jesus Christ. The church’s identity is found in its indispensability of mission and indispensability of diversity. The church must be willing to learn from other religions rather than imposing its ideologies on others, that is, the indispensability of diversity. The indispensability of mission should take place after the church has familiarized itself with the context of the community, cultural make-up, and from there can it proclaim Jesus Christ in humility. The church’s primary responsibility is to bear in mind that it exists because of what God has done. Therefore, the church’s secondary responsibility is to acknowledge and identify the context of the community where it does its mission work, for instance, the story of the tribe of Naga the so-called head-hunters in Northern India. The head-hunters had killed as part of their norm or culture and were merciless against their enemies as they killed them and took their heads as trophies. The more people an individual kills the more power they gained in their tribe. They were tattooed on the face as a form of graduation after chopping someone’s head off. Nonetheless, after the arrival of an American missionary to the Naga tribe, it did not result in them accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. However, after they observed the lifestyle of the missionaries, they accepted Jesus Christ, and they gradually started to welcome Jesus Christ as their Lord, and subsequently turned from all that was wicked in their traditions preserving only the good. These kinds of stories should encourage the church to be the light of the world, and conduct itself in a manner that those who are without Christ will envy them. The church’s identity in its simplicity

is about upholding and being informed by the word of God while proclaiming Jesus Christ to others.

In the framework of the church, the mission is defined as the church of God in motion. The identity of the church is best defined by its mission of imitating Jesus Christ as the head of the church. In Paul's letter to the Philippians when describes the posture of which characterized Jesus Christ that the church is expected to imitate:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to grasp, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:5-8).

This biblical principle describes what it means to be the church of God in the midst of challenges in the world. The church must be present in the world as the triune God is present. Therefore, the presence of the church is to be felt through its redemptive and creative characteristics, as the agent of healing in the world. As Hanson (1989: 346) rightly states that, the church "is in the world for the world, and yet is not of the world, for it has become a part of the reality toward which the fallen world yearns, God's order of justice and peace." The kenotic love of the church for those who are downtrodden make it distinct in the world by virtue of being Christ-like. The church's distinctiveness is not in a sense of being privileged, but rather by its willingness to empty itself and be among those who are suffering, broken, unredeemed, and placing the needs of God's creation at the forefront in all its concerns. The church has to bear the consciousness of Christ as the agent of change and God's healing. Jesus posited that in the human acts of healing and reconciling there is always God's presence "in the midst of you" (Lk 17:21). Hanson (1989:346) continue to say that even in our context there is a greater need "where once again the pyrotechnics of cosmic signs yield to the mundane matters of feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and the imprisoned." This Matthew 25 passage of the "great Judgement" looks at God's will for the transformation of creation, it commands the church to be there not only for those they can gain something from but also for those that they can lose everything, even their very life. Paul the Apostle of Christ explicitly posited that the church's identity depends on how the church discerns

the presence of God in the world, especially by imitating the life of Christ. The church must have a clear understanding of the kenotic love of Christ and the responsibilities that come with such love.

6.4 Church and its responsibility to other faiths

One of the challenges that the church faces today is the gradual growth of other religions, and perhaps the reason why the church is in need of self-reflection on how it does mission. The church as we know it is not the building structures but individuals assembled together in unity is what we call the 'church of Christ'. Nonetheless, the church has a responsibility to make Christ known to the world, therefore, how can the church engage people of other religion? The church must be willing to bear in mind that studying other religions will not be enough for anyone to understand the meaning and the ethos of any particular religion without engaging with people from that specific religion, and who adhere to the teachings and practices of that religion. This is the reason the church has to be kenotic in nature because it could be very daunting to engage some of the people in other religions, especially the extremists and the conservatives. It is important that the church must always pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit because in our encounters we should be led by the Holy Spirit and the Bible. If the church has to take the mission of God seriously, it has to take the authority of the Scripture and the Holy Spirit as the utmost reverential requirements in order to participate in God's mission.

6.5 The Church and Conversion

Is it the church business to convert people of other faith and those who are non-religious? If the church continues to see itself as responsible for converting people, what will be the churches shortcomings? During the arrival of the missionaries in South Africa they saw South African religious practices as barbaric, and people who needed conversion. The colonists saw themselves as Israel or the chosen nation, and South Africa as the Promised Land Canaan, drawing this idea from the book of Deuteronomy 20, where Israel is instructed to go to war and lay siege of Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The church can be guilty of doing the same to other religions just as colonists did decades ago. The intention here is not to argue about the differences between the God of the Old and New Testament as some scholars see fit. Nevertheless, if the church ought to be the 'church of Christ' it has to

imitate Jesus Christ, and love not only its neighbours but even its enemies as well (Stott 1999:60-61).

Furthermore, the church's mission is not about converting people from their religion, custom, and culture, but to influence and transform peoples' hearts. It is imperative that Christians should be kenotic in their encounters, and see non-Christians as persons who are created in the image of God, not as an atheist, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc. That is the reason why earlier it was posited that Christians are not responsible for converting others. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict and convert people. When the church is compelling people to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour that can be ruled as a mere proselytism. When Das (1998:105) dealt with this subject he correctly said, "Conversion experience is quite subjective based on some apprehension of objective truth. Therefore, by its very nature, conversion cannot be through force, fear or fraud. The Bible testifies to voluntary and volitional conversion." In the Great Commission Jesus Christ never mentioned that in the process of making disciples, it has to be through compulsion and force. Jesus Christ only said to His disciples, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:18-20, ESV). The Great Commission is a command that should be literally obeyed and practiced by every Christian. Nonetheless, all people are in need of conversion, the change of one's life from wickedness to righteousness, unnatural to natural and carnal to spiritual. There is no one who should involuntarily follow Jesus Christ. The Bible is referred to as the good news to those who are recipients; therefore, if the Gospel is not good news to some people, Christians should not persecute them for being devoted to other religions or non-religious at all. Although some of the non-Christian systems are persecuting those who refuse to follow their religion. To compel anyone to follow Jesus Christ is equivalent to being intolerant. It is a personal choice and freedom for one to make their allegiance to the Lord. John Stott (1999:61) shares the same light when he said, "in evangelism we should neither try to force people to believe the gospel, nor remain silent as if we were indifferent to their response, nor rely exclusively on the dogmatic proclamation of biblical texts (vital as authoritative biblical exposition is), but rather, like the apostles, we should reason with people from both nature and Scripture,

commending God's gospel to them by rational arguments." The mission of the church is to bring Jesus Christ to the people not to save them because it is only Jesus Christ who does the saving part (Stott 1999:61).

6.6 Christian Faith to Faith encounters

Christians must always be willing to have dialogues with people of other religions, and if need be, they should defend their faith. Nassen (2001:117-118) correctly posits that "Jesus as a good moral teacher is not what we need to reflect as a priori gospel. It is not the ethics he taught, but the justification, regeneration, and sanctification that He wrought on the Cross as the crucified Saviour. This forms the central message of our Christian mission." It is Jesus Christ who must meet the people's need for salvation, not Christians; therefore, Christian mission should reflect the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was always willing to talk to the religious leaders during His time on earth, although He was aware that most of the time they were trying to find something that could incriminate Him. In 1 Peter 3:15 the Apostle instructs Christians to be equipped for defending their faith in Jesus Christ. Apostle Peter mentioned three fundamental notions in the text. (1) He teaches the readers and hearers to "imitate Christ as they live" (my alterations). This implies that everyone must be committed to Jesus Christ as part of being a Christian (the follower of Christ). (2) They must "always be ready to make a defense" about their faith in Jesus Christ. This is a command to be obeyed by every Christian, to be ready to give the reason for having faith in Jesus Christ to anyone who seeks for the reasons. (3) The Apostle Peter gives another instruction that undergirds the first two notions, that is when they make their defense they have "to do it with gentleness and reverence." He strongly believes that in our encounters there must be a proper attitude, self-emptying which must lead to creating a space for others as the defense is to be conveyed. The Christian faith defense is not made through aggressiveness or intellectual pride; however, it must be done out of humility, holy fear of God, and with a good conscience. Christians in their encounters must be meek and respect those they encounter, as they should bear in mind that everyone is created in the image of God and ought to be respected regardless of their religion. This remarkable text from Peter the Apostle of Christ should be applied in inter-religious dialogues as well as in Christian mission.

6.7 The Church in Dialogue

According to Knitter (1986:34-36), dialogue should be understood as a global responsibility. He strongly believes that the Christian mission and dialogue should be done in a liberating approach. The literature approach is a global responsibility that focuses on promoting peoples well-being as its primary context. To Knitter, a globally responsible and soteriocentric approach sustains the necessity and the worth of the church, and the Trinitarian God, as it ought to be concerned with the ecological and the well-being of humanity as it is criteria of doing theology and inter-religious dialogue. The inter-religious dialogue to some is a way of finding the commonalities between different religions. Nonetheless, the most imperative aspect about inter-religious dialogue is to build up better communities as they strive for unity, justice, integrity, and peace in God's creation. This is the true essence of inter-religious dialogue, which is about striving for the betterment of God's creation and promoting unity in the midst of diverse religions. Hence, Smith (1988:308) posits that dialogue and mission lead us to "stand under the imperative, that is, to understand each other, to help each other, to contribute to our common life, and together to aim at co-operative and divinely acceptable world." The church should always be willing to be in dialogue with other religions as it can create mutual enrichment, and promote mutual understanding and knowledge. The church should participate in inter-religious dialogue with the purpose of learning from other religions, and with the right spirit of harmony, complementarily, and mutual interaction.

Inter-religious dialogue is about listening to people of other religion and learn their system of beliefs, practices, fears, values, hopes, shortcomings, dissatisfactions, and joys. However, the mission of the church is about witnessing about Jesus Christ, as the church that is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20 ESV). Dialogue is not about conversion, but rather aims at educating, not converting. The genuine dialogue is about learning from those we encounter, to learn from their proclamation and life experiences. The dialogue that is one-sided is not a genuine dialogue, but one religion imposing its values and beliefs over other religions. It is a religion that seeks to render itself superior over others. The church must not fall into the same trap but must bear in mind that the church in dialogue is capable of finding out things that are true and good in other religions. Nessian (2001:117) posits, "one may engage with genuine

sincerity in interfaith dialogue, ready to listen, learn, and be changed by the truth one encounters in the witness of those from other religions. At the same time, one may remain deeply convicted that the mission of the triune God in the sending of Jesus Christ is ultimately true for all people.” The primary and most important Christian message should be about the living Christ; therefore all doctrinal interpretations are absolutely secondary, especially to those who are engaged in interfaith dialogue.

6.8 The Function and Mission of the Church

As mentioned above the church’s mission is no longer only about imparting, converting, proclaiming, teaching, but it’s also about self-emptying and creating a space for others, listening, being enriched, accepting, and understanding other religions. The church has no mission of its own since the word ‘mission’ is defined as essentially about the act of God, to which the church is expected to be participants. The mission of the church is God centered as it seeks to respond to God’s act of reconciliation between Him and humanity as well as humanity themselves to be reconciled. The mission of the church has to be Apostolic in nature, finding its meaning in the premise that God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and the Holy Scripture testifies about the act of God. The church has to continue to be the light and the salt of the world, as God has spoken and continues to speak, therefore, the church exists with the mandate to speak against injustice, social-ills and be the voice of the voiceless. According to Barth (1956a:801-802) the proclamation of the church:

Is the Word of God means that God speaks as much for Himself in church proclamation as He has spoken, speaks and will speak for Himself in Jesus Christ and in the prophets and apostles as a witness to Jesus Christ? Therefore the formal task of dogmatics in regard to church proclamation consists in confronting it with its own law in all its transcendence, in reminding it that it is the Word of God because Jesus Christ and He alone speaks in the prophetic and apostolic witness.

This point implies that the church should always listen to the self-revealed God and those it encounters, and cease to rely on its own tradition, strength, and doctrine but should rely on revelation. The church’s mission is about striving for hearing the Word of God afresh as it speaks to a different context. This impedes the tradition of the church from being the basis in which the church does its mission work, but rather rely

on the self-revelation of God which will help to avoid the church's mission from being reduced to mere speculation. The church has to respond to the self-revelation of God because the church that hears the Word of God and remains passive ceases to exist as the Church (Barth 1956a:845).

6.9 Liberating Church

The church exists in the world to give life through the Holy Spirit and reveals who God is in the midst of multifacetedness. In the liberating power of Jesus Christ, the church has to understand its mission. The mission of the church has to be liberated by means of bringing transformation in society. The polarization of mission has led to a tendency that has subjected mission to mean either famine relief, digging wells, medical work, running schools, feeding the homeless, and in evangelical terms mission is about training people for discipleship, equipping leaders and spiritual development. Nonetheless, as Greenwood (2002:21) rightly says, "holding together the gospel to the complete person and the whole world is a challenge for mission priorities in a fragmented world." Furthermore, Brierley in Forrester's (2000:63) work, the sociologist of religion when dealing with Christians and the need to be cautious when participating in God's mission, He rightly states that:

social analysis, however, does not and cannot ask or answer theological questions. Christians must ask theological questions: at their simplest, what is God saying and doing, what words of judgment and hope there are for us in a present crisis. Otherwise, we easily get locked into some kind of deterministic bondage to statistic trends or psychological processes, with little place for grace, newness, forgiveness, or freedom.

The imperative of being a Christian is to show love to those they encounter. In fact, before Christians pursue to learn about other religions or those they encounter, kenotic love for them should precede every encounter as the Lord commands his followers to love even their enemies (Luke 6:27-36). The liberating church sees each and every person as a carrier of the imago Dei and deserves respect no matter how much they may differ from Christian beliefs. The liberating church understands that it is affected by the world as much as it may affect the world. This is why the liberating church relates to and pursues to transform the world as it learns from it.

6.10 Conclusion

As Knitter (1996:4) argued that when studying other religions, it does not matter how much of religious materials we read, it is extremely hard to understand their meaning as well as ethos without engaging with those from another religion, who practice the teaching of that particular religion. Therefore, the church has to be engaged in the interreligious dialogue in order to learn from other religions and if need be, the church will have to rethink its way of doing mission. The church must be always willing to learn from other religions before other religions learn from the church. It calls for the contemporary church to empty itself of any prejudice concerning other religions and be filled with compassion, love, and meekness in its encounters. It is imperative that the church should learn to be kenotic in its missiological approach, and be always ready to give defense pertaining to their faith in Christ. The church that participates in God's mission has to imitate Jesus Christ faithfully as parameters of being an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ. As Shenk (2000:230) correctly argues that, "the *missio Dei* as the source; Jesus Christ who embodies fully God's intention in mission; the Holy Spirit who is the source of power; the church as God's instrument in mission; and human culture as the medium through which all communication of the gospel must be made."

6.10.1. Final concluding remarks

This dissertation set out to address encounterology in mission by adopting a *kenotic* approach. The emphasis on *kenosis* was based on the understanding of the incarnated Christ whose 'self-emptying' was deeply embedded in love and humility, because Jesus knew what is required when encountering humanity. It was the intention of this dissertation that the contemporary church, positioned in a global metamodern village, should adopt the example of Jesus Christ in embracing *kenosis* as a missiological approach in encountering non-Christian communities in all walks of life.

Throughout the history of mission, the focus has been about the 'how' of doing mission. In this dissertation, we observed that Christian missions should not demean Jesus Christ, but should seek for a compelling and fresh vision of Christ, incarnation and crucifixion, resurrection and Lordship, giving the church the Holy Spirit as well as coming again. In the Old Testament God exalted the humbled, He used Abraham, Moses, David, and Gideon among many others to fulfil God's mission. God is the rewarder of the humbled, they are exalted and honoured, but the prideful are brought

to desolation. The humility in the Hebrew Bible required 'people to submit to God who is sovereign and demands righteousness, which primarily consisted in humility before God and there is little talk of humility towards others.' Nonetheless, the NT incarnation provided a different view of humility through Jesus Christ, who did not only emphasise humility towards God but also towards humankind.

In the present age, we need to imitate the *kenosis* of Jesus Christ, His humility revealed through selfless love, suffering, humiliation and ultimately the redemption of humanity. Christ was regarded as the greatest teacher and a Holy One of Israel, but that did not hinder Him from engaging the sinners who were despised by the community, in order to reconcile them with God. The *kenosis* of Christ provides Christians with the essential understanding that the believer must have the mind of Christ, in order to be a true follower of Jesus. Pudhicherry (2016:646) states that:

The understanding of humility as a concrete manifestation of love has its roots in the Divine Kenosis. The understanding of the true nature of humility has been revealed to us only because of the Kenosis of Christ. The life of Christ from His Incarnation until his death on the Cross reveals to us the salvific value of poverty and humility as against the deception of riches, honour and pride. Though there were some indications of this inversion of values in the period preceding Christ, the truth regarding the redemptive and salvific value of humility in all its fullness has been revealed in the humility of Christ.

Kenosis of Christ provides us with the proper attitude in our encounters with non-Christians. We do not engage other people with intellectual pride but with humility, respect, and perceive them as created in the image of God like us. The love of God can only be experienced and known by people who are meek and humble. This point is best explained in Matthew 11:25 where Jesus gives thanks to the Father for revealing the truth not to 'the wise and intelligent, but rather to the infants'. He put in front of the disciples the example of children, the publican, the poor widow and other several people in the margins of the society. An attitude of humility does not come easily because of the need of the human person to affirm oneself over and above others. The humility of God in the Divine Kenosis was despised by the Greeks as a folly and the cause of shame for the Jews. The *kenosis* of Jesus Christ demands that one must die to self in order to truly imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, and a kenotic person

cannot occupy an individualistic mind. Humility of Jesus Christ becomes an extension of the love of God, as revealed in Christ's life through submission to God. In this point Kgatle (2012:93) states that,

It took humility for Jesus too accept this type of a punishment, 'death on the cross'. It was not humility alone, but submission as well. He was able to submit to the heavenly mandate of sending Him to 'save the world'. By accepting the death on the cross meant that He was incurring curses upon his life 'cursed is every one that hangs on the tree' (Galatians 3:13). It meant that He became a foreigner, weak, poor and sinful on the cross. But He did it all for humanity because He did not owe anyone. Thus death becomes the highest point of His humility without which the world would have remained the same.

Jesus Christ had love not only for the disciples but even for the Samaritans who were Jews worse enemies, Jesus encountered with other people out of kenotic love. Therefore, Christians must be willing to love first before they encounter people of other faiths. Jesus Christ is the message that we carry into the world, His humility, love and meekness. Bearing in mind that Christ's humility should lead us to consider others as more important than ourselves.

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