

**HUGO DU PLESSIS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE
REFORMED CHURCHES' STRUGGLE FOR A RELEVANT
MISSION AND MISSIOLOGY**

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SUMMARY

It was the aim of this research to investigate Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the GKSA' struggle for a relevant mission and missiology. It became apparent in the course of the research that Du Plessis contributed in a meaningful way towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology. In the Dopper churches, Hugo had a great reputation, which is fully justified. He was the first Dopper missionary who stayed in a mission field for a considerable period and who, as a result, could show a church that endured after years. Many people admired him as "our missionary, the expert on mission and on the language and cultural anthropology of the black peoples".

Mission-minded Doppers were not critical of him at all. On the other hand, in those years mission and intensive contact with black people on a spiritual level were still relative novelties to the average Dopper mind. There were those who did not trust any missionary, because they suspected him of undermining "their Apartheid policy". Between these two extremes, there was a majority who were neither enthusiastic nor hostile towards mission. This picture only changed radically when Dr Jan Schutte succeeded in bringing Prof J H Bavinck to Potchefstroom for a year.

Knowing how much suspicion he might create, Hugo was very careful not to offend the Afrikaners. One should understand this attitude, since suspicion against him of being a "liberalist" might slow down the flow of funds for mission and eventually force him to leave the mission field. At that time the very fact that one was a missionary was sufficient to mark one as "eccentric" in some circles. So if one finds traces of racism and support of "Apartheid" in the life and works of du Plessis, one should keep in mind that he was a child of his times, even though he was ahead of most of his compatriots in his views. The very fact that he and his wife were willing to endure the hardships of a mission field at that time speaks of his dedication. However, it seems he was a far greater success as a theologian than as a missionary.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om Hugo du Plessis se bydrae tot GKSA se soeke na 'n relevante sending en missiologie te ondersoek. Dit het gedurende die studie ooglopend geword dat Du Plessis op 'n betekenisvolle wyse bygedrae het tot 'n Gereformeerde paradigma vir 'n relevante sending en missiologie. In die Gereformeerde Kerke het Hugo 'n goeie reputasie gehad, wat ten volle geregverdig is. Hy was die eerste Gereformeerde sendeling wat vir 'n geruime tyd in die sendingveld gebly het en wat as 'n gevolg 'n kerk kon toon wat na jare voortbestaan. Baie mense het hom bewonder as "ons sendeling, die kenner op die gebied van sending en die taal en antropologie van die swart mense".

Sending georiënteerde Doppers was glad nie krities teenoor hom nie. Aan die ander kant was sending en intensiewe kontak met swart mense op 'n geestelike vlak nog relatiewe nuwigheide vir gemiddelde Gereformeerde intellek van daardie tyd. Daar was diegene wat geen sendeling vertrou het nie omdat hulle hom daarvan verdink het dat hy die Apartheidsbeleid ondermyn. Tussen hierdie twee uiterstes was daar die meerderheid wat nie entosiasies of koud teenoor sending gestaan het nie. Hierdie prentjie het eers radikaal verander toe Dr. Jan Schutte daarin geslaag het om Prof. J.H. Bavinck na Potchefstroom te bring vir 'n jaar.

Wetende hoeveel agterdog hy mag verwerk, was Hugo baie versigtig om nie die Afrikaners in die gesig te vat nie. Hierdie houding is verstaanbaar, aangesien agterdog dat hy 'n liberalis is sy fondse sou belemmer en hom uiteindelik sou dwing om die sendingveld te verlaat. Gedurende daardie tyd was net die feit dat 'n persoon 'n sendeling was, genoeg om hom as effens eksentriek geklassifiseer te laat. As daar dus spore van rasisme en ondersteuning van Apartheid in die lewe en werk van Du Plessis is, moet mens in gedagte hou dat hy 'n kind van sy tyd was, selfs al was hy voor sy tydgenote in sy sienswyse. Die blote feit dat hy en sy vrou bereid was om die swaarkry van die sendingveld te verduur, spreek van sy toewyding. Dit wil egter lyk asof hy die grootste sukses was as teoloog, eerder as sendeling.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 TITLE

HUGO DU PLESSIS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFORMED CHURCHES' STRUGGLE FOR A RELEVANT MISSION AND MISSIOLOGY

[Keywords: Hugo Du Plessis; Mission; Missionary; Missiology; Missiologist; Contribution; Struggle; Reformed Churches; Relevant]

1.2 FORMULATING THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Background

Hugo Du Plessis was born and raised in an Afrikaans speaking family. Like many other Reformed theologians in South Africa, he received his training at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom. Here he felt the call to the mission field. After completing his theological studies, he received a call to be a missionary to the Venda speaking people at Siloam in Soutpansberg (see De Klerk, 1953:16). After his long experience as a missionary, he became the first missionary to train black theologians (see Du Plessis, 1959a:127; cf Du Plessis, 1958:11). Later, he became the first theologian to teach Missiology at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom (see Du Plessis, 1960a:29).

As a man used by God, many within the Reformed circles regard Du Plessis as a pioneer in a fourfold sense:

- Laying the foundations of missionary work in Venda from 1928 onwards,
- The mission work in Johannesburg from 1950 onwards,
- Influencing and structuring the training of ministers for the young churches in Dube, Soweto from 1959, and
- Lastly, as the first professor in Missiology at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom, he determined and gave direction to a Reformed approach to the Missiological task from 1959 onwards (cf Van der Merwe, 1976:7).

1.2.2 Problem statement

It is noteworthy that Du Plessis was a pioneer in the Reformed Church¹'s efforts with regard to a time when "race relations", "people's idea", "Apartheid" as it was known after its introduction in 1948, "culture", "autonomy" and "traditional belief" were hotly debated concepts in the life of the Church and the South African socio-political context (Du Plessis, 1939:10; 1961a:1; 1964:3; and Spoelstra, 1999:110 & 115).

From the day of its inception in Rustenburg in 1859, the GKSA has always been conscious of its missionary calling to the world. The founders of the GKSA felt that it is the calling of this newly formed church not only to remain true to the principles of reformation of the 16th century as led by John Calvin², but also to engage in the missionary calling. They came to terms with the fact that the obligations of mission are the same wherever the community is established – "Being God's missionary people". The issue on mission was brought to their attention in the General Meeting of Transvaal in 1863, Synod meetings of 1869, 1873, 1879, 1882, 1894 and many more. In 1913 the first policy for mission, which was revised in 1924 and 1953 respectively, was drafted. It is important at this stage to note that the intentions were good, but they lacked the practical wisdom to bring that into practice. Instead, they focused mainly on the internal problems and the struggle to survive against British imperialism (Du Plessis, 1959a:121).

The GKSA struggled to come to a real understanding of 'mission' and the way in which the church should engage itself in such an activity. They adhered to a traditional understanding of mission, in which mission was defined as something to be done among blacks, with evangelism as something to be done among the whites who were no longer interested in the church. In their struggle, the GKSA wrestled with the following questions: What is mission? Who should do mission? Where should mission be done? Why should mission be done? How should mission be done? And

1 Commonly known as "Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika." Its abbreviation, "GKSA" will be used from time to time.

2 In their letter to the government, immediately after their formation, they indicated that their act to establish the GKSA was a matter of returning to the original Reformed Confession regarding doctrine, office and discipline according to the decisions of the National Synod of Dordrecht of 1618 to 1619 (Jooste, 1958:67).

when should the church engage in mission. The GKSA' struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology was necessitated by three factors:

The first factor was the growing understanding of mission as focusing on the church. The GKSA, from the onset, maintained that it is the calling of a local church to engage in mission work. The fact that a local church has been entrusted by God with the authority to do mission had been emphasised over and against the mission work done by para-church missionary societies and church missionary societies (De Klerk, 1924:136). The GKSA, however, failed to come up with a desired paradigm for church mission. They struggled to bring the entire membership on board. A synodal approach to mission, which was termed by Spoelstra as the Mission Society approach, was taken after the Synod meeting of 1924. Mission was not done by the entire church, but by Synod's deputies for mission. The Mission Committee of the sending church via the missionary assisted them. Mission focused mainly on 'church planting', i.e. preaching, baptismal instruction, confession of faith and membership of the church. The cultural aspect of the indigenous people was not totally ignored, but was divorced from the church. The motive for church planting did not seek the conversion of the people of Africa within their socio-cultural life in terms of the Kingdom of God. Mission was a one-way traffic in which the missionary had all the say and the young Christians were just on the receiving end. Black believers had to accept the church structures of the GKSA, which were created at a synodical level.

The second factor had to do with the growing understanding in the International Christian Communities that mission should be understood from the Kingdom perspective. The church can never be viewed as an end in itself, it is only functional in its relation to the King of the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ. The Triune God is the missionary God who chose to use men to bring about and advance his kingdom. Consequently, the mission of the church can only be viewed in the light of the Kingdom of God (Honig Jr., 1973:10,14; cf. Padilla, 1985:186; Fuller, 1980:71). The question to be investigated is how far did the GKSA adapt to this change, and what was the contribution of Hugo du Plessis in this regard?

The third factor had to do with the developments and challenges of the post second world war period. The rebuilding of the socio-economic and political life in the

world brought about new challenges for the church. The church had to come up with a broader understanding of mission in order to address the problems posed by the Second World War. The legalisation of Apartheid in South Africa in 1948 became more visible in the hierarchical ordering of economic, political and social structures on the basis of race (Barber, 1999:121;122; cf. Baker, 1975:220; Lipton, 1994:27). The GKSA had to come up with a mission model and strategy that can be convergent, adaptable, and sensitive to the context of the post second world war realities in South Africa and the world at large. The GKSA's struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology was intensified by the developments in the religious arena. The concept *Missio Dei* gained momentum, the notion of church-centred mission was under attack, the missionary anthropology emerged, and the concept 'contextualization' in mission became a focal point in theological debate (Shenk, 1999:46).

The question to be answered by this research is: How did this context influence Du Plessis' understanding of mission, his missionary involvement in the black community, and also his involvement as a missiologist in training black ministers and as the first professor of mission at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom? What was his contribution to the shaping of the church's missionary involvement in the society from the Kingdom perspective?

The focus of this research, therefore, will be to make a thorough analysis of Hugo du Plessis as missionary and missiologist. Special attention will be paid to his contribution to the Reformed Churches in Venda and to the Reformed theology of mission, especially with regard to the direction it should take for the current and future missionary tasks, with an eye to the socio-political needs of the South African community (within the reach of the GKSA). The individual problems that will be researched are the following:

- 1) How should Du Plessis be understood as a man of the 20th century?
- 2) How did Du Plessis approach his tasks as a white missionary in the black community?
- 3) How did Du Plessis approach his tasks as a missiologist and as the first Afrikaner to train black theologians and introduce Missiology in the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom? What was his contribution to the

shaping of the Reformed theology of Mission in South Africa?

- 4) What contribution did Du Plessis make to the Reformed Churches in Venda in particular and the Reformed Churches in Southern Africa in general regarding their mission task and responsibility to society? In what way should his contribution be corrected, supplemented and superceded in the light of present and future demands placed upon the Churches?

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Aim

The main aim of this study is to make a thorough analysis and evaluation of Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed Church' struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology. The research will focus mainly on his missionary involvement among the Venda speaking people, his training of black ministers in Dube, and his work as a missiologist in the Theological School Potchefstroom.

1.3.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

- To study and outline Du Plessis as a man of the 20th century.
- To study and outline Du Plessis's work as missionary in Venda.
- To study and outline Du Plessis's work as a missiologist in Dube and Potchefstroom.
- To analyse and evaluate Du Plessis's role as missionary and missiologist and its positive and negative contributions to the current and future involvement of the church in missionary tasks that answer the needs of society.

1.4 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

Hugo du Plessis contributed immensely in the GKSA' struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology, but his contributions were not without negative aspects, they should

be corrected, supplemented and superseded in the light of present and future demands placed upon the Churches to respond to the socio-economic and political context of this world from the Kingdom perspective.

1.5 METHOD OF RESEARCH

This missiological study is done from within the Reformed tradition and the following methods will be used:

1.5.1 Literature Study

1.5.1.1 The study outlines the historical development of the GKSA's understanding and approach to mission within a specific context. The available primary and secondary literature will be consulted, analysed and interpreted.

1.5.1.2 The historical materials in the archive of the GKSA in Potchefstroom shall also be consulted, analysed and interpreted.

1.5.1.3 The exegesis and conceptional analysis will be done according to the grammatical-historical method (Kaizer and Silva, 1994:19).

1.5.2 Empirical Study

1.5.2.1 The available literature leaves much to be desired in the sense that it discusses most information from the white perspective. There is a lot of information that is generally not available in a written form. Personal interviews with relevant persons and with those who worked with Du Plessis will provide such information. A narrative methodology will be pursued.

1.5.2.2 Two questionnaires were designed to collect such information, and they will be referred to as Addendum 1 and 2. The first one was directed to Du Plessis' family and those close to him, and the second one to the existing 'helpers' and 'believers at Siloam', who worked with Du Plessis.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISIONS

1.6.1 Introduction

- 1.6.1.1 Title
- 1.6.1.2 Formulating the problem
- 1.6.1.3 Aim and objectives
- 1.6.1.4 Central theoretical argument
- 1.6.1.5 Method of research
- 1.6.1.6 Chapter divisions

1.6.2 Du Plessis as a man of the 20th century

- 1.6.2.1 Introduction
- 1.6.2.2 The man Hugo du Plessis: Forces and influences that shaped Hugo du Plessis
- 1.6.2.3 The 20th Century: The context of Du Plessis' Era
- 1.6.2.4 Summary
- 1.6.2.5 Evaluation
- 1.6.2.6 Conclusion

1.6.3 Du Plessis as a Missionary among the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam

- 1.6.3.1 Introduction
- 1.6.3.2 The Vhavenda people
- 1.6.3.3 Du Plessis as missionary in Siloam from 1928 to 1932
- 1.6.3.4 Du Plessis as missionary in Siloam from 1932 to 1950
- 1.6.3.5 Summary
- 1.6.3.6 Evaluation
- 1.6.3.7 Conclusion

1.6.4 Du Plessis as a theological educator and missiologist within the African context

- 1.6.4.1 Introduction
- 1.6.4.2 Hugo du Plessis as a theological educator in Dube
- 1.6.4.3 Hugo du Plessis as a Missiologist in Potchefstroom

1.6.4.4 Du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed churches' struggle for a relevant mission

1.6.4.5 Du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed churches' struggle for a relevant missiology

1.6.4.6 Summary

1.6.4.7 Evaluation

1.6.4.8 Conclusion

1.6.5 Findings and contributions

1.6.5.6 Introduction

1.6.5.7 Findings

1.6.5.8 Contributions

1.6.5.9 Conclusion

1.6.6 Bibliography

CHAPTER TWO

HUGO DU PLESSIS AS A MAN OF THE 20th CENTURY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The question to be answered by this chapter is: How should Hugo du Plessis be understood as a human being in the context of his time, i.e. the 20th century. The objective of this chapter is to study and outline Du Plessis as a human being in the context of his time. The forces and influences that shaped his life, character, worldview, religious affiliation and commitment will be investigated. This chapter forms the basis of how Du Plessis should be understood as a missionary and missiologist. His work as a missionary and missiologist was shaped in many ways by the context in which he lived. In order to reach the objective of this chapter, the following will be dealt with:

- The man Hugo du Plessis: Forces and influences that shaped Hugo du Plessis
- ❖ The 20th century context: The context of Du Plessis' era
- Conclusion

2.2 THE MAN HUGO DU PLESSIS: FORCES AND INFLUENCES THAT SHAPED HUGO DU PLESSIS

2.2.1 Introduction

In order to outline Du Plessis as a human being, his biography will be studied and outlined. The outline of his biography will focus mainly on his life as child, student, called man, family man and human being, and a man to be remembered. However, it is noteworthy that the world in which Du Plessis lived in, has passed. Through the eyes and recollection of his children, it can be made alive again. The information

below is the collective efforts of his existing children and their respective families, together with other available sources.

2.2.2 Parental home

Hugo du Plessis was born on March 22nd, 1902, in Burgersdorp in the Cape Colony. He is the son of Prof. J.A. du Plessis and Laurika Postma. His father was still training to be a minister of the Word at Burgersdorp when Hugo was born. He was baptised by his grandfather shortly after his birth. His grandfather, Rev. L.J. du Plessis, was a minister of the Reformed Church Petrusburg in the Orange Free State at the time. Hugo resided and grew up in Reddersburg during his years as a small child (Venter:1).

Hugo was born and raised in a middle class family with an affluent history. His father was a minister of the Word of the Reformed Churches in South Africa¹. His father became a professor at the Theological Seminary at Potchefstroom from 1920 to 1935. His mother was trained as a teacher², and she taught at the Middelburg district school³ (Venter:1).

Hugo was the grandchild of a well-known figure in the history of the 'Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika' (GKSA) and the Theological Seminary at Potchefstroom. This is very clear from the following remark: "Ses kleinseuns en drie agterkleinseuns van prof. Postma het predikante geword in die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika onder wie kleinseun, ds. H. du Plessis, dosent aan die Teologiese Skool vir nie-blankes in Johannesburg, en 'n kleinseun prof. S. du Toit, erkende Ou-Testamentikus in Suid-Afrika, professor is in Ou-Testamentiese wetenskap aan die Teologiese Skool van Gereformeerde Kerk te Potchefstroom" (Van der Vyver, 1958:458).

¹ Ds. J.A. du Plessis served as a minister of the Word in Reformed Churches Reddersburg and Pretoria.

² Hugo's mother received a certificate from the University of Cape Town, "Certificaat van Hoger Elementair Examen der Kaapsche Universiteit".

³ This school was situated on the farm known as Wolwekop, which was owned by mnr. H.J.J. Duvenage.

Hugo had three brothers named Wikus, Dirk and Koos. His brothers were all professionals. Wikus, whose initials are L.J., was a professor of Law at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Dirk a psychiatrist, and Koos a clerk in the government service. Du Plessis had two sisters named Mien and Louise.

Hugo also had half-brothers and half-sisters from his father's second marriage to Aletta Postma. Aletta was a sister to Laurika. She was married to J.A. du Plessis after the death of Laurika⁴ when Hugo was only two years old. His half-brothers are Maarten (Farmer), and Boet (Adv. P.J. Du Plessis – Executive Director of AVBOB). His half-sisters are Ida Bosman, Rika Heunes, Julia le Roux, and Sus Bredenkamp.

Hugo was raised by his step mother Aletta Postma⁵. Young as he was, the death of his mother deeply affected him. He usually went to play barefooted near the Reddersburg dam and at times he would be seen standing at the corner of the street like he is waiting the return of his mother⁶ (Venter:1).

Aletta, also referred to as Lettie, had a great impact on the life of Hugo du Plessis. She taught him Christian principles and also showed him the Christian way of living. At times he gave her the fright of her life when he joined the 'farmers' at their farms for a visit without her prior knowledge (Venter:2).

During the period that his father was a minister at the historical Paul Kruger Reformed Church in Pretoria incidents took place that highlight the fact that Hugo, like many other kids, was also very naughty at times. The following are three such incidents:

- ❖ One day, Hugo, together with other siblings, filled a bag with paraffin. They set the bag alight and it fell into the draining trench of the church. People were afraid that the church was going to burn down (Venter:2).

⁴ His mother Laurika du Plessis died of the 'kraambedkoors' after the birth of her last daughter, Laurika.

⁵ She got married to Hugo's father on April 20th, 1905, and became a housewife to take care of the five children. She had 8 children of her own, and she died on November 6th, 1957.

⁶ After her death a gradual loneliness developed in the child.

- ❖ At times when he and his brothers sat next to the organ in the church and his father was preaching, they often threw shells of peanuts into the bagpipe of the organ. “Dit was heerlik vermaak om na die gehoes en geproes van so ’n orrel te luister” (Venter:2).
- ❖ When Hugo came home from school in the afternoon, there was cooked meal. If he saw that his mother prepared pea soup, he would simply take the plate under the table and start to stick the peas to the underside of the table (Venter:2).

2.2.3 Du Plessis in primary and secondary school

As indicated above, Hugo lived in Reddersburg as a small child. He received his primary education here. He continued with his primary schooling in Pretoria after his family moved there. He received his secondary education in Pretoria in the school known as Oos Einde Secondary School (Venter:2).

Hugo completed his secondary schooling in 1919 and received his certificate from the Transvaal department of education. The certificate he received indicated that he passed the following subjects exceptionally well: Hollands A, Engels B, Rekenen, Geschiedenis, Latyn, Algebra, Meetkunde, Natuurwetenschappen.

It should be noted in this regard that Hugo du Plessis attended a school within the system of Christian National Education (C.N.E. / C.N.O.). This system of education came into existence in South Africa during the second half of the 19th century. It was a result of the Afrikaners’ struggle against the anglicising of Afrikaner children by the British and against the humanistic tendencies of the ‘British schools’. In the British schools English was the medium of instruction in all classes, with only strictly limited lessons per week where ‘Dutch’ was taught as a foreign language. Its beginnings received the almost unqualified approval, and indeed the admiration, of many Christians in the world (Currey, 1962:1; cf. Strauss, 1969:2).

It was a system of education founded to enhance the aspirations of the Afrikaners. It was aimed at the maintenance and furtherance of Afrikaans as a language and to protect and develop the Afrikaans culture and traditions (FED, 1949:1). It was based on the revelation of God in the Bible as expressed in the Articles of Faith of the three Afrikaans sister churches, i.e. Gereformeerde, Nederduits Gereformeerde, and Nederduitsch Hervormde kerke. In line with the Calvinistic tradition, Abraham Kuyper had a strong and direct influence in this an undertaking. Children were taught to serve God in the various spheres of human life because there is no square inch in the whole of the universe where Christ does not claim His (Van der Kooy, 1925:47; cf. Van Klinken, 1907:167; SATA, 1950:8).

2.2.4 Du Plessis' Theological Training

2.2.4.1 Du Plessis as a student

After the completion of his secondary schooling, Hugo studied through the universities of Potchefstroom and South Africa (Unisa). He received his junior degree (B.A.) in 1923. He completed his B.A. with Latin and Dutch as major courses.

After the completion of his B.A., Hugo could not enrol for the B.D., because he did not have Greek III as required by Unisa. Instead he enrolled for the Candidate in Theology at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom. He completed his first part of the Candidate examination in Theology with distinction in 1925. He then proceeded to the second part, which he completed with distinction⁷ in 1927.

Hugo completed his studies in 1927 in the same year as his friends Piet Jooste and Jacs van Rooy (Venter:6). The Particular Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Province of Transvaal examined him for ministry. The synod held its meeting on January 22nd, 1928, in Nylstroom. He was admitted and declared as a person suitable to be called and ordained in any of the Gereformeerde Churches in South Africa, with

⁷ Hugo also received distinctions for his missionary courses (see Venter:8).

the special tasks of preaching the Word of God, serving the Sacraments, etc. (see Venter:9; cf. Vorster, 2000:34).

Even after the admission and ordination into the ministry of the Reformed Churches, Du Plessis never ceased to be a student. He continued to be a scholar for the rest of his life. To elucidate the above-mentioned statement, the following can be highlighted:

- ❖ On April 19th, 1928, he received a Marriage Officer certificate from the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Union of South Africa. This certificate gave him permission to solemnise marriages as long as he remained a minister of the Word.
- ❖ He completed his studies in Bantu studies with the University of South Africa in 1934. He received his 'Lower Diploma in Bantu Studies' in March 1935.
- ❖ He received his M.A. degree (in Afrikanistiek) from the University of South Africa on April 16th, 1941.
- ❖ He published many articles and books.

The following are some of the events that shaped his life during his time as a student:

- ❖ Hugo's brother Wikus offered a class in Greek, which Hugo used to attend. In 1923, when they were translating a passage, Wikus asked Hugo not to come to class again because of his remark that "die gips wat hy vir hulle gewys het, is van só min belang, dat hy (Hugo) dit vir sy ma gaan wys" (Venter:6). Hugo responded by pointing out that he would never attend again.
- ❖ Hugo took a decision to become a missionary when he was still a student. He took this decision after he heard of the death of ds. P. Bos, who was working as missionary in the Transvaal. Hugo had several contacts with ds. Bos and the mission field in the Transvaal when he was still a student.
- ❖ He served in the A.C.B executive, as well as the executive of Corps Veritus Vincent – a student organisation (see Venter:10).

2.2.4.2 Du Plessis' Mentors

a) Prof. J.D. du Toit

Hugo du Plessis' mentor locally was prof. J.D. du Toit, better known as Totius. Totius served as a theological professor from 1911 to 1949, after which he retired. He served for 38 years. He was a hardworking person, who remained true to the Word of God and the advancement of the kingdom of God throughout his life. "Al die besoekers het reeds gehoor en gelees van die groot arbeid wat die digter op daardie plaas verrig het – vir jare aaneen het hy daar met toegespitste aandag gewerk aan die Afrikaanse Bybelvertaling en daarna aan 'n digterlike bewerking van Psalms in Afrikaans" (Nienaber, 1948:3). As a student, Hugo du Plessis received his theological training under the watchful eye of the capable professor (D'Assonville, 1977:60; D'Assonville, 1993:117).

b) Dr. A. Kuyper

Internationally, Hugo du Plessis' mentor was Abraham Kuyper, from the Netherlands. Kuyper, with his emphasis on teaching of the kingdom of God as leaving no square inch of life which Christ does not claim as His, succeeded in laying the foundations of the reformed principles from a Calvinistic perspective. Kuyper did this in the Netherlands and also in South Africa. He had a great impact in the life of young Hugo du Plessis through his writing. 'Kuyper het die baanbrekende werk gedoen in die uitbouing van die Gereformeerde beginsel'. His direct presence and influence led the General Synod of 1896 of the GKSA to formulate a mission policy regarding mission. Abraham Kuyper's understanding of mission can be summarised as follows:

- Mission should be pursued by the church and not a missionary movement;
- Mission flows directly from the Sovereignty of God and is primarily *Missio Dei*;
- The church is an instrument in the hands of God to accomplish His missionary tasks;
- The goal of mission is church planting through the preaching of the Word of God. Converts should be baptised and be incorporated in the covenant of grace;

- Obedience to God should be the church's motive when engaging in its missionary calling;
- The missionary should carry the office of the minister of the Word;
- Preaching should be relevant to the context of the objects of mission;
- Conflict with other missionaries and the missions of other churches should be avoided at all costs.
- An able person should be sent out for mission work;
- The local church is the sending church (Du Plessis, 1970a:79,80).

2.2.5 Du Plessis as a church man

Hugo du Plessis was born and raised within the Christian tradition. To be more precise, he was raised according to the Reformed heritage of the 'Dopper' denomination. He was a covenant child who grew up to be a committed Christian through life and teaching. This was confirmed by the fact that Hugo came to realise that God called him to serve His kingdom through his work as a missionary and missiologist. Hugo gained a lot of respect in the GKSA in this regard. It is imperative that attention be drawn to the history of this denomination at this stage.

2.2.5.1 The origin of the GKSA

Church history reveals that the Reformed Church that came to be known as "Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika" (GKSA), was founded in Rustenburg in 1859. It came into existence after the General Church Meeting of the **Hervormde Kerk**, which took place in Pretoria on the 10th of January 1859 and the following days. On January 12th, 1859, 15 men decided to inform the Meeting of their resignation from the Hervormde Kerk on the basis that the Meeting decided to endorse the existing way of church governance including the singing of the Evangelical Hymns. Their action flowed from the fact that the Meeting decided to endorse the status quo without testing their decision to the Word of God and the Confessions.

A new church was founded on February 12th, 1859, in Rustenburg. More than 300 adults assembled under a big seringa tree with close to 500 children and they elected

elders and deacons. They decided to call rev. Dirk Postma to be their first minister. Rev. Postma accepted the call to be the first minister of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika (also colloquially called the Doppers) (Jooste, 1958:56,59).

2.2.5.2 The calling of the GKSA

The founders of the GKSA felt that it is the calling of this newly formed church to remain true to the principles of the reformation of the 16th century as led by John Calvin. In their letter to the government immediately after their formation, they indicated that their act to establish the GKSA was a matter of returning to the original Reformed Confession regarding doctrine, office and discipline according to the decisions of the National Synod of Dordrecht of 1618 to 1619 (Jooste, 1958:67).

The group also felt that it was their calling to engage in the training of future ministers for this newly founded church. In 1869, after only 10 years of existence, the GKSA were able to establish a Theological Seminary in Burgersdorp in the Cape Colony. They also ran a programme for the training of teachers for the Christian national schools started by churches. The Theological Seminary moved from Burgersdorp to Potchefstroom in 1904, from which the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education evolved (Jooste, 1958:202,210).

From the onset, the GKSA felt that it was their calling as a church to engage in mission. The issue of mission was brought to their attention in the General Meeting of Transvaal in 1863, Synod meetings of 1869, 1873, 1879, 1882, 1894 and many more. It should be noted that the GKSA struggled from the onset to come up with a relevant mission strategy that could involve the entire Christian community within this Dopper family. For many years they took the direction of designating commissions or deputies as the ones responsible for this mission. They paid dearly in that the majority of the members of this church developed a negative attitude towards mission (De Klerk, 1923:136, 145).

2.2.6 Du Plessis as a called man

God called Hugo du Plessis with specific tasks for the coming and advancement of His kingdom. God called him and equipped him with the necessary gifts to serve as a missionary and a professor of Theology. A brief survey of such a calling is inevitable.

2.2.6.1 Du Plessis as a missionary

Du Plessis was called by the Reformed Church Pretoria to be a missionary in 1928. He was ordained on March 18th, 1928, and was sent to the Northern Transvaal where he served as a missionary until 1950. In the Northern Transvaal, rev. Du Plessis' missionary tasks focused mainly in Uniondale (where he resided), Molietsieskop, and Siloam, which later became the main missionary station (Jooste, 1976: 13; 16).

In 1950 rev. Du Plessis accepted a call to go and serve in the Witwatersrand, and specifically in Soweto. He was called as a missionary by the Reformed Church Johannesburg-Noord to serve among the blacks and coloureds of the West-Rand. He was the first missionary of the Reformed Church on the Rand (Venter: 76).

2.2.6.2 Du Plessis as Theological Educator in Dube

Rev. du Plessis served as a missionary until 1955 when he became the first lecturer to train black ministers of the Word at Moroka and later Dube. Later the training center moved to Hammanskraal Theological Seminary (Schutte, 1976:36; Botha, 1976:40; 42).

2.2.6.3 Du Plessis as a professor

It was only in 1959, during the 100 years celebration of the GKSA's existence, that the idea of introducing missiology as a theological discipline became inevitable. This matter was so urgent that members of the GKSA did not wait for the Synod to decide on the matter. The electing commission of the curators came together and took a

decision to appoint ds. Hugo du Plessis as the first missiologist to pioneer in this regard (Van der Walt, 1976:47).

Du Plessis became a professor at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom of the GKSA in 1959. He filled the position of professor in missiology. He served in this capacity for 13 years until 1971 when he died. “Hy het sy intreerede gehou oor Die Missiologie as teologiese Wetenskap” (Van der Walt, 1976:47).

2.2.7 Selected contemporary mission leaders and missiologists

2.2.7.1 P.J.S. de Klerk

P.J.S. de Klerk, whose sister, Cor, Hugo married, was one of the GKSA ministers who had a great influence in shaping the Reformed Theology of Mission and its involvement in mission in its early stages. He had a great love for mission work and missiology, and he also had a great influence regarding Hugo du Plessis’ understanding of mission. In his “Kerk en Sending in Suid-Afrika”, de Klerk echoed the Reformed understanding of mission as outlined in Kuyper and Bavinck (De Klerk, 1923:150;151). The following can be highlighted:

- Mission is primarily the work of God, **missio Dei**. It is therefore the purpose of mission to bring glory to God through the realisation of His sovereignty over the whole of life.
- The church is sent by God to engage in the missionary calling. By “church” he meant the local church. “Alleen die plaaslike Kerk besit die outoriteit en mag om te send, sy alleen kan die Sakramente bedien” (De Klerk, 1923:50).
- The person to be sent out as a missionary should be an office-bearer who shall proclaim the Word of God and also administer the Sacraments. He should be called and sent by the local church.
- All people from the world who are not yet Christians are the object of mission.
- Regarding the method to be used in mission fields, De Klerk touches on a number of aspects, i.e. the preaching of the Word of God and calling people to

faith, offering assistance like schools and medical facilities, encounters with other religions, and the planting of the indigenous church.

- The instituted church should stand in unity with other churches in order to make unity in the body of Christ visible.

2.2.7.2 K. Hartenstein

K. Hartenstein is known for his efforts to expand the theological foundation of mission around 1933 when he published his well-known study “Die Mission als Theologisches Problem”. He defined mission as the obedient witness to the faith of the church. “Vir hom is sending die gehoorsame getuiniis van die belydende kerk in sover dit tot die heidenwêreld gerig is in geloof aan die kerk en in verwagting van die ryk van God” (Du Plessis, 1970a:116). K. Hartenstein’s theology of mission could be summarised as follows:

- The church is a visible gathering of believers, who are also at the same time objects of faith. Through the church the Word of God calls people to faith. “Dit word gedoen in geloof aan die kerk” and the gathered church awaits the coming of the eternal kingdom of God;
- The foundation of mission lies in the Word of God in which, through Christ, God gave birth to his church;
- The subject of mission is the church, God is the primary subject thereof;
- The object of mission is the world in its fallen state of unbelief;
- The message of mission is the Word of God of which Christ is the focal point of the New Testament;

The purpose of mission is to bring people to the church and to incorporate them through baptism to become one with the church of Christ, which awaits the coming of the kingdom of God. The church that awaits the coming kingdom of God is, according to Hartenstein, the ultimate goal of mission (Du Plessis, 1970a:117,118).

2.2.7.3 *W. Freytag*

Freytag was a German who was less deeply imbedded in the Lutheran tradition than most of the German missionary leaders. He contributed a great deal regarding mission and missiology from around 1938, when he came up with a method of reaching out to a particular people. “Die sendingboodskap moet volgens hom ’n onafgebroke profetiese getuigenis wees teen alles wat sy eie aard wil handhaaf sonder om deur ’n radikale bekering te gaan” (Du Plessis, 1970a:119; cf. B.D.G., 1960b:80).

He made his first appearance on the international missionary scene at Jerusalem in 1928 and again at Tambaran in 1938. He is known for his emphases on the meaning and task of mission in the post-World War II situation. He laid much emphasis on the proclamation of the gospel before the second coming of Jesus Christ as the king of the kingdom of God. Like Hartenstein, eschatology was a key feature in his theology of mission (R.K.O., 1960:81).

2.2.7.4 *J.C. Hoekendijk*

J.C. Hoekendijk was a Dutch theologian who is associated with the apostolate theology in the history of Christianity. In his theology of mission, the church is seen as the instrument of the kingdom. His starting point is the eschatological character of the church as the sign or appearance of the end times. He propagated the comprehensive missionary approach in that man has to be influenced to adhere to Christianity in totality, including all terrains of his life and life relations (Du Plessis, 1970a:148,150; Van Rooy, 1968:40). The theology of the apostolate received severe criticism from the side of Du Plessis and other Reformed theologians.

2.2.7.5 *W.J. van der Merwe*

Willem Jacobus van der Merwe was a Dutch Reformed missionary and theologian in South Africa. He was the first full-time professor for missiology at the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch. He contributed a great deal to the shaping of the reformed

theology of mission through his publications (Bosch, 1986:42; cf. Du Preez, 1986:4-7). The impact of his contribution was not only felt in South Africa, but one can rightly say that he was an ecumenical figure whose outputs were widely recognised. He believed very strongly that the church should engage in missionary work for the glory of the Triune God, who is the subject of mission. The church should assist in the gathering and the up-building of the church through the preaching of the Word and the realisation and coming of the kingdom of God.

The church has the responsibility to show God's love to the world and thereby proclaim the evangel of the kingdom of God. The love of Christ and for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:14,20) should drive the church to unity and mission in cross-cultural setting. His calling have implications for structural unity, fellowship with believers of other races, and opening membership to the to all races for the glory of God. "Daar is baie voor te sê dat wit en swart gemeentes ter wille van kultuurverskille hul eie eredienste kan hou – maar om deure vir mekaar gesluite te hou, asof jy op grond van jou kleur kwalifiseer om saam te aanbid, is 'n verkragting van een van die belangrikste Protestantse leerstellings, dié van die *sola gratia*" (Meiring, 1986:25).

In van der Merwe's theology of mission, the Biblical foundation of mission is not lacking, Old Testament and New Testament alike. The relation between Missiology and the *missio Dei* concept is well-defined. "Sendingwetenskap dus in direkte verband met *missio Dei*, God se sending, wat op sy beurt weer gerig is op die koms en vervulling van sy Koninkryk op aarde" (Pauw, 1986:78).

2.2.7.6 J.H. Bavinck

J.H. Bavinck contributed a great deal to shaping the Reformed theology of mission through most of his publications during the post World War II era. He is known for his great contribution to the Biblical Foundation and Theological Foundation of Mission. He shed new meaning and understanding regarding mission as primarily *Missio Dei*, but also *Missio Ecclesiae*. The church exists for the glorification of God. They are instruments in the hands of God to advance His kingdom through the proclamation of the kingdom gospel. A fallen man should be confronted with the

Word of God in totality. Bavinck propagated for the “comprehensive approach” in mission (Bavinck, 1960:107).

Bavinck also contributed a great deal regarding the question of the religious plurality and the approach of the church towards non-Christian religions. He has to be commended for his views on ‘Elenctics’, which is part of Missiology according to which all false religions are unmasked as sin before God. They should be called to the knowledge of the only true God (Du Plessis, 1970a:135; cf. Bavinck, 1960:221). His visit to South Africa and the lectures that he gave at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom for the whole semester in 1952, stimulated an enormous interest in the GKSA and the study of missiology in several ministers of the GKSA – inter alia Paul Geertsema and Machiel Venter.

2.2.7 Du Plessis as a member of Afrikaner nation

Du Plessis should be seen and understood as a white Afrikaner, and as such he was a member of the Afrikaner nation with a particular history. The Afrikaner nation struggled to survive after the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902. They fought against English domination in many ways. They wanted to maintain and protect the Afrikaans language, their culture and traditions, hence the emergence of ‘Afrikaner nationalism’. Their struggle for ‘Afrikaans’ as an official language alongside English was achieved in 1925. They also struggled for survival during the period of poverty from 1929 (FED, 1949:1; Kellas, 1998:168).

2.2.9 Du Plessis as a family man and a human being

2.2.9.1 His engagement and marriage

Hugo was engaged and married to Maria Cornelia de Klerk. She was born on June 2nd, 1904, in Kraaifontein in the district of Bethulie. She was the daughter of mr. and

mrs. B.J. de Klerk (Oom Barend en Tant Cecilia). She was a sister to dr. P.J.S. de Klerk⁸ (Venter:10).

The couple met in Potchefstroom, where Cor was working as a typist and 'snelskriftikster' at the Potchefstroomse Universteitskollege. For them it was love at first sight. "Dit was liefde met die eerste oogopslag en toe Hugo vir haar sê: vat 'n vlerk, het sy ewe plegtig ingehaak" (Venter:10). The two got married in Potchefstroom on June 15th, 1929 (Venter: 21).

2.2.9.2 His family

Hugo and Cor had a family of 6 children, four girls and two boys. Their names in the order of their birth are: Cecilia Maria, Laurika, Maria Cornelia, Jacobus Albertus, Barend, and Monica.

All the children were born in Elim hospital. Cecilia Maria was born on March 7th, 1930, and was baptised in Potchefstroom. She was married to dr. I.J. van der Walt. After his death, she was married to mr. Adam Venter (a cousin to prof. I.J. van der Walt). She died in September 2001 at the age of 71.

Laurika was born on March 22nd, 1932, and was baptised in Louis Trichardt by rev. P.J. de Klerk. She is married to dr. G.H.J. Coetzee, who was a lecturer at Potchefstroom College of Education. Maria Cornelia, who was referred to as Marie, was born on August 16th, 1934, and was also baptised in Louis Trichardt by rev. P.J. de Klerk. She was married to mr. H. van Rooyen, who was a Director of V.K.E. – Civil Engineers. She died in February 2001 at the age of 63 (Venter:71).

Jacobus Albertus, also known as Kosie was born on July 4th, 1937, and was also baptised in Louis Trichardt by rev. P.J. de Klerk. He was the head of the Department of African Languages at the University of Stellenbosch, and is married to Clementia Visser (Venter:71).

⁸ He was appointed as a professor at the Theological Seminary at Potchefstroom from 1949 to 1961.

Barend Jacobus, also known as Bennie, was born on May 8th, 1942, and was baptised by rev. I.J. van der Walt in Louis Trichardt. He is married to Wymie Martens, Head Administrative Clerk of the Administrative Bureau of the GKSA. He was a financial clerk at the provincial administration (Venter:71).

Monica was born on Junie 29th, 1946, and was baptised by rev. W. Venter in Louis Trichardt. Monica, who is a deputy Principal at Sentraal High School in Bloemfontein, is married to rev. Willie Venter. She received her D. Litt. at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (Venter:71).

Hugo du Plessis was a man who cared a lot for his family. He loved them dearly. He always wanted the best for them and encouraged all of them to study hard and to become the best in the world. He was a role model who always respected and loved his wife and family.

2.2.9.3 His weaknesses

As a human being, Du Plessis had his own weaknesses. Though he had a great love for his family, he could not always express himself enough. At times he would look more like a loner, with individualistic traits. He could not easily express his emotions where necessary.

2.2.9.4 His strong points

Du Plessis also had his own strong points. He was very diligent and conscientious. He was a hard worker, and usually worked until late in the night studying and reading new books. He remained a student throughout his whole life. He underlined specific facts in each and every book he laid his hands on. He shared the knowledge and wisdom he had to those around him.

He had a brilliant intellect, and was a person who could offer his opinion on many different topics. This is elucidated by the fact that he wrote many articles and books

that are still useful today. He was also an excellent lecturer (The subject matter was good, but its deliverance was poor), who cared about the problems of his students.

2.2.9.5 Sports and recreation

Du Plessis was also a man of sports and recreation. He enjoyed watching rugby. When Du Plessis was between the age of 45 and 55, he and his wife enjoyed playing tennis with friends. He also played chess and got time to relax with his family by going for a swim (Venter:72).

2.2.9.6 His friends

Du Plessis also had time for leisure. He had a few best friends whom he often visited and enjoyed sharing opinions with. He would light his pipe and sit back, enjoying the discussion, and at the end summarise and give his view. He liked to tell a joke and would only smile faintly afterwards. Hugo's friends, among others, included the likes of:

- ❖ Piet Jooste, who became his friend in 1916 (Venter:2).
- ❖ Arie de Ridder who started a Rugby club (Venter:2).

2.2.9.7 His jokes

One of the jokes that Du Plessis usually shared regarded an incident that happened when he and his brothers were still at school. They sat next to the organ in the church. When their father was preaching, they threw shells of peanuts into the bagpipe of the organ.

2.2.10 Du Plessis as a man to be remembered

Indeed, Du Plessis was a man, he lived his life and came to an end. It is asserted that: "Soos hy gelewe het, het hy gesterwe: stil en in die vroeë oggendure. Cor is inderhaas na sy bed ontbied, maar hy was reeds in 'n koma en sy kon net toekyk hoe die harklop al stadiger en stadiger registreer het, totdat hy sy laaste asem uitgeblaas het" (Venter:95).

Du Plessis died on December 28th, 1971, at the age of 69 in Port Shepstone hospital in Natal. The family was on holiday visiting rev. P.J. de Klerk in Umtentweni, Natal. He was planning on retiring the following year, from April 1st, 1972, (Venter:95). The doctor who took care of Du Plessis, dr. C.S. Harison, indicated that he died because of heart failure. His whole system collapsed. According to his death certificate, he died of cerebral thrombosis, chronic bronchitis emphysema and heart failure (Venter:99).

Prof. Hugo du Plessis was buried in Potchefstroom on January 4th, 1972. Hugo's brother in law, rev. P.J. de Klerk, was of great help to Cor and the family during this time of grief. De Klerk delivered a sermon in the Reformed Church Potchefstroom Noord, after which Du Plessis was buried by prof. P.W. Buys (Venter:100).

Du Plessis is to be remembered as a wonderful person who was always calm. He had gained the respect of many people. He did not easily lose his temper or yell at people. His students will always speak of him as one whom they respected, both as a person and for his intellectual power.

Du Plessis was far ahead of his time, and for that reason some couldn't accept his views. He will be remembered for his wit and dry sense of humour, the way he walked and the way he smiled. He took pride in his work and published many articles and books. His legacy as an academic will remain forever.

In short, Hugo du Plessis will always be remembered as a man who left a mark on the history of the Reformed Churches in South Africa's missionary calling, both as

missionary and missiologist. The fact that prof. Hugo du Plessis left distinct footprints can never be disputed.

2.3 THE 20th CENTURY: THE CONTEXT OF DU PLESSIS' ERA

2.3.1 Introduction

As a man, Du Plessis lived within a specific context. It is predictable that his context shaped his life and his approach to mission as a missionary and missiologist. This context shall be studied and outlined and its influence on his understanding of mission will be discussed.

Special attention will be paid to the South African and global contexts during the life span of Hugo du Plessis, in other words the period from 1902 to 1971. It should, however, be noted that where necessary, reference will be made to the contexts prior to and following the above-mentioned period.

2.3.2 The South African Context

In as far as the South African context is concerned, the following aspects will be considered, namely:

- ❖ Political context
- ❖ Social context
- ❖ Economic context
- ❖ Religious context

2.3.2.1 The South African Political Context

The South African political scene was characterised mainly by the debate on the race relations between the whites and the non-whites. Understanding of the problem is grounded on one's understanding of the calling of Afrikaners in general, and their calling with regard to the Africans. After this one can ascertain the calling of the church with regard to race relations (see Du Plessis, 1957:53).

The calling of the Afrikaner people (volk) is that they are to maintain their identity as Afrikaners, Christians and white people. It is asserted that: "Dit is 'n roeping as Afrikaanse, Christelike en blanke volk" (Du Plessis, 1957:55). According to Du Plessis, they are said to have maintained this calling throughout the following periods:

- ❖ During the early-stage of their 'Afrikanerdom', which includes the time of the Great trek. They stood together against the destructive power of liberalism and British imperialism. "Nieteenstaande die magtige invloede van verengelsing en liberalisme het die Afrikaanse volk pal gestaan by hierdie roeping en plig om die volksidentiteit te handaaf" (Du Plessis, 1957:54).
- ❖ During the dangerous moment of liberal universalism, where there was an attempt to render all cultures similar. It was the hour of dechristianisation and material world civilisation, and the time of developing 'Bantoedom'. During this time they were called to remain true to their calling. It is stated that: "Nog nooit was die gevare so groot soos vandag nie, maar ook vandag is die Afrikaanse volk geroepe om sy roeping te vervul in reg en geregtigheid en in gehoorsaamheid aan God" (Du Plessis, 1957:55).
- ❖ During the times of spiritual decline and depolarisation, they were called to seek after the Word of God and to go back to God. Du Plessis (1957:55) states that: "Meer as ooit is dit nodig dat die Afrikaanse volk weer buig vir God se Woord en roepingsbewus word om eie roeping te aanvaar in gehoorsaamheid aan en kinderlike afhanklikheid van God en in die volle vertrouwe op die Almagtige God wat ons nie sal verlaat nie".

The calling of Afrikaner people was, in their minds, not grounded on the fact that they are whites or that they are Afrikaner volk or that they are Christians, but on the calling of God. The calling was from God in the perception of the Afrikaners. This is very clear from the following words: “Die roeping is eindelijk ook nie gegrond op ons Christelike feitlikheid asof ons daardeur geregtig is op besondere voorregte nie, maar op die roeping waarmee God ons roep om soos ’n Afrikaanse volk met ’n eie kersteningstaak van die lewe, in die lyn van ons Gereformeerde verlede, ’n ligbaken in Afrika te wees” (Du Plessis, 1957:56).

This explication of the Afrikaner volk’s perceived calling serves as a background of our reflection on the main trends in the South African political context. With regard to the South African political context of Du Plessis’ time, the following main trends are easily discernible:

- ◆ Afrikaner nationalism
- ◆ The formation of the Union of South Africa
- ◆ African nationalism
- ◆ Segregation
- ◆ Apartheid

For the in-depth discussion of the South African political context, we shall have three divisions in line with the major epochs of South African history. The three divisions are as follows:

- The period from 1902 – 1910
- The period from 1910 – 1948
- The period from 1948 – 1971

2.3.2.1.1 *The period from 1902 – 1910*

(a) Afrikaner nationalism

Du Plessis was born in the first decade of the twentieth century, when Afrikaner nationalism was making its way into the history of South Africa⁹. Afrikaner nationalism¹⁰ is the self-expression of the Afrikaners along ethnic lines. It is a phenomenon meant to promote the identity of the Afrikaners, their race, culture, language, common religion, and common history¹¹ (De Beer, 1961:10).

Like any event in history, Afrikaner nationalism had its causes. After the Anglo Boer War¹² of 1899 – 1902, Afrikaner nationalism became something inevitable because they were fighting English domination. Other factors that contributed to Afrikaner nationalism was the increasing urbanisation and secondary industrialisation during the period between the two world wars, as well as the continuing British imperial influence in South Africa (Pillay, 1994:195; cf. Mazrui & Tidy, 1984:160).

2.3.2.1.2 *The period from 1910 – 1948*

The political setting of the period from 1910 to 1948 was characterised mainly by the following trends:

⁹ This does not imply that Afrikaner nationalism is a concept that started around 1902. It can be traced back before the 1899-1902 Anglo-Boer War (see Kellas, 1998:168).

¹⁰ Nationalism is an ideology and form of behaviour that encourages the self-consciousness of the nation for self-determination. In most cases it is propagated along the lines of ethnicity or nationality (see Kellas, 1998:4; cf. Jay, 1994:153). In other instances nationalism can be, and most often is, multi-ethnic. The nation-state, the territorial form most nations exist in or strive for, usually involves a 'plural society' in which distinct ethnic groups 'share the same political and economic order' (Maré, 1992:43).

¹¹ The past that presented itself was that of Slagtersnek, the Great Trek, and the Day of the Covenant, the Anglo-Boer War, the concentration camps during the war and the rebellion of 1914 (see Pillay, 1994:198).

(a) The formation of the Union of South Africa

The Cape Colony, Natal, Free State, and the Transvaal merged and formed the Union of South Africa in 1910. The formation of this Union had a great impact on the question of race-relations between white and black South Africans. It is remarked that this event clearly showed Black South Africans that they were going to be excluded from the political development of South Africa (Saayman, 1993:70).

(b) African nationalism

Alongside the awakening Afrikaner nationalism, developed the so-called African nationalism. Various factors contributed to the awakening of the self-expression of Africans in South Africa. According to Walshe (1970:24) the following are such contributory factors:

- ❖ The establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910, ensuring the continued white supremacy over their African counterparts.
- ❖ The exclusion of the black South Africans from the politics of the Union, especially the racial discrimination principles in the Native policy of Orange Free State, Transvaal, and Natal.
- ❖ Failure of Britain to enhance the non-racial ideals and citizenship as spelled out in the Native policy of the Cape.

Like Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism had its focus. It maintained a remarkably steady focus on non-racial ideals¹³. This brought about a political consciousness, and African¹⁴ leaders launched political organisations like the African National Congress (see Walshe, 1970:25; cf. De Beer, 1961:11).

¹² The war was known and referred to as 'Anglo-Boer War' by the British. To the Afrikaners it was known as 'The Second War of Liberation' (see Barber, 1999:09).

¹³ On the question of ownership of South Africa, many Africans maintain that 'Africa is for the Africans', consequently Chief Albert Luthuli (The first president of the ANC) adhered to a view that 'South Africa belongs to millions people of different races' (see Luthuli, 1962:87).

¹⁴ The word 'African' is used exclusively in this context to refer to the black South Africans, and therefore African Nationalism could also be referred to as Black Nationalism as it is mentioned in Kellas (1998:165).

The African National Congress was established in 1912. It was formerly known as the South African Native National Congress. The founding of this political organisation, and many other African political organisations, intensified the need for self-expression among the Africans of South Africa. Many started to seek for liberation from white domination. They demanded to be granted full citizenship and democratic rights in the common fatherland (see Barber, 1999:125).

African nationalism brought about a certain wave when it came to the notion of mass support. It is remarked that: "Radical expectations consequently developed concerning mass support and political assertion, so that the concern to participate in a white-dominated society eventually gave way to claims for one man one vote and an unsuccessful attempt to reform society through the influence of the African majority" (Walshe, 1970:25).

The struggle against white domination became the hallmark of the South African politics during Du Plessis' life span. Speaking of African nationalism¹⁵, Du Plessis recognised the fact that it was something inevitable that could not be undermined by the whites. "Dit word 'n onuitblusbare vuur en onbedwingbare orkaan en onkeerbare stroom as dit gedra word deur 'n onwankelbare hoop en 'n fanatieke wil en godsdienstige besetenheid en begeestering" (Du Plessis, 1963c:14).

In the light of the above, Du Plessis (1963c:14) called upon whites not to undermine such a wave: "Ons is dus heeltemal agter ons tyd as ons meen dat ons nog steeds kan voortleef asof niks verander het nie". He urged whites to grant freedom to blacks and to proclaim the kingdom of God to them in totality (see Du Plessis, 1963c:14;15).

(c) First World War and Aftermath

When the war broke out in Europe in August 1914, the Union of South Africa entered immediately as a subordinate part of the British Empire. The Africans, led by the

¹⁵ Du Plessis (1963c:15) refers to African Nationalism as "Onchristelike Nationalisme van die Bantoe".

Native National Congress also supported the Empire. However, they were denied the opportunity to carry arms and fight against whites¹⁶ (see Barber, 1999:73).

As for the Union's involvement in the war, the whites, especially the Afrikaners, were divided into two camps. The hard-core Boer republicans were against the idea of supporting Britain¹⁷, whilst the government led by Louis Botha and J.C. Smuts supported the Empire (see Barber, 1999:73).

The rivalry was evident throughout the rebellion and virtual civil war, and during the resistance to join forces with the government against the neighboring German South West Africa, as requested by the British. "The rebellion and the South West Africa campaign polarized views, increased white divisions and hardened Afrikaner nationalism" (Barber, 1999:76).

On the global scene, Barber (1999:77) remarked that: "South Africa's contribution to the allied war effort enhanced its international position and its autonomy within the Empire". This was elucidated by the fact that a government delegation, led by Botha and Smuts, enjoyed separate status at the 1999 Versailles Peace Conference¹⁸. On the other hand, the Native National Congress¹⁹ and the Nationalist Party delegation were not recognised (see Barber, 1999:77).

(d) Segregation

Segregation is a programme through which discrimination against black and white domination was legitimised. Through legislation, segregation was an official practice of the Union. A good example is to be found in the Natives Land Act of 1913, which established 'possessory segregation' as the cornerstone of South African Native Policy (see Walshe, 1970:44; cf. Cochrane, 1994:201).

¹⁶ The only exception made was in the East African campaign, where the Germans effectively used African troops (Barber, 1999:73).

¹⁷ They saw it as an opportunity to regain their freedom (see Barber, 1999:73).

¹⁸ They also signed the peace treaty not as part of the Empire, but in their own right (see Barber, 1999:77).

¹⁹ They sent the delegation in anticipation that they will be rewarded by the Empire for their loyalty during the war, and that they were also trying to internationalise their claims for political and civil rights outside the imperial setting (see Barber, 1999:78).

Segregation ensured continued white domination and exploitation, and it was meant to gain the effective consent of those it excluded from power. This was necessitated by the fact that it "aimed at establishing limited land rights for Africans in exchange for sacrifice of any claims to common citizenship, and at placing Africans under white trusteeship to guide their autonomous development" (Cochrane, 1994:202).

The ideology of segregation or separate development gave birth to Apartheid, and this ensured that the natives of South Africa remained strangers in their own land during the life span of Du Plessis. The continued exclusion of South African blacks from politics ensured that their rights to be regarded and be treated as the citizens of this country is undermined and suppressed by white supremacy.

(e) Second World War and Aftermath

In September 1939, Britain declared war against Germany. History repeated itself in the Union of South Africa when Smuts called for a fight in support of the Empire and Hertzog opted for neutrality²⁰. The result was a split of the Fusion government (see Barber, 1999:117).

With the election of 1943, the Nationalist Party placed less emphasis on republicanism, offered full equality to English-speaking whites, propounded a policy of trusteeship among blacks, pointed to the danger of communism spreading among the blacks because of the alliance with the USSR, and attacked price rises and wartime inconveniences. As a result of this stance, they gained all the opposition votes, though the votes were not enough to put the NP in power (see Barber, 1999:121). The war also brought some economic changes, which had a great impact on the political scene. Due to the high demand in the manufacturing sector, the gaps left by skilled men who went to war were filled by those with less experience and lower qualification. The industry was able to provide for the internal demands. It

²⁰ It is remarked that: "War again reopened old wounds, leading to bitter personal divisions among whites" (Barber, 1999:117).

also contributed greatly to the war through ship repairs and the manufacture of munitions and vehicles (see Barber, 1999:121; 122).

These economic developments had direct implications for the socio-political setting of the Union, in that many poor white people were employed. In the meantime the large numbers of blacks were drawn into industrial employment and into the urban areas. The mingling of people across racial lines became inevitable (see Barber, 1999:122).

2.3.2.1.3 The period from 1948 – 1971

The period from 1948 onwards is commonly referred to as the Apartheid era in the history of South African politics. This became the gist of the matter on the entire 'race relations' debate. The following can be mentioned:

(a) The Nationalist Party Government

The Nationalist Party owed its formation and its growth to the aspirations of the Afrikaner people (see De Beer, 1961:7). It won the 1948 elections (exclusively white elections) and came to power. This ensured that South Africa was on its way to a republic outside the British Commonwealth, which became a reality in 1961. One of the distinguishing features of the Nationalist Party government was the institutionalisation of Apartheid, Apartheid laws legalised racism²¹ (see Millard & Adonis, 1994:290; cf. Saayman, 1993:72).

(b) The Legislation of Apartheid

Apartheid²² is defined as "The segregation of the most important ethnic groups and sub-groups in their own areas where every group (would) be enabled to develop into a

²¹ Racism is the belief that humans are subdivided into distinct hereditary groups that are innately different in their social behaviour and mental capacities and that can therefore be ranked as superior or inferior (see Marger, 1994:27).

²² According to Lipton (1985:14), the defining characteristics of Apartheid were:

- The hierarchical ordering of economic, political and social structures on the basis of race, identified by physical characteristics such as skin colour.
- Discrimination against Africans, and to a lesser extent Coloureds and Indians, who were excluded from civil, political and economic rights enjoyed by Whites, such as the vote,

self-sufficient unit" (see Haasbroek, 1981:5; cf. Lipton, 1985:14; Horrell, 1971:18). Legislation supporting this ideology came into being in 1948. Throughout the colonial era, it has manifested itself in the form of segregation policies and all forms of racial discrimination (see Saayman, 1993:72; cf. Cochrane, 1994:246).

Van den Berghe's distinction between three kinds of separation serves as a better illustration of how we should understand the separate development policy, or Apartheid, should be understood within the history of South Africa. The three kinds of separation are:

- Separation that ensured minimal social contact between whites and non-whites in daily life through racial barriers in all public facilities;
- ❖ Residential separation of the Whites, Africans, Coloureds, and Asians. They did not come into contact with each other where they lived and went to school;
- ❖ Geographical partition of the country, with reserved land for independent Bantustans Baker (1975:220).

On Apartheid legislation, Marais (1998:16) remarked that it ensured the following:

- ❖ That 'race' would become the definitive criterion for South Africans' access to privilege and opportunity, further restricting the social and economic mobility of black South Africans through a battery of legislative and administrative measures.
- ❖ That the African population would be deprived of political rights and full citizenship of the nation. Africans would eventually be decreed to belong to specific 'nations' assigned homelands on the 13 percent of land reserved for Africans.

The Apartheid legislation ensured the entrenchment of racial discrimination by whites against fellow black South Africans. It should, however, be noted that the Apartheid

freedom of movement, and the right to do certain jobs or own property in large parts of the country.

- Segregation of the races in many spheres of life: They lived in separate areas, went to separate schools and universities, and used separate buses and trains. There was little social mixing: Sexual relations and inter-marriage across the colour line were illegal.
- The legislation and institutionalisation of the hierarchical, discriminatory and segregated system, which was enshrined in law and enforced by the government.

legislation met with black resistance, for Apartheid was to them a gross sin against humanity.

Black resistance was enhanced by the increased economic strength of an African urban, organised, industrial workforce. Their resistance was coupled with the international pressure on the Nationalist Party government (see Millard & Adonis, 1991:290; cf. Saayman, 1993:72).

Black resistance led to growing political strength for organisations that challenged white political domination in South Africa, notably the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). These two groups worked together to organise non-violent mass action campaigns to win basic political, economic, and social rights for blacks (see Welsh, 1979:470; cf. Saayman, 1993:72).

(c) The ecclesiastical and Scriptural foundation of Apartheid

Apartheid was not just a humanistic innovation, it also had an ecclesiastical and scriptural foundation. The South African Calvinists, with the Dutch Reformed Church taking the lead in this regard, are said to be the main proponents of the Apartheid ideology. Hutt (1964:40) stated: "As a religious doctrine the Afrikaner form of Calvinism, preached by the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa, is dominated by the idea of predestination and original sin. The Afrikaners have been taught to believe that in maintaining the subordinacy of the non-whites they are fulfilling the will of God".

The Dutch Reformed Churches and the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs advocated total territorial Apartheid. However, Prime Minister dr. D.F. Malan indicated that it was not an ideal state of affairs for economic reasons alone (see Horrell, 1971:18).

In his paper, delivered on the People's Congress on 'Rassebeleid', prof. dr. J.D. du Toit provided the scriptural foundation for Apartheid, indicating that he has the entire Bible on his side. He maintains that: " 'n Teks het ek nie, maar ek het die Bybel, die

hele Bybel. My bewysvoering sal gaan van Genesis tot Openbaring” (Du Toit, 1944:5).

God is said to be a division maker (Hammabdil) from the very beginning of creation. Du Toit provides the following scriptural references as a support to his claim, Genesis 1:4; 1:6; 1:9,10; 1:18; 1:21; 1:24; 1:27; and 1:31. From there he continued on to provide other scriptural references from Genesis to Revelation. His claims were supported by prof. dr. S du Toit, who articulated the Biblical principles for Apartheid. The following are examples of such principles:

- ♦ ***Humanity is in unity***: S. du Toit quotes Acts 17:26, which indicates that humanity is from one blood and therefore blood cannot be the differentiating factor (see Du Toit, 1949:26).
- ♦ ***God is the great divider (die groot Skeidingmaker)***: To support his point view, du Toit offers the same mentioned quotations as J.D. du Toit (see Du Plessis, 1949:26).
- ♦ ***God planned the origin and existence of different people***: To support this principle, S. du Toit calls on Acts 17:26 and Deuteronomy 32:8 as scriptural references (see Du Toit, 1949:27).
- ♦ ***The result of sin accentuated the differences between race and people***: S. du Toit offers Genesis 3:17 and Acts 17:30; 14:17 as scriptural references to support this principle (see Du Toit, 1949:28).
- ♦ ***Humanity has a cultural mandate***: Genesis 3:17-19 is used to support the principle of cultural mandate as initiated by God in creation (Du Toit, 1949:30).
- ♦ ***People who fear the Lord are given the missionary mandate***: Matthew 28:19 is used as a scriptural basis of this principle (see Du Toit, 1949:30).
- ♦ ***In Christ comes the higher unity, which does not wipe away the national differences in day to day life***: Colossians 3:11, Galatians 3:28, and 1 Corinthians 11 are used as the scriptural basis of this principle (see Du Toit, 1949:32).

2.3.2.2 *The South African social context*

In order to sketch a clear picture of the South African social context, the demographic realities of the country are of uttermost importance. In line with Kritzinger (1994:77), the following demographic indicators will be considered for the purposes of this study, namely:

- ◆ Ethnic and language composition
- ◆ The geographic distribution
- ◆ Growth of the population

The issue of human identity shall also be considered, with a special focus on the constitution of the social group or society. In this regard, the following shall be dealt with:

- Individualism
- Communalism

2.3.2.2.1 *Ethnic and language composition*

South Africa is a pluralistic society composed of various ethnic groups and sub-groups, with different languages and cultures. During Du Plessis' life span, racial groups were divided into Whites, Africans, Coloureds, and Asians. Each was legally identified and given special treatment (Kellas, 1998:165).

The language groups were dispersed in the following way:

- Among the whites, were Afrikaans and English²³ speakers.
- Among the Africans, there were Xhosas, Zulus, Ndebeles, Swazis²⁴, Sothos,²⁵ Vendas, and Tsonga-speaking group.

²³ English speaking whites included not only those born in South Africa of British stock or who had emigrated from Britain, but also other Europeans who used English as a main language (see Barber, 1999:4).

- Coloureds fall in the category of Afrikaans-speaking group.
- Among the Asians were Indians with different dialects.

2.3.2.2.2 *The geographic distribution*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, South Africa did not exist as a single political entity. According to Barber (1999:2) "there were two British colonies (Cape Colony, and Natal), and two Afrikaner/Boer republics (The South African Republic or Transvaal, and the Orange Free State)".

All ethnic and language groups were distributed in a pluralistic way²⁶ in the Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State. The Xhosa speaking people occupied mainly the Eastern Cape frontier. The Zulu speaking people occupied mainly the area north of the Tugela River. The Venda speaking people occupied the area of Soutpansberg in the Transvaal, which runs east-west to the south of the Limpopo. The Tsonga speaking people lived much closer to the Sothos and the Vendas (see Lemon, 1976:7).

The majority of the South African population, i.e. the Africans, occupied only 13.7 per cent of all land, whilst the whites occupied 86.3 percent. As a result of the race relations problem, reserves were created for the Africans in the form of Bantustans. In order to attain more land from the Republic of South Africa, Bantus had to buy a piece of land within their area, or it was to be bought for them by the Republic (see Du Plessis, 1970b:128, 130).

Apart from the fact that land was to be bought for the Bantus where necessary, their Bantustans were to be consolidated as a positive aspect of Apartheid. The consolidation process was to be made along the lines of ethnicity, i.e. Swazi's to

²⁴ The Xhosas, Zulus, Ndebeles, and Swazis fall under one main language group, Nguni. Xhosa and Zulu have stabilised into two main forms of Nguni speech. Some of the Nguni speaking peoples are currently living in Swaziland and Rhodesia (see Lemon, 1976:6).

²⁵ Sotho peoples include those who speak 'southern Sotho', 'northern Sotho' or Pedi, and Tswana (Lemon, 1976:7).

²⁶ The pluralistic integration was necessitated by the common claim for the fatherland and the process of urbanisation.

Swaziland, the Tswana's to Botswana, the Sotho's to Lesotho, and so on (see Du Plessis, 1971a:132, 133; cf. Du Plessis, 1971b:137).

2.3.2.2.3 *The Growth of the population*

In 1904, the year of South Africa's first official population census, the inhabitants numbered 5,175,000, whilst the 1970 census recorded 21,448,000 South Africans. Demographically, the Africans were in the majority, with the Whites as the second largest group, then the Coloureds, and then the Indians (see Lemon, 1976:3).

The 1970 census, just a year before Du Plessis died, recorded the rate growth of 21,448,000 South Africans, of whom just over 15 million (70 percent) were Black Africans. The 3,750,000 Whites constituted the second largest group (17.5 per cent), followed by just over 2 million Coloureds (9.4 percent) and 620,000 Asians (2.9 percent)" (see Lemon, 1976:3).

2.3.2.2.4 *Individualism*

Individualism identifies the human person with the individual. According to Van der Walt (1994:247) "To be an individual is to be human. And to be human means to be an individual". In this regard individual rights and freedom are over-emphasized against that of the respective social order. This is a common tendency among whites. The Society is therefore constituted of individuals (see Van der Walt, 1994:248; 249).

2.3.2.2.5 *Communalism*

Communalism identifies the human being with the community. Man is defined in terms of the community he belongs to and his involvement in it. There is a typical African saying which says '*Muthu ndi muthu nga vhathu*', meaning 'a man is a man because of others'. Van der Walt (1994:249) remarked that: "Through total involvement in the community, the individual establishes his personal identity and thus becomes a complete human being."

Society therefore makes the person. This is a typical understanding of the Africans. Society is defined in terms of the communal whole, where the relationship and fellowship with another is highly emphasised. Du Plessis (1965d:197) explained that: "In die geheelverband het die mens sy plek maar hy is in die eerste plek mens as lid van sy gemeenskap. Sy vitaliteit, sy psigiese veiligheid, die menslikheid van die mens self hang af van sy integrasie in die familie, die sib, die stam."

The solidarity of the community is highly emphasised, and each individual member is held accountable and responsible for its maintenance. "In hierdie gemeenskap is die mens so verbind dat die individuele inisiatief taamlik lamgelê word. Hy moet in alles konformeer aan die tradisionele patroon. Alles word vir hom voorgeskryf en die tradisie, wat alreeds in die oertyd vasgelê is, is onveranderlik" (Du Plessis, 1965d:197).

The word solidarity is used not only in terms of the relationship between members of the community, but also in terms of their relationship with the spirits of the forefathers. This solidarity is symbolised by the offering of the meat of goat or cattle, traditional beer, and snuff (see Du Plessis, 1965d:197).

In the mission of the church, the communal life of the Africans can be used positively: "Terwyl hy primêr 'n gemeenskapsmens is, as Christen in sommige opsigte die gemeenskap van die heiliges in die een gemeente van Christus beter tot uitdrukking bring as wat gewoonlik gebeur in blanke gemeentes" (Du Plessis, 1965d:207).

2.3.2.3 The South African economic context

The period prior 1902 marked a major shift from patriarchal subsistence economy to a more world economic development in the economic sphere of South Africa. The South African economy became more and more commercialised as the result of the discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West in 1867 and the world's greatest gold bearing reef on the Witwatersrand in 1886 (see Lemon, 1976:29).

The discovery of mines brought about changing economic circumstances as indicated above. The following economic traits became the economic context of South Africa during Du Plessis' life span:

2.3.2.3.1 Industrialisation

Industrialisation was a new wave of economic activity necessitated by the discovery of mines, and South Africa's involvement into the global economy. The whole process of industrialisation was characterised mainly by the capital and labour economics (see Barber, 1999:11).

According to Lemon (1976:29), the distinctive characteristics of South African labour economics are:

- Division of labour into two classes: a large body of African labour earning low wages (cheap and exploitable), and a much smaller group of White workers earning high wages.
- Division of labour into two classes of skilled and unskilled labour, with blacks being the most unskilled because of the lack of training.

Industrialisation as a new wave of economic activity in South Africa reached its peak from around 1929 onwards. It is remarked that: "The face of the economy has literally been transformed by the growth of the older and the creation of new towns linked by all weather roads, air services, an electric power grid and relatively effective telecommunications, in addition to their earlier railways" (Van der Horst, 1979:97).

Industrialisation is seen as a way and means to economic independence even within the Bantustans. Du Plessis (1966:9) maintained that: "Industrialisasie is die enigste weg na volkome ekonomiese selfstandigheid en vooruitgang". His remarks focused mainly on the economic development of the Homelands in which Bantu-

entrepreneurs²⁷ will be encouraged by white entrepreneurs through instituted development co-operation.

2.3.2.3.2 *Commercialisation of Agriculture*

With the process of industrialisation, agricultural subsistence still continued. It should be noted that agriculture was being transformed into the market economy. According to Barber (1999:13) this commercialisation of agriculture affected both whites and blacks. He elucidates his point by highlighting the following:

- White farmers expanded their production to meet demands, and as they did so the price of land increased, with the result that tenants and squatters were driven off.
- Some African peasant farmers were able to consolidate their holdings, and others made profits. However, at the same time there was increased pressure on the peasants, with the result that many lost their economic independence and ability even to meet their subsistence needs.
- Peasants started to flock to the cities as migrant labour.

The transformation of South African agriculture was almost entirely confined to the white agricultural sector, which produced about 95 percent of the total agricultural output by 1970. The remaining 5 percent was produced by thousands of Africans farming small-holdings in the Bantustans and grazing their cattle on the communal land (Lipton, 1986:102,103).

Apart from industrialisation as a means to own economic development among the Bantus in the Homelands, farming was highly recommended. Du Plessis (1969c:124) remarked that: “Vir ’n mens-waardige bestaan in die Bantoetuislande is dit dringend noodsaaklik dat, benewens ’n industriële ontwikkeling, die landbou indringend en diepgaande verbeter word.”

²⁷ Bantu-entrepreneurs, through the instituted development co-operation of white entrepreneurs, are the main channels to be followed for the process of industrialisation to succeed in the homelands as suggested by the Tomlinson Commission (see Du Plessis, 1966a:9).

2.3.2.3.3 *Economy and urbanisation*

The changing economic circumstances brought about a massive process of urbanisation. As a result, urban societies boomed alongside the mines. The urban society consisted of the White immigrants, Afrikaners drawn off the land and an increased number of blacks as migrant workers from the reserved rural areas. This brought the economic integration of the entire population (see Barber, 1999:12; 40).

It was only after the Second World War that such an integration became more visible. After the war, South African industry grew tremendously and brought more and more blacks into the industrial workplace and urban communities. Accordingly, black wages rose sharply, black trade unions made solid gains, and the number of blacks living in urban areas more than doubled (see Welsh, 1979:470).

The Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 as amended in 1930, attempted to control the influx of Africans to Urban areas. The local authorities were required to provide segregated areas for African residents and to create Native advisory boards and Native revenue accounts. Those who were not employed were considered as a surplus, and were removed from those areas (see Horrell, 1963:3).

2.3.2.3.4 *The Economy and race relations*

The new wave of economic activity in South Africa and the process of urbanisation had a major impact on race relations. Lemon (1976:35) is also of the opinion that the South African economy depended on the economic integration of all races. With regard to the integration of all races the following tendencies can be identified or conclusions can be made:

- Economic integration never implied societal integration (see Barber, 1999:40).
- Discrimination was still prevalent in the working environment. Whites normally occupied managerial and skilled position, whilst other groups worked mainly as cheap labourers (see Lemon, 1976:41; cf. Sowell, 1994:88).

- There was insufficient training for the Africans to be managers, administrators and technicians (Lemon, 1976:42).
- There was employment discrimination against blacks (see Sowell, 1994:88). This was institutionalised by the introduction of Job reservation in 1956 (Lemon, 1976: 41; 42).

2.3.2.3.5 *Economy and poverty*

As indicated above, the South African economic context displayed a high degree of inequality between the races. The high rate of unemployment, cheap labour, exploitation, job reservation, and other South African labour laws of the period between 1902 to 1971 ensured that many blacks remained poorer, while many whites generally enjoyed a very privileged position economically. South Africa's income disparities are extreme (see Lemon, 1976:43; cf. Van der Horst, 1979:97) and in economic terms they could better be described in terms of poverty and wealth (Kritzinger, 1994:96).

Du Plessis lived during the times when legislation was also passed to ensure that the poor remained poorer. In 1913 the Nations Land Act was passed, driven by two demands namely, the need for cheap labor for the mines and protection of white farmers against black competition. The 1913 act set aside 93 percent of South Africa's land for white purchase only (see Chazan & Lewis, 1999:469).

One other notable aspect related to poverty was the global economic depression that began in 1929. It had a great impact on the Union of South Africa. It was severe enough, and caused great misery for many people of all races. As a result, unemployment increased sharply among all races, but jobs were reserved mainly for poor white Afrikaners (see Barber, 1999:105).

The process of own economic development in the Bantustans was highly recommended. The fact that own industrial development and farming was anticipated, gives a clear picture of the economic conditions of the Bantu Homelands.

According to Randall (1971:59, 60) the problems facing the homeland areas included among others:

- ❖ Poverty and overpopulation.
- ❖ Absence of economic infrastructure and sustained industrial growth.
- ❖ Lack of development capital and business enterprise.
- ❖ Inadequacy of the tribal system to meet the demands of the modern industrial society.

The economic disparities within the South African population were visible abroad, especially poverty in the Bantustans. One example of international action is the Gereformeerde Kerk in Nederland, which took a decision to support the under-developed areas among the non-Western people. "Dit gaan hier om die hulp aan die arm nie-Westerse volke vir hulle eie ontwikkeling en dié van hulle land, asook om die ontwikkeling van beter bestaansmoontlikhede" (Du Plessis, 1968c:7).

2.3.2.3.6 *Economy and ideologies*

With the new economic circumstances, the scene was set for war between conflicting interests and competing creeds: Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism. The immigration of skilled and capitalist whites from Britain to South Africa was experienced by Afrikaners as a combination of imperialism and capitalism. In London the newly enriched Transvaal and the rest of South Africa was seen as an increasing threat to British paramountcy (see Barber, 1999:13).

2.3.2.4 *The South African religious context*

There is a common saying that man is a religious being, and therefor South Africans as such are religious beings. The distinctive characteristics of the religious context of South Africa are determined mainly by the socio-political settings of the country. The following are elements of the South African situation:

2.3.2.4.1 Religious plurality

One of the distinctive features of the South African religious scene is the plurality of religions. This has been the case long before and will be long after the life span of Hugo Du Plessis (1902 – 1971). The South African population was divided into different religions, for example²⁸:

- ♦ Christianity
- ♦ African Traditional Religions
- ♦ Islam
- ♦ Hinduism, and so on.

Terminologies used by Du Plessis to refer to religions other than Christianity, including the above-mentioned, are: 'Non-Christian religions' (Du Plessis, 1964a:3); 'Primitive religions' (Du Plessis, 1965d:186); 'Heathens religions' (Du Plessis, 1969a:10).

Besides the above-mentioned religions, there are several sectarian groups (sects), i.e. "Die Sionistiese en profeties-messiaanse sektes" (Du Plessis, 1965d:202). Du Plessis (1965d:186) gives a clear perspective of these groups by remarking that: "Daarbenewens het die meeste Christene nog nie die heidense agtergrond heeltemal afgeskud nie, is daar baie sektes wat heidendom met die Christendom gesinkretiseer het maar in wese heidens bly."

2.3.2.4.2 Religious encounter

One of the inevitable results of the plurality of religions in South Africa is the religious encounter of those religions. Christianity, with its missionary endeavours, features prominently in this regard. "Whilst Christ now speaks and acts through His Word throughout the world, we encounter world phenomena and world reactions such

²⁸ Compare Kritzinger (1994:80).

as Communism, and even the so-called revival of non-Christian religions" (Du Plessis, 1960c:71).

The plurality of religions posed a great threat to Christianity. Du Plessis saw it as an opportunity for the church to confront these religions with the Word of God. Du Plessis (1964a:4) remarked that: "Daar vind 'n ontmoeting van godsdienste plaas. Daar ontstaan gespreksgeleenthede."

2.3.2.4.3 Religion and culture

The relation between religion and culture has been one of the central issues in the religious scene of South Africa. Religion and culture form an unbreakable unity²⁹. Christianity and western civilisation were also perceived along that line, and the same could be mentioned with regard to all religions as experienced in South Africa.

For many Africans, attraction for the developed white culture was the motive for becoming Christians (Du Plessis, 1963c:7). This brings an idea that 'change in the culture will also mean change in religion', which cannot be the case in all instances³⁰.

2.3.2.4.4 Religion and Afrikaner nationalism

The Anglo Boer War of 1898–1902 fostered this bond between religion and nationalism in the vocabulary of many Afrikaners. Religious convictions were used to enhance the nationalistic ideals of the Afrikaners.

As a result of this War, a very close link between the Afrikaans Reformed churches and Afrikaner nationalism was inevitable. Saayman (1993:70) states that "The churches went to war with the Afrikaner people and identified fully with the nationalistic ideal of the Afrikaners."

²⁹ This is a tendency that is visible throughout the history of the church (Du Plessis, 1963c:8).

³⁰ Du Plessis (1963c:8) remarked that: "Hulle het dit as vanselfsprekend aanvaar dat met die verandering van die kultuur ook verandering in godsdiens moet plaasvind".

2.3.2.4.5 Religion and African nationalism

There was also a bond between religion and nationalism among the blacks in South Africa. "Waarmee hulle egter minder rekening hou en wat ons as die tweede baie belangrike nuwe faktore beskou, is dat die politieke aspirasies nou ook godsdienstig en mities gekleur en gefundeer word" (Du Plessis, 1963c:12).

Accordingly, many blacks started to seek after the coming of the kingdom of God in which they will be granted their own messiah. A person like Nkrumah was given a status of such a messiah in other black circles. The bond between religion and nationalism brought about movements to propagate the idea of the Bantoe-Messianism. Du Plessis (1963c:13) states that: "Daar ontstaan politiek-godsdienstige beweginge wat op verlossing uit die krisis en op die verwagting van 'n nuwe toekoms gerig is."

2.3.2.4.6 Ecumenicity and independence

Around the middle of the twentieth century, one distinctive feature in the religious life of South Africa was the development of ecumenicity and independence. This developed alongside the national development of universality and nationalism (Du Plessis, 1960c:63).

The churches established in black communities started to be vocal on the issue of attaining an equal status with those of the West as one Church of Christ. They desired to form an ecumenical alliance with the Church of Christ throughout the world, as long as their autonomy and independence were acknowledged and maintained (Du Plessis, 1960c:63).

2.3.2.4.7 Syncretism

The word 'syncretism' can be used in different ways, for the purposes of this study it refers to a hypothesis that all religions are the same. Christianity is considered as one of the religions in the world, and that it does not have a distinct character of being the only true religion among others (see Du Plessis, 1965f:3).

The fact that South Africa is a pluralistic society with plural religions, provides a ground for 'syncretism', which is a great danger to church's mission in the world. "Sinkretisme is veral in ons tyd 'n groot gevaar vir ons Christelike geloof en daar lê vir Gods Kerk veel stryd voor teen hierdie vyand, veral ook met die oog op teenstand in verband met die verkondiging van die Evangelie" (Du Plessis, 1965f:4).

Syncretism is visible in the double lifestyles³¹ led by those who consider themselves to be Christians. "By die Sionistiese en profeties-messiaanse sektes waarvan daar honderde in Afrika is, is daar wel die geloof in die transendente God, die enige ware God, maar verder is die godsdiens van die meeste van hierdie sektes heeltemal heidens met 'n vernis van enkele Christelike vorms daardeur heen gevleg. Die primitiewe religiositeit bly nog steeds die agtergrond in hierdie bewegings" (Du Plessis, 1965d:202).

2.3.3 Global context

2.3.3.1 Introduction

In order to determine the global context of Du Plessis' time, the main trends of his time, their development, and their impact on the South African social, economic, political and religious scenes will be investigated. The world situation of this period was characterised by the following:

- ❖ Developments in Western civilisation, secular advancement, awakening nationalism, religious breakthrough, fruits of communism, post-colonialism, and World Wars.

2.3.3.2 Main trends in the global context

2.3.3.2.1 Developments in western civilisation

During the life span of Hugo Du Plessis, there were tremendous changes and developments with regard to the Western civilisation. The main cultural traits or the most visible cultural advancements of the West were nothing but the technological and scientific developments³² (see Du Plessis, 1960c:57).

The technological and scientific changes in the world brought about changes that affected all the inhabitants of the globe, including South Africans. There was indeed a paradigm shift in the pattern of living in the world. Many people became more and more materialistic and this gave birth to an ideology of materialism (see Du Plessis, 1960c:57).

These global developments made a great impact to the non-white world³³. They started to look forward to the technological and scientific developments as a means towards power, progress, and political freedom. Many started to seek for more and more knowledge from the West. This is illustrated by the fact that many started to go abroad for studies in order to enrich their countries of origin (see Du Plessis, 1960c:58).

2.3.3.2.2 Secular Advancement

The technological and scientific developments in the Western culture came to be regarded by many as the secular advancement of the entire globe. Many people all over the world, South African non-whites included, wanted to partake in this kind of advancement. This brought about an ideology known as secularism in the world context (Du Plessis, 1963c:7).

³¹ Where the God of the Bible does not help, the spirits of the forefathers will (see Du Plessis, 1965d:202).

³² In his explanation of Western Civilisation, Du Plessis (1963c:9) stated that: "Dit is die wêreld beskawing van motors, draadlose, vliegmasjiene, fabrieke, kernkrag, stede, dit is die ideale van welvaart, voortuitgang en welsyn vir alle volke en alle mense".

The secularising process in Western civilisation brought about the quest for universal unity of humanity. This quest was also necessitated by the fact that the globe became more and smaller. "Geographically the macrocosm has now become one world and although humanity is not yet united, the same political and economic ideals are noticeable throughout the whole world" (Du Plessis, 1960c:59).

2.3.3.2.3 Awakening nationalism

The world was faced with an awakening nationalism throughout the non-white world. This was an irresistible wave among non-white peoples, who could no longer be blocked by any form of white domination. The noted changes in the world situations and relationships brought about this kind of awakening.

This awakening of nationalism among the non-whites of the world brought about the retreat of white domination as it was resisted by the force of the awakening nationalism among the non-white peoples of Africa as well.

2.3.3.2.4 Religious breakthrough

The Christian mission, coupled with the impact of Western civilisation, made a major religious breakthrough in the non-white world. Through the process of enculturation and gospel proclamation, many from the non-white groups were converted and became Christians.

New converts became free from the bonds of traditional beliefs. This brought about change in the way that the gospel was presented to the natives. The converts became more and more involved in the gospel presentation among their own. They in actual fact became ambassadors of Christianity. This was a kind of spiritual wave that hastened the spread of Christianity among the non-white peoples of the world population.

³³ Du Plessis (1963c:7) remarked that: "Ook die nie-blanke volke wil in die wêreldbeskawing deel".

Another major religious breakthrough was noted in that the Christian world denounced all forms of injustice, discrimination, and exploitation of humanity at the hands of other human beings. The Christian world maintained the fact that the church should remain true in its prophetic calling of denouncing all forms of wickedness, including the racial discrimination policy as practised in South Africa.

2.3.3.2.5 *Fruits of communism*

The influence of communism in the non-white world started to bear fruits, in that all forms of white domination and exercise of authority started to be resisted by the non-white peoples of Africa. This brought about the zeal for liberation to the non-white peoples, both as individuals as well as communities. The call for freedom echoes throughout the whole of the non-white world in Africa³⁴ (see Du Plessis, 1960c:58; 59).

2.3.3.2.6 *Post-colonialism*

The global scene prior to Du Plessis' time had seen many Eastern and African peoples being de-colonised. Du Plessis lived in a time that can be referred to as post-colonial. It was a time characterised by the deterioration of white domination and superiority, the independence of African states (one after the other), and the policy by the west to aid the oppressed non-white peoples of Africa.

2.3.3.2.7 *World Wars*

The global context of Du Plessis' time was also characterised by world wars. Mentioning the following could elucidate this fact:

³⁴ The rebellion against all forms of white domination, bottled up for years, has reached bursting point, the steam escaping from the boiling water has blown off the lid and the vapour is drifting in all directions.

- ◆ The First World War and its aftermath.
 - ◆ The Second World War and its aftermath.
 - ◆ The threatening Third World War and the anticipated destruction of humanity.
- The technological and scientific developments also brought about a great threat to the world's life, i.e. the Hiroshima incident coupled with the ongoing cold war between the West and Communism. The two posed a great danger of the third world war. Fear became one of the ruling masters of the day (Du Plessis, 1960c:60).

2.3.3.3 The impact of the global context on South African scenes

The global context as highlighted above had a great impact on the South African socio-economic, political and religious settings. The extent of such an impact can be highlighted as follows:

2.3.3.3.1 Social impact

One major contribution made by the change of things in the globe was the 'equality of humanity'. People of different races and colour could now look at each other as human beings, and be able to interact without restrictions. The following two statements, as uttered by Du Plessis, elucidates the above-mentioned:

- ◆ White domination throughout the world and the white's feeling of superiority which goes hand in hand with it, is virtually something of the past (Du Plessis, 1960c:57)
- ◆ Speaking of the Africans, Du Plessis (1960c:60) remarked that: "Seeing themselves as part of a whole world and associated with it, begin to demand the acknowledgement of themselves as inherent and equally worthy parts of it". This indicates that many Africans were now coming to terms with the feeling of inferiority.

In short, the changing world situations and relationships contributed much to the issue of race-relations and the structuring of society in South Africa. It is even remarked that: "The world has become one, mainly because no single people can today live in isolation and stubbornly persist in following its own course" (Du Plessis, 1960c:60).

2.3.3.3.2 *Political impact*

South African political context was also shaped by the influence of the changes that were taking place in the world. With regard to the political scenes of South Africa, changes in the global context contributed the following:

- ◆ It consolidated 'Afrikaner nationalism' against British imperialism. This was necessitated by the fact that the whole world was turning its back against colonialism.
- ◆ It awakened the so-called 'African nationalism' among the non-whites of South Africa. Du Plessis (1960c:57) remarked that: "What concerns us very closely here in South Africa, and what immediately strikes one is the already changed world situations and relationships throughout the non-white world".
- ◆ The question of allocating Africans the political and civil rights became a focal issue in the minds of prominent leaders (see Barber, 1999:104).

2.3.3.3.3 *Economic impact*

The global changing scenes also had the great impact on the economic setting of South Africa. The following can be mentioned:

- ◆ As a result of universality, South Africa became more and more involved in the global economy. The process of industrialisation took place and agriculture was also commercialised (Barber, 1999:11; 13).
- ◆ The economic setting of the globe also affected that of South Africa, in that it could no longer pursue its ways like a lone ranger. "There can no longer be talk

of continuous prosperity among now flourishing people when a great part of the world is economically destitute (Du Plessis, 1960c:60). This became apparent with the world's economic depression which began in 1929 (Barber, 1999:104).

- ◆ Doors are open for people to travel internationally and learn about information that enriches our economic policies and involvement. "Duisende uit Asië en Afrika gaan nou na Europa en Amerika om daar in verskillende rigtings verder te studeer of om op hoogte te kom met die nuutste industriële, wetenskaplike en kommersiële ontwikkelinge" (Du Plessis, 1963c: 9).

2.4 Summary

Hugo du Plessis was born and raised in a middle class Afrikaans family with an affluent history. He is a grandchild of Prof. Dirk Postma, a well-known figure in the history of the GKSA and the Theological School Potchefstroom. He was raised as a covenant child within the Reformed Church. He received his education under the Christian National Education system (C.N.E. / C.N.O.). C.N.E. was a system of education founded to enhance the aspirations of the Afrikaners over English domination. He received his theological training in the Theological School Potchefstroom and his M.A. degree (in Afrikanistiek) from the University of South Africa (UNISA). His personal mentors were Prof. J.D. du Toit and Dr. A. Kuyper. Kuyper had a great influence on him through his writing.

Du Plessis grew up to become a servant in the service of the Kingdom of God in the 20th century. He was a missionary in Venda from 1928 to 1950, a missionary in Witwatersrand from 1951 to 1955, after which he became the first educator to train black ministers and helpers in Dube. He later became a professor of theology (Missiology) in the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom and the Faculty of Theology of the PU for CHE in 1959. He died at the age of 69 in Port Shepstone hospital in Natal on the 28th of December 1971 whilst on holiday.

2.5 Evaluation

It is fair to note that Du Plessis should be understood and be judged in the context of his time, the 20th century. The following questions shall be used as guidelines in our efforts to evaluate Du Plessis in this regard:

- ❖ Who was Du Plessis?
- ❖ What are the forces and influences that shaped his life style?
- ❖ What was the context in which he lived?

2.5.1 The man Hugo du Plessis

2.5.1.1 Positive: Hugo du Plessis was born and raised within a Christian Afrikaans family, an affluent history. He grew up to become a committed Christian and a servant in the Kingdom of God. He grew up to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and his father by becoming a minister (missionary) and a professor of theology in the GKSA. He also grew up to become a family man who had sincere love for his family. He wanted the best for his family and encouraged the education of his children. Hugo du Plessis was a social being who also loved sports and recreation.

2.5.1.2 Negative: His main weakness was that he could not always express himself enough. At times he looked more like a loner who could not express his emotions where necessary. This is not a good character for somebody who was to become a missionary. It always has a negative impact on how one should interact with people.

2.5.2 Forces and influences that shaped Hugo du Plessis' life

2.5.2.1 Positive: The vision and the mission of the GKSA became his. He sacrificed his life and that of his family for the sake of the church and the Kingdom of God. Because of the teachings he received in his upbringing and his study of theology, he became a committed missionary and missiologist – a real servant of God. With the influence of his mentors here at home and internationally

and also his contemporary missionaries and missiologists, Hugo du Plessis established himself through writing. He took pride in his work and published many articles and books, so that his legacy as an academic will remain forever.

2.5.2.2 Negative: The Christian National Education which he received as a youngster made him not only to become a country man, but also instilled some traits of racism or white superiority. His life and ministry was not free from such traces.

2.5.3 The context of Hugo du Plessis' era

2.5.3.1 Positive: Hugo du Plessis grew up to become a man who could read the signs of his times. He could see the imbalances and the injustices of the Apartheid era. His voice was not totally silent, he stood up against all forms of injustices and also gave alternative solutions through his publications. In view of the context in which he lived, it took him a lot of courage to voice his views.

2.5.3.2 Negative: As already noted in 2.5.2.2, Hugo du Plessis' life and ministry was not free from racial traces or a feeling of white superiority. There are instances where he practiced paternalism (see chapter 3 for further discussions).

2.6 Conclusion

Hugo du Plessis was indeed a man of his time, a man of the twentieth century who should be understood and be judged within the context of his time. He was a child of his time, a natural man whose personal up-bringing, personal commitment to Christianity and his studies of theology prepared him to be a possible candidate for the ministry of the Word in the mission field. It also prepared him for teaching others how to become good servants of the Lord. His calling as a missionary and missiologist will be studied in chapter 3 and 4 respectively.

CHAPTER THREE

DU PLESSIS AS A MISSIONARY AMONG THE VHAVENDA PEOPLE IN AND AROUND SILOAM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to study, outline and evaluate Du Plessis' work as a missionary. Du Plessis served in the Northern Transvaal from 1928 to 1950, when he departed for the Witwatersrand, where he served until 1959. This chapter will focus mainly on his missionary work among the Venda people in the Soutpansberg area, and specifically Siloam.

Rev. Du Plessis' work as a missionary among the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam can be divided into two main periods. The two periods shall form the basis of this study:

- ❖ The period from 1928 to 1932
- ❖ The period from 1932 to 1950

3.2 THE VHAVENDA PEOPLE

Before Du Plessis' missionary work can be investigated, the milieu into which he had to bring the Gospel message has to be delineated. This task grows more difficult with the passing of time, for, as Africa would express the problem, 'the old mushroom is decaying and the new mushroom growing in its place'. Du Plessis worked among the Vhavenda people in the years between 1928 and 1950. Those were the years dominated by questions related to race, issues surrounding the emergence and growth of both Afrikaner and African nationalism, and urbanisation. The self-identity of the Vhavenda people was of crucial importance. It is therefore imperative to reflect on the historical background of the Vhavenda people, their culture, social structure and belief systems. These are dynamic entities of their being, and it should be noted that they are continually changing, growing, and adapting. It was similar during the years between 1928 and 1950. It is, however, not the purpose of this study to provide an

exhaustive description of the Vhavenda people, but rather a broad overview in order to understand their historical background and cultural traits.

3.2.1 Geographical Review

3.2.1.1 The geographical distribution

The Vhavenda people belong to the Venda tribe, one of the Bantu peoples of South Africa. At the time of their encounter with the mission of the GKSA, the Vhavenda people occupied the territory of the Soutpansberg in the Northern Transvaal. The area that they occupied stretched up to the Limpopo river in the north, the National Kruger Park in the east, Gazankulu (the Bantustan of the Tsonga speaking people) in the south and south-east, and the Bahananwa people in the west (see Burnett-van Tonder, 1987:1; cf. Van Warmelo, 1935).

The geographical areas occupied by the Vhavenda people can be divided into three, i.e. western, eastern and southern Venda (Burnett-van Tonder, 1987:1; cf. Van Warmelo, 1935:117-121).

The western part of Venda included amongst others the Mashau, Mphephu, Sinthumule, Kutama, Mashamba, Nthabalala and Mulima clans. The southern Venda included among others the Tshimbupfe, Davhana and Masia clans. The eastern Venda included among others the Tshivhase, Mphaphuli, Thengwe, Khakhu, Rambuda, Mugivhi, Lwamondo, Tsianda and Tshakhuma clans (see Burnett-van Tonder, 1987:1; cf. Van Warmelo, 1935:117-121).

3.2.1.2 Ethnic and language composition

The Vhavenda people are a composite people who speaks one language, 'Tshivenda'. It is best summarised by Van Warmelo (1935:117) when he states that: "The people of Venda division form a culture complex of exceptional homogeneity". The Venda language has slight dialectic differences, i.e. Tshiilafuri, Tshironga, Tshiphani (which

is considered as the standard form), Tshinia, Tshimbedzi, Tshitavhatsindi and Tshilembethu. This is due to the fact that the Vhavenda tribe is composed of different sibs (mitupo), i.e. Vhatavhatsindi, VhaKwevho, VhaDau, Ndou, VhaMbedzi, Vhafamadi, and so on. Apart from different sibs, the Venda language has had linguistic influences from the Shona (Vhakalanga), Tsonga (Shangaan) and Sotho (the Pedi) neighbors (see Stayt, 1931:9; cf. Burnett-van Tonder, 1987:3).

According to De v. Minnaar (1992:1), the Venda language is linguistically allied to that of the Karanga of Zimbabwe and in turn to the larger groupings of East Africa, which use Swahili. There also seems to be elements of the Nyungwe language of the Tete province of Mozambique. There are actually three different acceptable forms of relative clauses, one similar to Northern Sotho (the Vhangona of Bakona) – “munna a shumaho”, one similar to Shona – “munna a no shuma” and one similar to Nyungwe, using the relative pronoun – “munna ane a shuma”.

The last mentioned is by far the most complete form, and is the only acceptable form to use in “indirect” relative clauses, such as “munna ane nda shuma nae”, “munna we ra mu vhona” etc. This latter construction occurs in both Venda and Nyungwe, but not in their neighbouring languages, such as, in the case of Nyungwe, Cewa and Sena.

3.2.1.3 Population

During the times when the GKSA had their first encounter with the Vhavenda people via the missionary in the person of rev. Hugo du Plessis, it was very difficult to determine their numerical strength. Their demographic figures are best described by Van Warmelo (1989:5): “A ‘census’ held in 1904 produced a total of c.120 000 persons. Stayt gives a ‘rough estimate’ of 150 000 in 1931. The 1970 census gave 358 000 for all Venda-speakers in the whole of South Africa”.

3.2.2 Historical Review

Historically, there is no accuracy in determining the true origin of the Vhavenda people. They are said to have immigrated from central Africa via the Shona (Karanga) area in Zimbabwe to the Soutpansberg area in the Northern Transvaal around the 16th or 17th centuries. They are said to have come together with the VhaLemba people, who stay in their midst. The VhaLemba people are said to be of semitic origin (see Burnett-van Tonder, 1987:2; cf. West, 1976:90, Spoelstra, 1999:100, Stayt, 1931:14).

As already stated, the Vhavenda people settled in the Soutpansberg area in the Northern Transvaal, and their neighbors were the Shona people of Zimbabwe, the Tsonga people of Gazankulu, and the Sotho people of Bulobedu and Botlokwa. They are distributed in a number of village-communities, under various chiefs (*mahosi*) and petty chiefs, who are to varying degrees independent of each other.

The political system of the Vhavenda people was organised in a more central manner with a well-defined hierarchy of authority. The paramount chiefs (*VhoThovhele*) were on top of the hierarchy, ranging down to the petty chiefs (*vhakoma* or *magota*). The paramount chiefs of the Vhavenda people were chief Mphephu in the west and chief Tshivhase in the east (see Lestrade, 1928:13; cf. West, 1976:90, Spoelstra, 1999:100).

3.2.3 Social review

3.2.3.1 Social structure

The Vhavenda social life is structured in a hierarchical order. The hierarchical order is visible with regard to the cosmic order. "In the traditional Venda worldview the cosmos is experienced as an hierarchy of forces, each with fixed place in the totality, and exercising influence or power on each other" (Van Rooy, 1978:3).

The hierarchy in the cosmos is also reflected in the interpersonal relationship, kinship, and ancestor spirits. This kind of the hierarchy within the traditional Venda worldview is basically based on seniority and status within the society. Practically, the hierarchical ladder within the traditional Venda worldview ranges from God to the youngest member of the community, from the paramount chief to the ordinary man in the street, and from ancestor spirits of the seniors to those of the juniors (see Van Rooy, 1978:4; Mbiti, 1969:205,6).

As a result of this hierarchical structuring of life and society within the traditional Venda worldview, there is a widespread custom of approaching seniors like parents and chiefs through intermediaries. A typical example of this is a normal Venda family in which a son or daughter approaches his or her father through the mother, or the wife approaches the husband through elderly people of the family like the aunt '*makhadzi*' or the uncle '*malume*' or '*khotsimunene*'. If this order is not followed, it is believed that the cosmic chain of seniority is broken and harmony is disturbed (Van Rooy, 1978:4).

3.2.3.2 Social groups

The Vhavenda people are composed of different social groups in accordance with the sibs, '*mitupo*'. The typical examples, as already mentioned above, are: VhaDau, Nḁou, Vhaṭavhatsindi, VhaLaudzi, Vhanyai, VhaMbedzi, Makhwinḁe, Vhafamaḁi, Vhatwanamba, VhaKwevho. Every sib has one or more honorific phrases, '*zwikhodo*' and a taboo '*tshiila*' associated with it. The lion is associated with VhaDau, the elephant is associated with Nḁou, water is associated with Vhafamaḁi and so on (Stayt, 1931:186,189,192).

3.2.3.3 Marriage

Marriage among the Vhavenda tribe is regulated by a complex legal and social system, the chief feature of which is the passing of a bride-price (*thakha*) from the family of the man to the family of the woman. Since most of the Vhavenda people

were polygamists, the bride-price for the first wife¹ would be referred to as '*dzekiso*'. The wife is referred to as '*musadzi wa dzekiso*' for the "bride-price wife". She is the one to give birth to the next chief. It is a taboo to marry from one's lineage (see Lestrade, 1950: XII; cf. West, 1976:90,91).

3.2.3.4 Kinship

The Vhavenda kinship system is such that usually people belonged to two lineages, i.e. the patrilineal and matrilineal. The male line is the most valued one, in that it determines inheritance. It is however noted that: "Although descent, succession, and inheritance are reckoned through the father, every individual is also a member of a parallel lineage on the mother's side, important in social and religious life" (Stayt, 1931:185).

3.2.3.5 Customs and rituals

There are certain customs and rituals of the Vhavenda people that are rigorously adhered to. To mention just a few which are relevant for this study, the following can be highlighted:

- The birth of a child in the family has its own customs and rituals. It is the custom that after the birth of the child, a wife may go back to her family of origin to raise a child. The child cannot go out of the house for several months, at least three months, for fear that the baby may contract diseases or be harmed by witchcraft. After the specified months, the child can go out after the ritual of '*u thusa nwana*' for 'helping the child' has been performed.
- There are certain stages of life in which a Muvenda girl or boy has to undergo certain training until he/she reached the stage of adulthood. According to the Venda custom male children had to go to the 'thondo', the 'murundu' (circumcision school), and 'domba'. On the other hand,

¹ Musadzi wa dzekiso is not always the first wife, but means the wife given to the son by the father.

the female children had to attend 'vhusha' or 'khomba', 'domba', and 'musevhetho' (Stayt, 1931:101,106).

3.2.4 Traditional worldview

It is impossible to understand the impact of the mission work on the Vhavenda people without having at least some understanding of the religious beliefs of the people to whom the Gospel was brought. Their beliefs not only influenced their response to the preaching of Christianity, but are still active and, in some cases, increasing in strength. The Vhavenda people perceive the world in more or less the same way as other blacks in Southern Africa do. For the purpose of this study, a cursory survey of their traditional worldview will be provided.

3.2.4.1 *Their conception of God*

The Vhavenda believe in the mysterious deity who is called '*Raluvhimba*' or '*Mwali*'. The name Mwali is related to the name of the god of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, '*Mwari*'². The '*Mwari*' referred to here is the '*Mwari weMatonjeni*'³ and not '*Mwari weDenga*'. The Mwari we Matonjeni has historical links with the Venda people. Accordingly, there are links with and continuation of the historical past, because even before they migrated to the Southern parts of Rhodesia and northern Transvaal, the Venda had been closely associated with the Mbire tribe and regularly sent delegations to the Matonjeni shrines" (Daneel, 1970:44).

Creation is attributed to Mwari. He is said to be the god who lives somewhere in the heavens and is more connected with all astronomical and physical phenomena (Stayt, 1931:230). All the natural phenomena that affect the people as a whole are said to be his revelations. Mbiti (1969:84) states that: "The Bavenda regard locust invasion, floods, and other calamities of nature as punishment from God when he is angry with

² Mwari is said to be the God of fertility, mainly of crops and women. He has both male and female attributes, hence he is regarded as the rain giver. He is closely associated with the Mbire tribe within the Shona tradition. His shrines or ritual headquarters are situated at Matopo hills near Bulawayo, hence he is known as *Mwari weMatonjeni* (the God of the Mnatopo hills). One of the keeper who served at Matonjeni shrines was a muVenda called Peura (Daneel, 1970:16,44; cf. Schutte, 1978:109,110).

³ The Venda equivalent of the name Matonjeni was Matongoni (Schutte, 1978:121).

their chief". A typical example of this is the severe drought in 1924. This drought was ascribed to the fact that Chief Mphephu had failed in that year to send an offering to Mwali at Mubvumela in the Matopos near Bulawayo in Rhodesia (Van Rooy, 1978:6).

It now remains an established fact that the Vhavenda people used to visit the Matonjeni shrines, especially when they encountered calamities. Peura, the keeper at Matonjeni shrines, who was a muVenda, remarked that the Vhavenda people only run to the shrines when a severe drought has convinced them that Mwari is angry (Daneel, 1970:53; cf. Van Rooy, 1978:6).

According to the Venda legends, the 'Mwali wa Matongoni' is said to have visited Venda several times in different centers for different purposes. Typical examples mentioned by Schutte are Mudzivhadi (for agriculture), Makonde, Luvhimbi, Musekwa and among the Tshivhula people (Schutte, 1978:119,120).

3.2.4.2. *Their conception of man*

As already highlighted, man occupies his own place in the hierarchical structure of the Vhavenda society. His place is somewhere below the spirits and above the other creatures, i.e. animals and plants. Man occupies a central position in the life of the Vhavenda people. Van Rooy (1978:16) remarked that: "Die sentrum van alles is die mens – die lewende mens op aarde". Man is considered a 'full human being', having undergone the transitional rites, i.e. birth rites, initiation ceremonies, marriage and raising children⁴, and the kinship system rites (see Van Rooy, 1978:1,4; cf. Mbiti, 1969:206).

Within the traditional Venda worldview, man is viewed in terms of the total whole of his community. This explains why priority is given to communalism or interpersonal relations within the culture of the Vhavenda people and other black communities in Southern Africa. Van Rooy (1978:9) provides the following proverbs that elucidates

the fact that the individual Venda looks at his personal value as an integrated part of totality:

- “Muthu ndi muthu nga muṁwe” – (“A person is a person through another person”);
- “Muthu u bebelwa muṁwe” – (“A person is born for the other”);
- “A u tswukisi ndila u wothe” – (“You can’t tread open a footpath on your own”);
- “Munwe muthihi a u tusi mathuthu” – (“One finger cannot take samp from the pot”).

As a result of communalism within the traditional Venda worldview, the ethical codes of an individual person is shaped by his willingness to give in his rights to those of the integrated whole. Characteristics which are valued in Venda culture are “friendliness, complaisance, adaptability, pliability, the willingness to compromise, modesty, respect for seniors, open-handedness, the willingness to share what one has with others, everything that contributes to smooth interpersonal relations and to avoiding friction between persons” (Van Rooy, 1978:10).

These characteristics had a certain impact on their behaviour during the missionary encounter. When asked whether they believe in the gospel about Christ or not, they would just say “*Ndi a tenda*” (I believe) for politeness sake.

3.2.4.3 *Their conception about life*

The general conception about human life among the Vhavenda people is that there is life after death. This can be elucidated by their belief in the ancestral spirits, and the fact that they try by all means to maintain their bond with these spirits (Stayt, 1931:240).

⁴ To die without getting married and without children is to be completely cut from the human society, to become disconnected, to become an outcast and to lose all links with mankind (Van Rooy, 1978:14).

3.2.4.4 *Their belief in the Spirit World*

The belief in the spirit world is a very integral part of the Vhavenda worldview. They believe in the world of the dead who, through their spirits, are in constant contact with the living. There are certain places throughout the Venda country that are known to be inhabited by the spirits. In actual fact, every chief has or did have a forest or mountains in which the spirits of his ancestors are supposed to abide. Accordingly, many of these places are the actual burying places of the chiefs. "Spirits of dead chiefs were believed to live in particular sacred groves; others in the mountains, in pools and in streams" (see West, 1976:91; cf. Stayt, 1931:236).

A typical example of the above-mentioned is the Lake Fundudzi or Dzivha Fundudzi. Fundudzi is connected to the ancestor spirits of Netshiavha of the Tshiavha clan, who is the guardian of the Lake. It is also supposed to be inhabited by the spirits of other Vhaṭavhatsindi people (see Stayt, 1931:237; cf. West, 1976:91).

This kind of a belief has a great impact in the lives of the Vhavenda people. Basically because the presence of the spirits in such related areas, like Lake Fundudzi, is greatly feared. They are greatly feared because of the influence that they have on the living, i.e. their ability to bring misfortunes on the living (Stayt, 1931:236).

3.2.4.5 *Ancestor cult*

The Vhavenda people believe in ancestral spirits known as '*midzimu*' in the plural and '*mudzimu*' in the singular. The ancestor cult remained central in their belief, so that their relationship with their dead ancestors has much more meaning than their relationship with Raluvhimba. "There was believed to be remote Supreme Being, Raluvhimba; however, all prominent religious functionaries were ancestors and spirits" (West, 1976:91; cf. De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:8).

The dead ancestors are said to bring benefits and misfortunes to their descendants. Accidents, illness, miscarriage, (and so on) are said to be caused by angry spirits of one's family or the dead ancestors. Should one incur misfortunes in his life, the

Vhavenda people will basically say that “*midzimu i a hana*” meaning that “*the ancestor spirits are not in agreement or are refusing*” (Stayt, 1931:230). As a result, the Vhavenda people never doubted the existence of the spirits of their deceased. The spirits are said to be nearby and interested in the daily activities of their descendants (De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:8).

3.2.4.6 Rituals conducted

There are certain rituals for communicating with the ancestors. If an individual is offended by his ancestors and he wants to communicate with them, the ‘*makhadzi*’⁵ can perform the ritual of spitting out water, ‘*u phasa madi*’. She does so mentioning the name of the offending spirit, followed by the names of all ancestors and finish with the mention of the unknown, ‘...na vhoiwe ri sa ni di’ for ‘...and you whom we do not know’ (see Stayt, 1931:250; cf. West, 1976:91).

3.2.4.7 Objects associated with rituals

There are certain objects associated with rituals within the tradition of the Vhavenda people. A sacred bull known as ‘*makhulu*’, for grandfather, is regarded as the embodiment of all the ancestral spirits. On the other hand, a female black goat, also known as ‘*makhulu*’, is said to represent the ancestors of the mother’s lineage. Other objects related to the rituals are: “river pebbles, spears, copper rings, and sacred stones, etc.” (Stayt, 1931:243; 245).

3.2.4.8 The belief in witchcraft

The Vhavenda people believe that no misfortune just happens by itself without a cause. They express it by saying that: “*A hu na tshi no da nga tshothe*”.

⁵ The ‘*makhadzi*’ is the sister to the head of the lineage, and is entrusted with the task of the ‘priest’ of officiating the service of offering to the ancestors, ‘*thevhula*’. In this regard the traditional beer ‘*mufhoho*’ is offered to the ancestors.

Consequently, they believe that certain misfortunes are caused by witchcraft, '*vhuloi*'. This is the act in which the '*muloi*' is said to have bewitched somebody to become sick, miscarry, deform, die, and so on. The '*muloi*' is associated with black magic (see Stayt, 1931:264; 274; cf. Burnett-van Tonder, 1986:8, Van Rooy, 1978:15).

In case one is very sick, the witchdoctor, '*hanga*' is consulted for divination in order to determine the cause of the sickness. He also identifies the actual spirit concerned and the best means of propitiation. The '*hanga*' is the medicine-man proper, who is more in line with practitioners, general or specialised (see Stayt, 1931:249; cf. De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:8).

In case a person is believed to have been bewitched by a '*muloi*', a diviner, '*mungome*' is consulted. He specialises in detecting the '*muloi*' through his magical dice when he divines. The '*mungome*' would therefore be consulted when the family members would like to know the person who caused the death of their beloved one. "Siekte en dood word nie aan natuurlike oorsake toegeskryf nie; gevolglik word die magiër geraadpleeg om die skuldige aan te wys" (Burnett-van Tonder, 1986:21; cf. Stayt, 1931: 264; 274, Van Warmelo, 1932:197; De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:8). At the time when rev. Du Plessis arrived in Venda, this worldview had been practically untouched by christianising influences.

3.2.5 Important characteristics of the Venda worldview

It is imperative to conclude this discussion by giving some hints regarding some of the important characteristics of the Venda worldview. This will enable us to get a broader picture on some important traits of the traditional worldview of the Vhavenda people.

- It is **comprehensive**. They view life in totality. This is basically based also on their view of the cosmos. The cosmos is seen as a hierarchy of powers, each with its own place in the totality and influencing each other mutually. Accordingly, totality is seen as a hierarchy of powers, with God as an inherent part of it and

occupying the top position. The idea of “limited cosmic good”, ‘priority of human relations’ and influence of the ‘spirits and witchcraft’ in the hierarchy play a significant role. Salvation, blessedness and peace depends on whether man is integrated in this totality, and then in his right place. A Venda person sees himself or herself as part of a greater totality, in which everything has a fixed and inter-related place. Their day to day life is not compartmentalized, and therefore such things as religion becomes the integral part and pattern of life. This implies that the totality mentioned above comprises all things as we know them. The comprehensiveness of the Vhavenda traditional worldview is best summarised by the following words: “According to the premises on which it is based, it is a logically integrated whole” (Van Rooy, 1978:1; cf. De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:6).

- It has the sense of **communality**. As already discussed in 3.2.4.2, the idea of ‘*interpersonal relations*’ play a central role in the life of the Vhavenda people. The communality has as its basis the place accorded to ‘*interpersonal relations*’ in the hierarchy of powers. It is an ideal of life for Africans to see that everyone is integrated and fits into the community. The notion of ‘reciprocity’ receives strong emphasis in this regard. An individual is valued his worth through communal participation, and he defines himself or herself in terms of others ‘*I am because we are*’. Consequently, man by himself is helpless and has little value (Van Rooy, 1966:12).
- It entails **egalitarianism**. The notion of ‘*communalism*’ and ‘*cosmic good*’ play a significant role in propagating *egalitarianism* among the Vhavenda people. Equal rights for everyone who is a member of the Venda community is emphasised. In line with the limited cosmic good, those who are wealthy are expected to share their wealth with others. Every member of the community should therefore have his or her equal share of the resources at the disposal of the community. Reciprocity also plays a significant role in this regard (De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:6).
- The notion of **timelessness** is also covered in the worldview of the Vhavenda people. Life among the traditional Vhavenda people is not structured according to

time frames. The Vhavenda people are more concerned with the present, and therefore the future is not an important factor in their concept of time. Their life is more oriented to the past because it is familiar, it connects them with their roots (the ancestors) – the origin of their traditions (Van Rooy, 1996:12; cf. Van der Walt, 1994:93).

- It is **rural** and **agrarian**. The area inhabited by the Vhavenda people is known for its exceptional fertility, the beauty of its mountains. It became famous for fruits such as oranges, lemons, bananas and mangoes. Most of the land occupied by the Vhavenda people to date is still rural and agrarian. The Vhavenda people depended mainly on maize for subsistence, which is cultivated in large quantities to the present day (Wessman, 1908:9; cf. Burnet-van Tonder, 1986:9).
- **Sacralism** is not lacking in the worldview of the Vhavenda people. In actual fact they do not distinguish between that which is sacred and secular. In their totalitarian view of life, they see everything as embodied in the hierarchical powers. The notion of 'taboo' is entailed in their understanding of the hierarchical powers (Van Rooy, 1964:32). That is why there are lots of taboos within the Vhavenda worldview, i.e. It is a taboo to cry when a person (who is a member of your family) is sick 'zwi a ila u lila muthu a tshi kho tshila'. They imply that he or she might die.

3.3 DU PLESSIS AS A MISSIONARY IN SILOAM FROM 1928 TO 1932

The work of the Reformed Mission (Du Plessis) and the confrontation with the gospel must be seen as a direct challenge to the traditional religious fabric of the Venda. Out of this confrontation a birth finally came in 1942, the establishment of Siloam as an independent church, and an own synod of the Vhavenda people in 1964.

The period from 1928 to 1932 is the first phase of Du Plessis' involvement in mission work among the Vhavenda people at Siloam. This period can be considered as a

foundational period for him, in that it was the period in which Du Plessis got a better understanding of the missionary field.

3.3.1 His calling

Hugo du Plessis completed his theological studies with distinction in 1927. After having completed his studies, he was examined and made available to the churches of the GKSA as a suitable candidate for the ministry of the Word. He was called as a missionary by the sending church, Reformed Church Pretoria, and was ordained as a missionary on March 18th, 1928, in Pretoria (Jooste, 1976:13).

The Reformed Church Pretoria sent rev. Hugo du Plessis to the Northern Transvaal with a broader sphere of operation than that of rev. P. Bos⁶. In line with the decision of the General Synod of 1924, Du Plessis had to develop a new mission post on the northern part of the Soutpansberg (Jooste, 1976:15).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis first stayed at Uniondale. The congregation came together for the first time on March 25th, 1928. The occasion was meant to introduce the new minister of the Word to the congregation. Elder Tempel from the sending church was present to do the presentation (Jooste, 1976:15).

It was quite an occasion and the congregation was very delighted. The occasion was graced by the presence of chief Joseph Matshisevhe of Uniondale. A head of cattle was slaughtered to provide food for those who attended the welcoming ceremony of rev. Hugo du Plessis.

Jesaja Moutloatse, who was an elder ordained by the late rev. Bos, welcomed rev. Hugo du Plessis on behalf of the congregation. It was a very memorable occasion. An event like this never took place when his predecessor, rev. P. Bos, arrived at

⁶ Rev. P. Bos was an elder of the Reformed Church Pretoria who did mission work among the natives around Pretoria before he was admitted to the ministry of the Word. He was admitted as a minister through article 8 of the church order of the GKSA and was sent as a missionary to the Northern Transvaal, where he stayed on the farm Dundee in the district of Louis Trichardt. He died in 1923 after having served as a missionary in Uniondale and Molietsieskop (Jooste, 1976:14).

Uniondale for the first time. Mrs Bos made this point clear when she mentioned that: “Toe haar man sewentien jaar te vore daar aangekom het, daar niemand was om hom te verwelkom nie” (Spoelstra, 1999:98; Louw, 1985:10).

This welcoming occasion was held under the tree in front of Jesaja’s house, because the church was too small to host such an event. During the proceedings, rev. Hugo du Plessis conducted the church service and preached from the Old Testament. “Die sendeling het na die ark in die Ou Testament verwys en aangetoon dat God se Woord die wêreld oorwin” (Spoelstra, 1999:98).

3.3.2 His missionary mandate

In alignment with the Mission order of the GKSA of 1913 and its revision of 1924, rev. Hugo du Plessis’ missionary mandate included, amongst others, the following:

- Preaching of the Word of God and serving the Sacraments, i.e. Holy Communion and Baptism.
- Visiting the sick.
- Exercise of church discipline.
- Categethical instruction.
- Elementary education.
- Offering medical assistance.

The above-mentioned missionary mandate of rev. Du Plessis is clearly stated in the mission order: “Die arbeid op die sendingveld sal bestaan: Bediening van Woord en sacrament, besoek van kranke, uitoefening van kerklike tug, kategetiese onderrig, elementêre onderwys en die verlening van mediese hulp” (see GKSA, 1924:107; cf. GKSA, 1913:81-83, Jooste, 1959:342).

For him to fulfill his missionary mandate with ease, rev. Hugo du Plessis had to have basic knowledge of:

- Tshivenda (the Venda language), of which he gained knowledge through correspondence, and consultation with the Vhavenda people. It should also be noted that Article 6 of the Mission Order made provision for the use of a native interpreter who was to serve as the 'helper' of the missionary. It is stated that: "De dienaren op het zendingsveld kunnen zich doen bijstaan door kleurlingen-tolken of reisgezellen, doch deze zullen niet beschouwd worden als dienaren van de zendende gemeente, maar als dienaren van de zendings-predikant, door hem bezoldigd" (GKSA, 1913:82).
- Medicine, i.e. first aid, operations, medicines and related matters. He stayed at Elim hospital for a month in July 1927 where he attended some operation sessions and also got to know some doctors. Whilst staying at Elim, he also came to know more about tropical diseases and their treatment (see Venter:12; cf. Spoelstra, 1999:98).
- Farming, because one part of the farm at Siloam was set aside to be utilised for that purpose (Venter: 12).

3.3.3 His missionary posts

When rev. Hugo du Plessis took over where rev. P. Bos left, there were only two existing posts, to wit Uniondale and Molietsieskop. The work at Uniondale and Molietsieskop (Ga Moletše) was not very fruitful, and rev. Hugo du Plessis was given a mandate to start a new mission sphere at Siloam. He started at Siloam late in August 1928. During the period from 1928 to 1932, he only had three places that he took care of. This research will focus mainly on Siloam. For this reason only a cursory reflection on the other two is provided.

3.3.3.1 Uniondale

When Du Plessis went to the Soutpansberg area for the first time, the Uniondale mission already existed. It is, together with Molietsieskop, one of the preaching posts started by rev. Bos, with the help of Jesaja as the helper. At a later stage, Jojakim Matlakala also served in this preaching post. There was a church building, and a school was also started. The missionary had the obligation to visit this preaching post not less than four times per year.

As result of the work of the missionary rev. Du Plessis, there are a number of things that came into being on this preaching post:

- A teacher was appointed to take charge of the school education. By the end of 1929, the number of learners at the school grew by a hundred percent, from 10 to 20. Biblical history and church hymns were integrated in the schooling system. The missionary was expected to inspect the school at some stage, i.e. 1931 (Jooste, 1976:17).
- The missionary inspired members of the church in Uniondale to renovate the church building. They successfully completed the work and a gift of five pounds was donated to cover the costs incurred during the renovation process (Jooste, 1976:17).
- The missionary managed to work in close relationship with rev. Bos' wife and the local chief Matshisevhe. The chief later complained of not being invited to the church meetings. The missionary agreed that he could be present at church meetings since elders had not yet been chosen and no church council had been instituted (Jooste, 1976:17).

3.3.3.2 *Molietsieskop*

As already indicated above, Molietsieskop was another of the preaching posts started by rev. Bos, and it became an outside preaching post for rev. Hugo du Plessis. There was a formal church council instituted in this area, yet things did not go as expected. Prior to Hugo du Plessis' era, elders did not fulfil their responsibility of visiting members at their homes.

With the coming of rev. Hugo du Plessis, a new strategy of reaching out to the people of this area was sought, but the elders and the helpers, like Hosea, seem to have not been very faithful in the implementation of the plan. This area was later handed over to the mission of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (Jooste, 1976:18).

3.3.3.3 *Siloam*

Siloam is situated about 55km north-east of Louis Trichardt, and was initially part of Tshithuthuni under headman Netshithuthuni, who was under the paramount chief M. Tshivhase. Later this piece of land came under the control of the paramount chief Mphephu. The mission deputies of the synod GKSA bought this piece of land from the Department of Native Affairs. It was 500 morgen in extent and was bought at 5/- per morgen (see Jooste, 1976:15; cf. Venter: 12).

Geographically, Siloam stretched up to mount Tshamunawa in the north, the Nzhelele river and Dopeni (Haralinala) in the south, the road to Hakhakhu, the river Tswiridi, and Sendedza (Tshavhalovhedzi) in the west, and Tshirenzheni in the east. The name Siloam means '*the one sent*' and it was given to this area in line with the name 'Siloam' in John 9:7. "Die naam *Siloam*⁷ beteken "die een wat gestuur is" en is aan die bad in Jerusalem ontleen waar Jesus die oë van 'n blinde geopen het (Joh 9)" (Spoelstra, 1999:99). The name was regarded as appropriate, since there were hot springs on the farm.

⁷ Siloam also refers to the hot springs which were originally part of the farm.

The Vhavenda people from in and around Siloam often referred to this area as '*Tshitāsini*' (station), because Siloam was indeed a mission station. When visiting the house of the minister (pastorie), they would often say that they are going to '*Hamuneri*', with the same meaning of the Afrikaans word for mister, '*meneer*'.

3.3.4 His missionary activities at Siloam

When rev. Hugo du Plessis was called to be a missionary among the Vhavenda people in the Soutpansberg area, he received the special mandate of turning Siloam into a new mission field of the GKSA. His missionary activities included amongst others the following:

3.3.4.1 Erecting a church building and the minister's house

As already stated above, when rev. Du Plessis started at Siloam, there was no church building or parsonage. It was part of the plan that rev. Du Plessis should make sure that those facilities be provided within a short period of time. The young missionary never hesitated to take up these responsibilities. "Na enkele maande is met die bou van die pastorie en 'n kerkgeboutjie begin" (De Klerk, 1953: 16).

To accomplish the above-mentioned, rev. Hugo du Plessis was assisted by the evangelist Jojakim Matlakala, who was also his translator and helper. De Klerk (1953:16) reports that: "Jojakim het daarby soos 'n gewone handlanger gehelp, klei aangemaak en kruiwa gestoot". In three months' time, they had already laid 23 000 bricks (Jooste, 1976:18).

In the meantime, Jojakim had finished building his rondavels, and rev. Hugo du Plessis and his wife Cor had to live in one of them whilst waiting for the minister's house to be completed. The minister's house was ready in the beginning of 1930, and the mission couple could move in soon after (De Klerk, 1953:16).

Initially, Sunday church services were held under a tree. To provide temporary accommodation for the church, a round hut had to be built. People started to attend church services on Sundays there. In his report to the Mission Committee of the sending church, rev. Du Plessis pointed out that: "Omdat dit langsamerhand tyd geword het om 'n vaste preekplek in te stel waar elke Sondag diens gehou kan word, het ons die bestaande rondawel daarvoor ingerig" (Jooste, 1976:18,19; cf. De Klerk, 1953:16)

3.3.4.2 Institution of the church

It was rev. Hugo du Plessis' purpose to start an indigenous church with immediate effect, but his vision could not be fully realised during his first period of service at Siloam. "Sy ideaal was egter formering van selfstandige kerke in 'n vreemde volk" (Spoelstra, 1999:104).

As already stated, rev Hugo du Plessis started at Siloam with Jojakim's family and the Christian families of Alfeus Madzhiabada and Joël Mamphiswana. They all came from outside Siloam. Alfeus, whose wife was blind, was a Lutheran, who was willing to accept and confess the reformed faith in line with the GKSA (Spoelstra, 1999:105).

The language remained a problem. The missionary and Alfeus could not understand each other properly since the former was an Afrikaner and the latter a Muvenda. The missionary started to realise the need to learn the Venda language. "Du Plessis kon nie met Madzhiabada kommunikeer nie en het besef dat hy Tshivenda moes aanleer" (Spoelstra, 1999:105).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis started to have fellowship with these families. Whilst the church was not yet instituted, rev. Hugo du Plessis formed a sort of church council with the above-mentioned brothers, with the missionary as the chairperson. From there the first formal church meeting was organised. "Die eerste vergadering is op 17 Mei 1931 gehou" (see De Klerk, 1953:17; cf. Jooste, 1976:20).

The first formal church gathering provided the opportunity for those few members to partake in the sacrament of the Holy Communion. During that first meeting, the first Holy Communion was served: "Toe is ook vir die eerste keer nagmaal op Siloam bedien" (Jooste, 1976:20).

3.3.4.3 School education

Most of the Vhavenda people to whom rev. Hugo du Plessis had to reach out, could not read or write. In order to teach them to read the Bible, rev. Hugo du Plessis had to start with elementary training. With the help of Jojakim, the school for Vhavenda children was started. At first they had to meet under a tree. The progress was very slow because of misconceptions about education fostered by the Vhavenda people in that vicinity. "Die skooltjie wat intussen gestig is, het stadigaan uitgebrei, want die baar naturel het tog die besef gehad dat onderwys sekere materiële voordele meebring" (De Klerk, 1953: 17).

When the round hut was completed for the purpose of church services, the missionary also used it for a school. It was a humble beginning. Only about 25 to 30 children came to school. The missionary and his helper Jojakim taught children before the services of trained teachers was acquired at a later stage. Learning areas taught at the school included among others elementary education, Bible history and singing (Jooste, 1976:19).

3.3.4.4 The institution of the outside preaching posts

Apart from laying initial foundations for his missionary work at Siloam, rev. Du Plessis' approach also involved establishing as many outside posts as possible. This would enable him to turn Siloam into a dynamic mission station. His initial efforts could not get off the ground as anticipated. It was very difficult for him to gain access to the area around the mission station. Those areas were owned and ruled by chiefs and headmen who denied the GKSA access to their vicinities. Neither chief Mphephu nor chief Tshivhase would allow the missionary permission to institute

preaching posts in their respective vicinities. "Geen van die kapteins wou toelaat dat ons kerk in hul gebiede buiteposte aanlê nie" (see De Klerk, 1953:17; cf. Jooste, 1959:346).

Consequently, the missionary had to approach the neighboring farmer of Swartfontein (Manyii) for a working relationship. The farmer was quite cooperative and missionary work was started there. He also approached the authorities of the neighboring crown lands, who were also very cooperative. As a result missionary work was started at Diepkloof (Hamavhunga), Chewas (Shanzha) and Boabab (Tshituni) with Jojakim doing most of the work. As indicated, the last three farms were "crown land" (khorolani), where the department of native affairs had the authority to grant permission for mission work without the prior permission of the local headmen. It should, however, be noted that the problem of the chiefs who denied the missionary access to their respective areas, was going to be a temporary thing (see De Klerk, 1953:17; cf. Jooste, 1959:346).

3.3.4.5 Training and use of helpers

In line with his predecessor, rev. Du Plessis made use of helpers (evangelists or catechists, *mamesitere*). This was necessary because of the language factor. They were to help him to bring the gospel to the people with whom he had contact in their own language, in this case the Vhavenda (Jooste, 1976:15). On the one hand, at the already existing posts, Uniondale and Molietsieskop, rev. Hugo du Plessis made use of Andries Moutluatse and Hosea Mathobela respectively. On the other hand one of the helpers whom rev. Du Plessis used, became a pillar in the work that he was doing in Siloam. His name was Jojakim Matlakala, who was really Du Plessis' right hand man. At a later stage he became the first black minister under the guidance of rev. Hugo du Plessis (see Jooste, 1976:15; cf. Spoelstra, 1999:111).

According to Jooste (1976:16;17), rev. du Plessis, as assisted by his helpers, managed to fulfil the following:

- He visited and preached at different preaching posts as indicated above.
- He led catechism classes.
- He did house visitation with an aim to evangelising the natives in that area.

The helpers were very useful in bringing the gospel to the people. They also served as his points of contact whilst visiting different mission fields to evangelise there. It was part of his responsibilities to find and train new helpers, with the aim of starting outside preaching posts. However, a lack of funds prevented the training and use of more helpers. For that reason, Jojakim had to do most of the work. As already stated, he was also entrusted with the task of educating children on the neighboring farms. "Jojakim moes maar inspring en elke môre vroeg na 'n paar plase gaan om daar vir die kinders wat bymekaar gekry het, skool te hou" (De Klerk, 1953:17).

3.3.4.6 Farming

It was the responsibility of the missionary to make sure that the farm was running properly. However, during the first period of rev. Du Plessis' missionary efforts at Siloam, it was very difficult for him to focus his attention on farming. The person responsible at the farm as the foreman was mr. Esterhuysen, with rev. Du Plessis supervising his work (Spoelstra, 1999:105).

According to Spoelstra (1999:105), it was part of the missionary's work to distribute the fields at Siloam "Die sendeling moes die klam en droë lande tussen Esterhuysen en die Vendavroue op die plaas verdeel". About 20 morgen was distributed between mr. Esterhuizen and about 50 women from among the Venda community. Some of these women were sent by their husbands to come and stay at Siloam so that they could acquire a piece of land for subsistence. "Soos Jojakim die helper sê: die nasie van ons is baie slim en hulle stuur hulle vrou om op Siloam te kom bly, die kry dan 'n stukkie land, oes dit klaar en trek weer weg" (Du Plessis, 1929:840).

The missionary encountered problems when he had to distribute the land among the Venda women, because everyone wanted an equal share. Du Plessis (1929:840) remarked that: "Op die oomblik is ons besig om land onder die volk te verdeel en dit is maar 'n moeilike werk om almal te vrede te stel".

Under the guidance of mr. Esterhuizen, the farm workers had to start the project of digging a furrow from the Nzhelele river in order to bring water to the farm. The deputies had to visit chief Mphephu to ask for his assistance with regard to this project. After having visited him several times, the only answer that they could get was that they are still attending to the matter and that all the 'indunas' must first be consulted. That was their way of wearing the missionary down by giving him neither a positive nor a negative answer. "Hulle wil nie help nie maar wil ook nie beslis weier nie" (Du Plessis, 1929:840). The initiated person will know that this practice of "postponing" a decision is actually the Venda way of politely refusing. The idea is to keep the applicant waiting until he finally gets the message or get discouraged.

The farm workers were to be employed for two pounds per year and were to be encouraged to send their children to school. This was in line with the agreement between rev. D.P. du Plessis and dr. P.J.S. de Klerk, the secretary of the Mission Committee of Pretoria, mr. Hogewind, and rev. Hugo du Plessis, which was reached at Siloam in July 1929 (Spoelstra, 1999:105).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis did not make a great success of the farm at Siloam. Spoelstra (1999:122) attributes that to piety, that Du Plessis was exclusively concerned with "spiritual matters". According to him, mission and farming went parallel and at a certain stage against each other. It should, however, be noted that his failure had no theological basis, his lack of interest in the farm was the result of a lack of technical knowledge about farming.

3.3.5 The first encounter between GKSA mission and the Vhavenda people

The following section is an assessment of the work which Du Plessis accomplished in his first encounter with the Vhavenda people as a missionary of the GKSA.

3.3.5.1 The missionary's encounter with the Vhavenda people

The first encounter between rev. Hugo du Plessis and the Vhavenda people at Siloam and the surrounding areas took place in August 1928. There are two outstanding

aspects of rev. Hugo du Plessis' approach to mission which are noteworthy in this regard. The following can be mentioned:

3.3.5.1.1 Housing

There was no house for Du Plessis to live in, so he had to stay in a tent for some time. Later he moved to the roundavel of Jojakim Matlakala whilst waiting for the minister's house to be completed in the beginning of 1930. "Aanvanklik moes ds. Du Plessis in 'n tent bly, maar later kon hy en sy eggenote 'n eenvoudige woninkie, wat entlik meer bedoel was vir die evangelis Jojakim Matlakala, betrek" (Jooste, 1959:345,346; cf. De Klerk, 1953:16).

3.3.5.1.2 Transportation

The young missionary had to do his missionary work using a donkey or a donkey cart, or by walking. It is only after his marriage, when Mr. Gerhard Braak of Braak's garage in Pretoria gave him a 1914-model car as a wedding gift, that his problem seemed to have been resolved. It should however be noted that his transport problem was far from over. The roads were very rough, and some of the places he had to visit never had any roads (Spoelstra, 1999:104).

3.3.5.1.3 Church building or structure

When rev. Hugo du Plessis started at Siloam, there was no church building where people could come together on Sundays. They had to use a tree as a meeting place for church meetings as well as for the school for elementary education. "Onder 'n boom is skoolgehou, en Sondae is onder dieselfde boom kerk gehou" (Jooste, 1959:346).

3.3.5.1.4 Resistance

Rev. Du Plessis' initial encounter with the Vhavenda people met with strong resistance from the Vhavenda people in that area. "Die jong ds. Hugo du Plessis het

van die heidense Bavenda 'n swak indruk gekry" (see Spoelstra, 1999:100; cf. Jooste, 1959:346).

The resistance which rev. Hugo du Plessis encountered from the Vhavenda people had more than one cause.

- *Suspicion and animosity*

Rev. Hugo du Plessis' encounter with the Vhavenda people in that area was something strange to them. The white man had to stay in their midst. The Vhavenda people were very sceptical of the white missionary's intention to come and stay in their midst. "Daar was agterdog onder hierdie heidene teen die bedoelings van die blanke leraar wat onder hulle kom woon het" (De Klerk, 1953:16).

One other factor that contributed to their animosity was the fact that the Venda people still had fresh memories of their clash with the whites in 1898. It was a mere thirty years after the war between the South African Republic and Mphephu, when Mphephu and his people had to flee to Zimbabwe. It was only after the Anglo-Boer war of 1899 to 1902 that the Venda territory was under the complete control of the white administration of the Republic of South Africa (De v. Minnaar *et al.*, 1992:4; Van Rooy, 1959:172).

- *Social barrier*

Rev. Hugo du Plessis was a white Afrikaner working among the Vhavenda people. They belonged to different social groups with an entirely different culture. Interaction between the two different ethnic groups was difficult. It was not long after the war of 1898 between Mphephu and the South African Republic. The young missionary knew little about their way of life and doing things. He had to learn everything from the outset.

- *Language barrier*

Rev. Hugo du Plessis also had a communication problem with the Vhavenda people, since he was an Afrikaans speaking person whilst they spoke Tshivenda. He made use of the translator in the person of Jojakim Matlakala, who was a '*motswana by origin*'. The Vhavenda people were not very comfortable with him. They suspected he was the white man's instrument. "Hulle het hom as 'n agent van Boere beskou wat hulle grond wou vat" (Spoelstra, 1999:101; cf. Van Rooy, 1959:172).

- *Land issue*

The Vhavenda people, especially the chiefs, suspected that the missionary was there to rob them of their land. Siloam was a bad omen to them. They thought it might merely be the start of more disowning of land (Van Rooy, 1959:172; cf. Spoelstra, 1999:101).

3.3.5.2 The encounter of the Vhavenda people with the gospel

During the first years of Du Plessis' encounter with the Vhavenda people, the gospel had very little impact on them. The good news about Jesus Christ as personal saviour and Lord did not seem to bear much fruit. "Die doop-klas is aanvanklik deur vyf persone bygewoon" (De Klerk, 1953:17).

It should also be noted that during this first period, there were only four Christian families who came to Siloam, having accepted the Christian faith already. Those were the families of the missionary, Jojakim, Alfeus and Joël. Consequently, the church could not be officially instituted, since church offices were not functional. Du Plessis could only appoint an ad hoc 'church council', consisting of the above-mentioned brothers with the missionary as the chairperson (De Klerk, 1953:17).

The encounter between the gospel and the Vhavenda people is best captured by the remarks of Venter (20) who mentioned that “Die opkoms was aanvanklik swak”. The reasons for the resistance are the following:

3.3.5.2.1 Traditional belief

The Vhavenda people could not accept the gospel as it was proclaimed because of their strong belief in the traditional religion as described above. They were also afraid of the consequences they might face as inflicted upon them by their ancestors. “Die Bavenda’s was nog baar, verharde heidene, vol bygeloof en vrees vir die geestewêreld” (De Klerk, 1953:16).

It is important at this stage to note the fundamental differences between the gospel and the Venda worldview. The following differences are noticeable:

- Cosmos

The traditional Venda worldview presents the cosmos (world) as a hierarchy of powers, each with its own place in the totality and influencing each other mutually. The feeling of cosmic relationship in this totality is very strong (Van Rooy, 1986:92).

The gospel, on the other hand, presents the cosmos and everything in it as the creation of God. The world is not in any way a product of blind chance and probability, God created it (Genesis 1:1; cf. Acts 17:24). Everything stands in relation to the Creator in such a way that nothing happens without his knowledge. He controls and sustains the universe. God cannot, therefore, be viewed as a divine clockmaker who wound up the “clock” of creation at the beginning but then left it to run on its own (Grudem, 1994:270).

It is noteworthy that God created the cosmos and everything in it out of nothing⁸ (*ex nihilo*) and for a purpose, that through creation man should come to a better

⁸ God did not use any previously existing materials when he created the cosmos.

understanding of him (Romans 1:19-21) and thus serve and bring glory to his name (1 Corinthians 10:31; cf. Isaiah 43:7; Revelation 4:11).

- The notion of God

The God of the Venda people, 'Nwali', is said to have created and left his creation alone. He is the one-time originator of creation, the highest force in creation, but not essentially different from creation. God is seen as an inherent part of the totality of the hierarchy of powers (Van Rooy, 1986:91; cf. Van Rooy, 1971:85).

According to the traditional Venda worldview, the lesser powers in the hierarchy, including men, do not have direct access to God, he is unknowable and inaccessibly far. God does not give attention to human life, and therefore, the notion of God among the Vhavenda people is strongly deistically coloured. Their God is "*Deus absconditus*", a hidden, absent God (Van Rooy, 1986:93).

The gospel on the other hand presents God as *Yahweh*, "I am" (Exodus 3:14). According to Helberg (1988:81), this name indicated his omnipotence, his immutability and trustworthiness, his living and life-giving presence among his people and his bond with them. He is the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God, and should be understood and served as such.

God is not a remote God and is not trapped in his creation. God is sovereign and in control of everything, he is close and personal to each and every individual being. Paul explained it very clearly in Acts 17:27, when he pointed out that he is not far away from each one of us.

- Man

Man in the traditional Venda worldview finds meaning in his relation to the entire 'ingroup' community. He is like a creation of the community, he lives for the community and finds the meaning of life in his harmonious interaction with it. This can be elucidated by a typical African saying '*muthu ndi muthu nga vhathu*' (a person

is a person by other people). Interpersonal relations receive strong emphasis in this regard (Van Rooy, 1971:88).

As already stated in 3.2.4.2 above, man occupies a special place in the life of the Venda people, especially with regard to the hierarchy of powers. Van Rooy (1986:92) maintains that man has his own modest place in the hierarchy, somewhere between the spirits above and the animals and plants below him.

On the other hand, the gospel presents man as the image bearer of God (*Imago Dei*) (Genesis 1:27). Man is created by God according to his likeness, and can only find the true meaning of life in his personal relationship with God. We are, therefore, created to reflect the glory of God and his character in our love, patience, forgiveness, kindness, and faithfulness.

- Sin

The concept of sin, as depicted by the gospel, is foreign to the traditional Venda worldview. It denies the possibility of sinning against God and being guilty before him or responsible to him, because of the assumption that he has nothing to do with human actions. A person can only sin against the community or become guilty of failure to be loyal to the entire "ingroup" community. Murder, theft, black magic and enmity is seen as sin only when directed against members of the "ingroup" (Van Rooy, 1971:86;88).

The gospel on the other hand presents sin as disobedience towards God, doing that which He forbids and not doing that which He permits. Sin can, therefore, be defined as the breaking of the law⁹ of God (1 John 3:4) and also not doing what God is commanding one to do (Isaiah 1:16,17).

⁹ The law of God can be viewed from two sides: God does command and forbid certain things. There are things which are wrong and which God commands us to put off; but there are those which are good which we are commanded to put on (Ephesians 4:22-24). It should also be clear that sins of omission are just as serious and deadly as those of commission. This point is well illustrated by the parables in Matthew 25:31-46 and Luke 10:25-37.

- Soteriology

The notion of salvation in Christ is strange within the traditional Venda worldview. Salvation is understood in terms of the *cosmic relationship*. Salvation, blessedness, peace depends on whether man is integrated in the totality of cosmic relationship and the rightful place that he/she occupies in it. And the notion of salvation is taken to mean the same as being released from distress and misfortune in this life (Van Rooy, 1971:88).

The gospel presents salvation in Christ as an exclusive testimony or fact to be propagated to the entire universe. Sinners can only be saved through faith in Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord. As we read Revelations 7:10, the great multitude of those who washed their robes clean by the blood of the lamb praised God, saying that salvation comes from him and from the lamb. By the lamb reference is made to Jesus Christ, it's only through Him that sin's penalty can be removed. Jesus' name is the only name given by God for our salvation (Philippians 2:9-11; cf. John 3:16).

- Pneumatology

There is no place for the Holy Spirit within the traditional Venda worldview. He is confused with an ancestral spirit, and His indwelling and working is confused with that of the *malombo* spirits and the ways in which they manifest themselves (Van Rooy, 1971:88).

The gospel presents the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, as the only true living God. The Holy Spirit, through the unique proclamation of salvation in Christ, works redeeming faith in the hearts of the believers.

- Eschatology

The traditional Venda worldview propagates life after death in a way totally different from what is revealed in the gospel. Those who die enter immediately into the realm of the dead, where they continue to influence the life of the living in a negative or

positive way. There is no expectation for the resurrection of the dead. The dead may rather possess the spirit of the living through the *malombo* (the cult of spirit possession) (Van Rooy, 1971:50).

The elements of accountability and judgement before God are strange to the traditional Venda worldview. The remote God has nothing to do with the life of human beings on earth, hence man is neither accountable to Him nor judged by Him (Van Rooy, 1986:113).

The gospel, on the other hand, presents the message of hope for people, the adherents of the Christian faith. The gospel teaches about life after death, in the sense that those who die in this life as Christians depart to be with the Lord. Paul is able to confirm this truth by saying that "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The Holy Spirit becomes a guarantee, or God's assurance, for those who believe in Christ (Romans 8:11).

The gospel teaches about the resurrection of the dead, whereby the dead and the living shall account before Him in the final day of judgement. Those who die in the Lord will receive everlasting life, hence those who die without Christ receive eternal punishment. In Acts 17:30-31, Paul confronted his audience with Jesus' resurrection and its real meaning to all people – either life or punishment.

- Prayer

Prayer as understood in terms of the gospel is not known to the traditional Venda worldview. The veneration of ancestors is emphasised over and against any personal contact or communication with 'Nwali'. The notion of veneration of ancestors (*urerela vha fhasi/vhadzimu*) includes both the elements to pray and to utter a spell (Van Rooy, 1971:86).

In their prayers to the ancestors (ancestrolatry), the Venda people, by implication, relegated God to the realm of the long-dead spirits. He is only referred to as 'Na iwe

ri sa u di' (And you whom we do not know) at the end of some prayers (Van Rooy, 1986:109).

According to the gospel, prayer is a way in which Christians communicate with their heavenly father, God Almighty (Grudem, 1994:376). Prayer should be directed only to God on behalf of oneself and others, i.e. fellow Christians, people of other beliefs, government, etc (Matthew 6).

Because of these fundamental differences between the gospel and the traditional Venda worldview, the missionary's efforts met with strong resistance and were exposed to syncretism. He always had to guard against the notion of 'accommodation' or preaching for the sake of preaching without realising the fact that a Venda person should be confronted with the saving gospel within his own culture.

3.3.5.2.2 *New religion*

During their first encounter with the gospel, Christianity was totally strange to the Vhavenda people. It was very difficult for them to make sense of and accept the gospel as proclaimed, because the Christian religion was new to them. They could simply not understand the content of the message proclaimed. "Afgesien van sommige wat in aanraking met die Berlynse Sending in die omgewing gekom het, was die Christelike godsdiens en beskawing aan hulle feitlik nog onbekend" (De Klerk, 1953:16; cf. Venter:20).

3.3.5.2.3 *Fear of rejection*

With the notion of communal life playing its role, it was very difficult for an individual Muvenda person to accept the gospel about Christ because of a fear of rejection. "Sodra 'n Venda die Christelike geloof aanneem, het sy familie hom verwerp" (Spoelstra, 199:100). The negative role of the chiefs also played a bigger role in this regard. People were afraid to go against the wishes of their chiefs from fear of being chased away from their areas.

3.3.5.2.4 *Questions faced by the missionary*

In his first and the entire missionary endeavor among the Vhavenda people, rev. Hugo du Plessis wrestled with the questions related to their culture. For the purpose of illustrating this fact, the following can serve as best examples:

- *Initiation schools*

As already stated in 3.2.3.5, the Vhavenda people sent their children to the initiation schools. The problem remained of whether those schools are acceptable from a missionary perspective or not. This question was necessitated by the common tendency among missionaries of Du Plessis' days, who totally forbid such practice for all Christians. "Die sending van vandag sê eenvoudig: ons wil niks met die skool te doen hê nie, en alle kristene word verbied om daaraan deel te neem" (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *The use of beer*

The traditional beer of the Vhavenda people is called '*mahafhe*' or '*mutomboti*'. Many missionaries strongly disapproved of its use. Du Plessis (1928:300) remarked that: "Die sending sê hy mag dit geheel en al nie gebruik nie". Du Plessis had to wrestle with the question of whether the Vhavenda people who come to faith should still drink their traditional beer or not?

- *Polygamy*

Some of the Vhavenda people, during their encounter with the GKSA and the gospel, were polygamists. The missionary had to wrestle with the question of whether polygamists should be accepted as church members or not. This was necessitated by the missionary approach of many missionaries of that time. Missionaries generally proclaimed monogamy on the basis of the superiority of the love of one man for one woman. This proved to be a most difficult concept to explain to the people of Africa.

Missionaries encouraged those polygamists to divorce their wives and remain with one before they could become Christians. “Die sending sê hy moet eers afstand doen van al sy vroue behalwe een, voor hy wil kristen word” (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *Bride's price*

When a young man had to marry, it is within the tradition of the Vhavenda people to pay the bride's price called '*thakha*' in the form of cows. Most missionaries of Du Plessis' era rejected this custom. Du Plessis (1928:300) asserts that: “Die sending sê hy koop vir hom 'n vrou en daarom mag 'n kristen dit nie doen nie”. Consequently, Du Plessis had to wrestle with the question of whether this act was acceptable or not.

- *Marriage ceremonies*

Marriage ceremonies among the Vhavenda people differed from that of Christianity, which had to take place in the church as officiated by the ordained minister of the Word. A feast is organised, and the bride is accompanied by her friends, who will stay with her at her new family for quite a number of days. This form of marriage took place at night. Missionaries of those days forbade such marriages, and encouraged the couple to get married in the church. “Die sending sê: nee hy moet in die kerk gaan trou” (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *Birth rites*

When a child is born among the Vhavenda people, the rituals of '*u bvisa nwana*' (to take the child out of the house where it was kept for some months), '*u sikela dzina la nwana*' (to officially name the child) are performed and celebrated with a great feast. The name given will be attached to a specific event or circumstance at the time when the child was born. Missionaries usually objected to such a practice saying that Christians need not do that. Du Plessis had to wrestle with the question whether Christian should be allowed to engage themselves in such rituals (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *Music and dance*

It is within the cultural traits of the Vhavenda people that they sing, play certain instruments, and dance to the sound of their music. Du Plessis (1928:300) remarked that: "Sy nasionale musiek is die fluit en die drom, daarby dans hy dan." In this regard the missionary had to wrestle with the question whether that can be allowed or not. It was a common tendency amongst the missionaries of Du Plessis' times to forbid cultural music and dancing. Especially in the church they could not use instruments like flute (*nanga*) and drum (*ngoma*). "Die sending verbied enige van hulle musiek" (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *Spiritual possession (Malombo)*

It is believed that when the spirit of the departed ancestor wishes to take possession of the ill-person, an act of spiritual possession, '*malombo*', must be performed. According to Van Rooy (1071:70) "The 'treatment' consists of singing, sometimes night and day for a week, by the bedside of the patient, to the accompaniment of rattles (*tshale*), until she sits up and commences swaying her body round and round and nodding her head, with ever increasing violence." The missionary, rev. Du Plessis, had to wrestle with the question of whether such an act should be allowed (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

- *Attire*

The traditional attire of the Vhavenda people is '*tsindi*' for men and '*minwenda*' and '*makunda*' for women. It was a common tendency amongst missionaries to encourage the indigenous converts to exchange their traditional attire for that provided by the missionary (western attire). Du Plessis wrestled with the question of whether those who came to faith should throw away their attire or not. "Word hy gedoop tot kristen, dan gooi hy sy nasionale klere weg en trek die witman se klere aan" (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis made use of the antithesis method of approach to reach out to the Vhavenda people. For him, mission should not only forbid the indigenous people certain things, but also provide with an alternative or replacement for such things. He feared a situation wherein the native would resemble the missionary in all respects. This is very clear from his remarks that: "Een ding is duidelik dat as dit gedoen word en die sending nie iets anders in die plek gee nie, die kristen vanself die sendeling navolg in alles. Hy trou soos die sendeling, hy eet soos hy, hy trek soos hy aan, hy speel soos hy, hy maak sulke musiek soos hy, met een woord hy word 'n nageaapte witman" (Du Plessis, 1928:300).

3.3.6 The end his first period

On February 27th, 1932, rev. Hugo du Plessis was released from the Reformed Church Pretoria as their missionary to the Transvaal in the Soutpansberg area. This happened after the congregation indicated to the particular synod of Transvaal of 1932 that they were no longer going to take part in mission as sending church. This marked the end of rev. Hugo du Plessis' first period at Siloam (Venter: 26).

From the above-mentioned, one might rightly conclude that the beginning years were quite difficult for the missionary, in that everything had to start from scratch. The missionary had to persevere. "Die beginjare was ook maar moeilik, want alles moes van die grond af gebou word, en ds. en mev. Du Plessis moes hulle die grootste ongerief en opofferings getroos" (Jooste, 1959:345). The tenacity of the hold of the traditional religion and worldview on the Vhavenda people showed itself in the paucity of the converts to the Christian faith during the first years of missionary work.

3.4 DU PLESSIS AS MISSIONARY IN SILOAM FROM 1932 TO 1950

3.4.1 His calling

According to Jooste (1976:20), rev. Hugo du Plessis received a calling from the Reformed Church Pretoria-Oos to be their missionary at Siloam, shortly after his release from office by the Reformed Church Pretoria.

3.4.1.1 The calling and sending church, Reformed Church Pretoria-Oos

The Reformed Church Pretoria-Oos came into being through the act of secession from the Reformed Church Pretoria. They were under the leadership of dr. P.J.S. de Klerk (a brother in law to rev. Hugo du Plessis) when they accepted this challenging responsibility of calling rev. Hugo du Plessis as their missionary to Siloam (Jooste, 1976:20).

3.4.1.2 Financial matters

According to the letter of his calling, rev. Du Plessis was to receive yearly stipend of R700,00 in the form of a monthly or three monthly payment. It was going to be an enormous task for such a young church to carry such a cost, unless they received assistance from somewhere else. The sending church was assisted financially by the following:

- Some Reformed churches which formed part of the particular synods Transvaal and Orange Free State.
- The women's organisation of Pretoria-Oos.
- Individual donors.

The financial support given by the above-mentioned was also meant to cover the following costs:

- Transport allowance of R120, 00.
- Emeritus and widow's funds, and the pension fund were to be provided for him in line with the guidelines as outlined and accepted by the synod of 1930.

- He could stay in the minister's house for free, since it was built for that purpose.

3.4.1.3 His missionary mandate

The sending church, Pretoria-Oos, and the mission deputies of the particular synod Transvaal compiled the letter of instruction (Instruksie-brief) to highlight the missionary mandate that rev. Hugo du Plessis had to carry out in Soutpansberg. According to the letter of instruction given to him on the 4th of March 1932, rev. Hugo du Plessis had the following missionary mandates to fulfil:

- He was to stay at Siloam in the minister's house, and engage himself in a new mission area with Siloam as a mission station. He had to fulfil his roles in alignment with the Mission order of the day.
- With the help of God, rev. Hugo du Plessis was given the task of reaching out to the entire Vhavenda population with the Word of God. He had to reach out to the locations and farms outside Siloam to create new preaching posts and to see to it that he get capable helpers and teachers to assist him with the workload.
- With regard to the capable helpers, he finds the responsibility to find them from amongst the Vhavenda people and to train them as far as possible for that purpose. The final goal for such training was to start a training school for prospective servants of the Word from among the natives.
- In consultation with his sending church and the mission deputies, rev. Hugo du Plessis had to supervise the schools which were already there, and those that were to be instituted on the outposts.
- Rev. Hugo du Plessis had to take care of the medical services in the mission and also had to provide native nurses where possible.
- He had to visit the outside stations of Uniondale and Molietsieskop at least four times per year. On those occasions, rev. Du Plessis had to administer sacraments, i.e. Holy Communion and Baptism.

The church council of the Reformed Church Pretoria-Oos and its Mission Committee, together with the mission deputies of the particular synod Transvaal, gave him full moral and physical support during his stay in the mission field. They pledged to visit him at least once a year in the mission field to show their commitment.

3.4.2 Siloam as a mission station

Rev. Hugo du Plessis went to Siloam and engaged himself in turning it into a dynamic mission station.

- He engaged himself in extending his missionary field by establishing new posts on the locations and farms outside Siloam. It was a very difficult task, since he had to go through the local chiefs to obtain permission to do so. Those chiefs were under the jurisdiction of either Chief Mphephu or Chief Tshivhase (Jooste, 1976:23). He managed to establish the following posts: Gogogo, Tshamulungwi, Mabila, Tswera, Vhurivhuri, Tshikundamalema, Thononda, Maname, Sane, etc.
- The establishment of outside posts was quite an enormous task for one, and he had to train some more helpers and teachers to assist him. The helpers who assisted him were: Johannes Mabona (husband of Jesaja Moutluatse's daughter Hermina), Ezekiel Ramabenyane, Stefaans Mugeru, Makhelimela Raphala, Josef Barure, Shadrack Shumba, Aaron Machaba, Gideon Mathobela, Alfeus Madzhiabada, Jojakim Matlakala, Andries Moutluatse, Manasse Moshapo.

3.4.3 Siloam as an independent church

In his report to the Mission Committee in January 1938, rev. Hugo du Plessis made it clear that the time is ripe for a church to be established at Siloam. According to article 10 of the Mission order of that time, there had to be twenty or more members for a church to be established as autonomous (Jooste, 1976:24).

A decision was taken to give a mandate to those members present in the meeting of the Mission Committee to visit the mission field in order to investigate the possibility of instituting a church in Siloam. They had to visit Siloam during July 1938, but the establishment of the church only took place on October 18th, 1942 (Jooste, 1976:25).

According to De Klerk (1943:8), October 18th, 1942, stands as one of the dates with a special and particular meaning in the history of the GKSA mission. History was made when the first Reformed Church for blacks was established under the GKSA mission. As to the proceedings prior and on the day of the establishment of Siloam as an independent church, the following can be highlighted:

3.4.3.1 Election of a church council

For Siloam to be established as an autonomous church, there had to be a church council for the purpose of overseeing the life of the church in line with articles 23, 37 and 38 of the Church order (see Vorster, 2000:45,68 - 73). The meeting for electing the elders and deacons took place on the eve of the 18th, the day of the establishment of the church.

The following persons were present at the meeting: dr. P.J.S. de Klerk as the chairperson of the church council of Pretoria-Oos; rev. P.J.J. Delport on behalf of the Mission deputies of the particular synod Transvaal; rev. P.J. de Klerk on behalf of the Mission deputies of the synod; rev. S.J. van der Walt, who was the chairperson of the new sending church; Sixteen helpers and chief Matshisevhe of Uniondale (De Klerk, 1943:8).

It was rather an unfortunate situation for rev. Hugo du Plessis, who could not be present at this a historic event in which he was actively an instrument in the hands of God. He could not attend because of illness. Five elders and five deacons were elected, and their names were to be presented to the church for approval the following day. It was during this meeting that the duties of the elders and deacons in line with

articles 23 and 25 of the church order were explained to them (De Klerk, 1943:8; cf. Voster, 2000:45 – 48).

3.4.3.2 The church service prior the establishment of the church

On the 18th of October 1942, the service was held at 12 o'clock in the church building at Siloam, and it was led by dr. P.J.S. de Klerk. During this service the meaning of 'the autonomy' of a church and the obligations of the elders and deacons were announced to the congregation. The congregation was given time to bring in their possible objections against the names of the prospective office-bearers. They were given time until 3:30 in the afternoon (De Klerk, 1943:8).

3.4.3.3 The institution of the Reformed Church Siloam

The service for instituting the Reformed Church Siloam was held at 3:30 on October 18th, 1942. It is in this service where six members of the church council were ordained. Rev. P.J.J. Delport is the one who led the service, whilst rev. Erasmus is the one who ordained them after having read the respective formulas for the ordination of the elders and the deacons (De Klerk, 1943:8).

Rev. Erasmus and the deputies present congratulated and wished the newly ordained office-bearers the best of wishes for the service in the coming of the kingdom of God. They also passed their greetings to the newly established church. Rev. Hugo du Plessis, who missed this occasion, only sent verbal greetings to the congregation and their respective office-bearers through the deputies (De Klerk, 1943:8).

3.4.3.4 Sunday at Siloam

Since the first Reformed Church for blacks under the GKSA was established at Siloam, it is imperative to reflect on how church members and the community in and around Siloam perceived the Lord's day, "Sunday". Sunday at Siloam was not just an ordinary day, it had a special meaning for the church members and the community at large. Sunday at Siloam had a four-fold meaning, and the following can be mentioned:

- *Sunday as a day of rest*

Sunday was a day that was highly respected by the people of Siloam. It was regarded as the Christian Sabbath. Church members and heathens who were residents of Siloam, had great respect for the 4th commandment of keeping the Sabbath day holy. Elders were very strict. They did not even allow people to cut firewood on that day.

By Saturday afternoon, the members of the community made sure that their clothes were clean. They also went to bath themselves for the next day. “Dan is almal by die rivier of die nabygeleë Tshipise en, waar seep nie wil help nie, moet met ’n sandklip geskuur word” (Du Plessis, 1950:15).

- *Sunday as a day of worship*

Sunday was also the day of worship. The congregation and observers or seekers (people who attended the church services though they were still heathens) came to the church for the worship service. “Die heidene woon almal die erediens by, hoewel sommige dit minder gereeld doen” (Du Plessis, 1950:15). The pagans probably came because it was expected of them as inhabitants of the farm.

According to Du Plessis (1950:15), the liturgical arrangements of Sunday at Siloam were as follows:

- At 11h00 the bell was rung for the 11h30 church service.
- The church council will meet before the church service in the rondavel of Jojakim, since the church building did not have a consistory of its own. The rondavel of Jojakim was near the church building, that is why they opted to use it.
- The normal liturgical procedure of the GKSA was adhered to. Singing was very lively, and the church participated in saying the Lord’s prayer.
- During the second service, the congregation received preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism: “Ons ondervinding is dat as die kategismus op

eenvoudige en toepaslike wyse verklaar word dit wel ingang by die naturelle vind” (Du Plessis, 1950:16).

- Rev. Hugo du Plessis organised one Sunday per month during winter in which the congregation engaged in mission work. On this Sunday the congregation held a special service in the area of one of the local headmen for mission purposes. This Sunday was meant to awaken and to teach the church about its missionary responsibilities. “In die winter gaan die hele gemeente een Sondag per maand na een van die omliggende kapteinstatte en dan word daar ’n regte sendingdiens gehou” (Du Plessis, 1950:16).

- *Sunday as the day of instruction*

Sunday at Siloam was also a day of instruction on the matters of the Lord. According to Du Plessis (1950:15), the following instruction classes took place on a Sunday:

- Sunday school was at 8:30. Not less than 100 children attended. They were taught by teachers who were under the supervision of rev. Du Plessis.
- After the church service, which lasted for about an hour and a half, there was also an instruction session of not less than 30 adults of the heathens who came to church. Jojakim, or one of the elders if he was absent, would lead them. The sermon of the day was explained to them, and they received Biblical teaching of some sorts.
- 15 minutes after the above-mentioned instruction session of the heathens, there was a catechetical instruction class for the children and elderly people who were to confess their faith and or baptised at a later stage. Most of them spent up to three years in one class.
- The fifth Sunday was meant for the singing practice that was led by the principal of the school at Siloam, at one time the well-known Lemba author, W.M.D. Phophi. This practice took place after the above-mentioned class.

- *Sunday as a day of celebration*

Sunday was also a day of celebration at Siloam. The nature of the celebration revealed the communal character of the black communities in line with African

communalism. The feast took place after the second service, and the rest of the day was used to visit one another. “Na die tweede erediens kuier die christene vir mekaar en die Sondag bly vir hulle steeds ’n feestelike dag waaraan gewoonlik herinneringe verbind word” (Du Plessis, 1950:16).

3.4.3.5 *The liturgy of the worship services*

Liturgy has to do with the dialogue between God and his people, which is vertical and at the same time horizontal. This dialogue takes place within the context of the worshipping service, a meeting between God and His people and with one another. In liturgy, the notion of cultural adaptation plays a significant role. God’s people should be allowed freedom to worship in their own mother tongue and within their own culture. This does not imply that other people from other ethnic groups should be excluded from the service. The liturgical structure or format introduced by rev. Du Plessis in the Venda church lacked cultural adaptation. Everything was done from the western perspective, and consequently the local church became a replica of the mother church.

3.4.3.6 *Du Plessis’ preaching*

There are three aspects of rev. Hugo du Plessis’ preaching that deserves special attention, namely: its contextuality, pietistic, and kingdom focus. His sermons were in the first place contextual. They were able to speak to an African within his own context. His knowledge of anthropology enabled him to apply the gospel to the African context. Prof. J.A. van Rooy maintains that he remembers rev. Hugo du Plessis preaching from Revelation 3:14-22, the letter to the church at Laodicea. He started by saying “*Ndo do u dalela tshivhidzo tshanga tsha kale. A tho ngo da fhedzi, ndi na tshe nda fara. Ndi vhurifhi. Ho nwalwa nga Yesu*” meaning “I have come to visit my old church. I did not come with nothing, I have something in hand. It is a letter. It is written by Jesus”. Then he read the text and commenced his sermon: “You imagine yourselves to be rich etc.” He said *inter alia*: “We think that we have developed a lot; we no longer wear ‘tsindi’ (stertriems), we now wear trousers. We know much more than the old people. We are rich, like the Laodiceans. Yet we may be poor and miserable and blind and naked like the Laodiceans actually were, unless we buy the ointment from the Lord Jesus.”

A typical example is his sermon during the opening of the first General Synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa on June 28th, 1965. Rev. Hugo du Plessis read from Ephesians 2:19-22, and in his exegesis and application, he emphasized the unity of the church. He called upon people from different cultural backgrounds, black and white, to take part in the building of the universal church of God. This had implications for the race relation question in South Africa. Blacks and Whites could now look at each other as members of one body of Christ. This is attested by the following words: "Die groot kloof tussen die mense is nie meer die tussen Israel en die volke nie, ook nie meer die tussen Blank en Nie-Blank nie, tussen stam en stam nie maar die tussen geloof en ongeloof. Daarom is mense wat vroeër ons vyande was nou saam met ons in die woning van God, saam met ons huisgenote van God en medeburgers in die koninkryk van God" (Du Plessis, 1965c:302).

This statement highlights the second aspect of Du Plessis' preaching, namely that it was not only focused on the church, but also on the coming kingdom of God. God in Christ inaugurated the new era. He saw the church as existing and operating within the *scopus* of the kingdom of God. "Daarom is ons wat aan Christus verbind is, die kerk van die Here wat sy woning is, geroep om hierdie nuwe tyd die uitbreiding van die koninkryk van God met alle middele en kragte te bevorder" (Du Plessis, 1965c:304).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis' sermon on Acts 1:1-14 and 2:1-13 bears testimony that his preaching was kingdom focussed. He reckons the sovereignty of God over all of humanity and creation. "Hy is die soewereine God vir die hele wêreld, en hy moet ook as sodanig erken en geëer word" (Du Plessis, 1961d:311). He reckons the fact that God in Christ is in control, that He is reigning through his Word and Spirit. He attests to the fact that the gospel message should proclaim Christ as such. "Christus moet geproklameer word as die Koning en Verlosser van die hele wêreld" (Du Plessis, 1961d:311).

The third aspect of Du Plessis' preaching is that they were not pietistic per se. This is an important aspect to discuss, since Du Plessis was accused of having been concerned exclusively with "spiritual matters" or "pietism" (Van Rooy, 2000:602). One should note that rev. Du Plessis did not totally escape from it, but it was not a

prominent aspect of his ministry. As to the traces of piety in his life and preaching, rev. Hugo du Plessis should have been more “pietistic” in one respect. He grew up in the atmosphere of Neo-Kuyperian theology, in which there was little place for calling church members to “root conversion” (since they were all regarded as having been born again at birth). Prof. J.A. van Rooy attests that Totius, who had married his mother’s youngest sister Marié, was responsible for introducing this theology to the Doppe churches. As a result of this, Hugo and his contemporaries were a bit uncomfortable with conversion theology. Even when dealing with pagans, they very easily accepted that if a person claims to be a believer, then he should be regarded as one. Rev. Hugo du Plessis perceived the preaching of the Word as the primary component of his calling (Van Rooy, 2000:602). Du Plessis had the custom of giving the chiefs and headmen brandy as token of recognising their status. One could hardly call that “pietism”. Of course most of them appreciated the brandy. It is doubtful, however, that they appreciated the convictions of the person who provided it. They would probably have been more impressed with the convictions of the ZCC members who preached total abstention from alcohol.

3.4.3.7 Financial independence

It is an undeniable fact that an independent church is also a self-sustaining church in terms of finance. Having mentioned that, it does not rule out the possibility of getting financial assistance from a sister church or churches. During Du Plessis’ era, Siloam never gained financial independence. They relied heavily on the finances of the sending church. This should not be misunderstood as saying that funds were not raised and collected in this young church. The minutes of the church council in the archive of the GKSA in Potchefstroom attest to the fact that there were some money collected from church members on a monthly, quarterly and even annual basis.

Most of the times when the church council gathered, there was a financial report tabled in the agenda of the meeting. There are no written traces of the exact amount that individual members of the congregation contributed for their tithing. Prof. J.A. van Rooy maintains that rev. Hugo du Plessis expected every member, rich or poor, to pay 10 cents per month or R1, 00 per year. Evangelists Aaron Machaba also second this claim. The missionary is said to have upheld this practise until his departure.

Whilst the minutes of the church council attest that there were financial reports tabled in the agenda, those reports were never communicated to the members of the congregation. Aaron Machaba, one of Du Plessis' helpers or evangelists, claimed in a personal interview that they did receive financial reports before the church council, but it was not presented to church members. It should be kept in mind that there were hardly any members of the church in Du Plessis' time who earned a salary. Only later did a number of professional people emerge from the ranks of the youth of the church.

3.4.3.8 *The Identity of the new church*

It is primarily the aim of church planting to give birth to an indigenous church of Christ in which the indigenous people are able to worship God within their own cultural context. The planting of Siloam as an independent church left much to be desired in this regard. The local church became a replica of the mother church in all respects. Members had an identity crisis in that they had to copy the life of the missionary in all respects. They had to dress like him, eat and drink like him, make use of the western names, speak his language and so on (cf. 3.3.5.9.3 above). This left them with the problem of not being able to discern what is right and wrong within their own culture. Most of them became alienated from their culture, whilst some became syncretistic. For those who became syncretistic in their acceptance of Christianity, Biblical principles of life only mattered most in the sight of the minister or in the church. Among them you find drunkards and fornicators who were also members of the church. There are traces in the minutes of the church council of people who were admonished and disciplined several times for one thing.

Another aspect that is noteworthy in this regard is that communal life was more visible when they were gathered in the church. Christianity was never a pattern of life, it was like a dress that you put on during special occasions. It became a pattern of life to many church members to put on the new self on Sundays and to put on the old self before and after church service. Some even went as far as suggesting that their church is not troublesome "*Kereke yashu a i dini*", you eat and drink whatever you want "*ni la na u nwa tshine na funa*", as long as you go to church and do not trouble anyone "*tenda na ya kerekeni, nahone ni si dine muthu*". However, this does not suggest that there were no committed members within the newly founded church.

There were those who lived according to the standards of the Word, those who felt the obligation to lead a life of thanksgiving for the salvation they received from God in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Under the leadership of rev. Hugo du Plessis, mission work in Siloam slowly but steadily progressed. The outstanding effort of the GKSA was rewarded in August 1947 when the church in Siloam called its first black minister in the person of Jojakim Matlakala. Jojakim was ordained to office in September 1947 (Jooste, 1976:25).

3.4.4 Siloam as a training center

Through the leadership skills and giftedness of rev. Hugo du Plessis, Siloam was turned into a training center. There were two forms of training that took place there, namely: school education and ecclesiastical education.

3.4.4.1 School education

In accordance with the Mission order of the day, it was part of the missionary's tasks to organise and teach elementary education so that people could learn to read and write so tha they could be to read the Bible. When rev. Du Plessis and his helper Jojakim Matlakala moved to Siloam, they had to lay the foundation for school education (Jooste, 1976:25)

As for elementary education, rev. Hugo du Plessis and his helper Jojakim started to teach children reading, singing and some Bible history in the round hut at night. After the erection of the church building, the building also served temporarily as a school building (Jooste, 1976:25).

Regarding the organisation of the school, rev. Hugo du Plessis encountered a number of problems. By way of example, the following can be mentioned:

- Lack of school premises. The church building was initially also used for the school purposes.

- Shortage of teachers and money to remunerate them. Rev. Du Plessis had to conduct some classes on his own, and at times helpers had to do this job.

3.4.4.2 Ecclesiastical training

In line with the mission methods of the time, the missionary had to find helpers for further training in order to equip them for the service in the mission field. They also had to receive training in ecclesiastical matters. In this regard, rev. Du Plessis had to organise such meetings and prepare lessons to be taught and discussed there (Jooste, 1976:27).

Apart from the general training on ecclesiastical matters, some helpers were offered special training in order to become evangelists. This kind of training was a success. "In 1939 het die Sendingkomissie dit reeds as sy wens uitgespreek dat helpers Andries en Jojakim van 1 Julie 1939 af kon optree as evangeliste" (Jooste, 1976:27).

Apart from evangelists who were trained by rev. Hugo du Plessis, Jojakim Matlakala was trained to become a minister of the Word of God. After intensive training, application was made for Jojakim to be admitted to the ministry through article 8 of the Church Order. "Van Junie 1943 tot Junie 1944 is baie goeie vordering gemaak, want Jojakim bly steeds ywerig en sal waarskynlik in 1946 gereed wees vir ondersoek onder artikel 8 van die Kerkorde" (Jooste, 1976:27).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis was very successful in this regard, with the result that in July 1943, Jojakim had to be examined at Siloam by the Mission deputies of the General Synod of the GKSA. He was asked questions to test his knowledge on biblical and ecclesiastical matters. He passed the examination, became a proponent, received a calling from the Reformed Church Siloam and was ordained to ministry shortly thereafter (Jooste, 1976:27).

3.4.4.3 Equipment of the congregation

Members of the congregation were edified through preaching on Sundays and house visitations before and after Holy Communion. Minutes of the church council attest to the fact that rev. Hugo du Plessis made use of his helpers or evangelists to do house visitations. Through the help of his wife, sisters of the church started with the tradition of coming together during weekdays for sewing, singing, prayer and listening to the Word of God. Apart from the training of evangelists and the above-mentioned, there are no traces of youth work that he organised or traces of congregational conferences, workshops and seminars to address specific issues. The congregation only came together for special occasions, i.e. when they had to partake in the Sacraments (see 3.4.7.d).

3.4.5 Medical service at Siloam

The development of the medical services at Siloam took place in line with the mission order of that time. Missionaries were expected to have medical knowledge in order to provide elementary medical assistance when needed. From the early stage of his stay in Siloam, it was not possible for rev. Hugo du Plessis to develop such a service. "Gedurende die eerste paar jaar van ds. Du Plessis se verblyf op Siloam word in sy verslae aan die Sendingkommissie niks gesê van mediese dienste nie" (Jooste, 1976:28).

According to the Instruction letter which rev. Du Plessis received from the sending church and the mission deputies of the particular synod Transvaal, he was instructed to provide medical service and also to appoint nurses from among the blacks (Venter: 53).

It was only after his report of 1936 that rev. Hugo du Plessis highlighted the need for medical services in Siloam. He saw it as a useful tool in proclaiming the gospel in a practical way. He was of the opinion that it is the service through which the Christian life and love find expression. It can also help the blacks to have a better

perspective on life and death, health and sickness, so that they can abandon their belief and practice of witchcraft¹⁰ (see Venter:56; cf. Jooste, 1976:28).

With the help of Jojakim and Mrs Du Plessis, rev. du Plessis started to offer ordinary house medical services. At a later stage the round hut was used as a clinic. A Dutch lady sister, Drost, served as a nurse. The clinic also received some assistance from Elim hospital. According to Jooste (1976:28), white nurses became involved at Siloam, and at a later stage black nurses were also involved in visiting the sick and sharing the Word of God with them. Doctors from Elim hospital also assisted in this regard. "Die dokter het elke 14 dae van Elim af met sy bussie gekom en dié wat erg siek was hospital toe geneem" (Jooste, 1976:28).

Apart from the assistance that the clinic received from Elim hospital, the Scottish missionary doctor from Donald Fraser Hospital near Sibasa, in the person of Dr. Aitken, also assisted them. In his report rev. Hugo du Plessis indicated that Dr. Aitken visited the mission centre for medical services on a weekly basis.

There was tremendous growth and success in what rev. Hugo du Plessis, with the help of others, were doing. Soon there was the need to establish a hospital in Siloam. A proposal was laid before the government, asking that a hospital should be built there, and it was approved. The authorities donated R3000, 00 for the building of the hospital. A plan was also donated. "Mnr. P.S. Dykstra, argitek van Pretoria, het die planne gratis opgetrek" (Venter:54).

Under the supervision of rev. Hugo du Plessis, the building of the hospital was a great success. The hospital was officially opened on February 20th, 1940. It was officially opened by the secretary of Native Affairs, Mr. D.L. Smith. He was accompanied by the inspector of Native Education (Venter:54).

The opening of the hospital in Siloam was a major break-through for the mission of the GKSA. Its functioning was of great significance for the mission station as well as

¹⁰ They had the belief that if a person is sick, the sickness is inflicted upon that person by another person who is bewitching him or her. They also believed that sickness and death are also caused by the spiritual forces, and as a result they use to consult the witchdoctor, in order to get medical service.

the black people in and around the mission station. There were about 2000 blacks who attended the opening, which was held under the tree within the yard of the hospital. All the deliberations were translated into Tshivenda so that all natives present there could follow the proceedings. The occasion was graced by the presence of Chief Mphephu and his headmen, who were among the distinguished guests (Jooste, 1976:28).

The hospital had a nurses' home to provide residence for the nurses. There were other outside buildings related to medical service. The government provided R400,00 for the buying of medicines and medical instruments. They also provided R200,00 for maintenance. The hospital acquired the services of sister R. Drost. "Met die bou van die hospitaal in 1940 het daar gewaardeerde hulp gekom op Siloam in die persoon van suster Drost, die eerste matrone van Siloam hospitaal" (GKSA, 1959:186). Later on the services of other sisters in the persons of Naude and Gutter were also acquired (Venter:54).

3.4.6 Farming at Siloam

In line with the mission order of 1924, Siloam was not only bought for ecclesiastical purposes, but also for farming. Farming was meant specifically to provide extra funds and subsistence for the mission of the church

3.4.6.1 Administration of the farm

From the onset, the administration of the farm at Siloam was under the Mission deputies of the General Synod of the GKSA, with the missionary acting on their behalf. "Die plaas Siloam waarop die sendingstasie geleë is, was aanvanklik onder die bestuur en beheer van die Sendingdeputate van die Algemene Sinode" (Jooste, 1976:29).

This kind of arrangement changed in 1939 when the Mission Committee of the sending church, Pretoria-Oos, was entrusted with the responsibility of administering the farm. With the new arrangement the hands of the missionary were tied. His

involvement was very limited. "In die administrasie-beleid moes Hugo geraadpleeg word soverre dit die sendingbeleid betref" (Venter:58).

To elucidate the above-mentioned, certain resolutions that were taken in line with what had been decided, has to be looked at:

- On October 25th, 1939, it was decided that the advisors of the Mission Committee should take the responsibility of deciding on what had to be planted and cultivated (Venter:58).
- Payments of everything related to farming had to be done by the Mission Committee from Pretoria. "Die Sendingkommissie het besluit dat alle uitbetalings vanuit Pretoria moes geskied" (Venter: 59).

These resolutions made things very difficult with regard to the proper administration of the farm. It is rightly remarked that they were unrealistic and impractical: "Dit het baie probleme veroorsaak en was baie onprakties en onrealisties" (Venter:59). Here are a few examples:

- Communication between the missionary and the Mission Committee was difficult since there was no telephone at Siloam until the establishment of the hospital. " 'n Telefoon is eers verkry nadat die hospital opgerig is" (Jooste, 1976:31).
- Rev. du Plessis had to communicate with the Mission Committee through letters. In one of the letters that he wrote to the committee he included not less than 15 matters to be attended to. "Hierdie sake het gewissel van verlof van die predikant af tot afsonderlike bedrae in geld wat aan die verskillende helpers uitbetaal moes word; aartappels wat Joël moes kry om te plant en die dam wat skoon geskrop moes word" (Jooste, 1976:31,32).
- Several matters had to be attended to when rev. Du Plessis visited Pretoria. "Elke keer as ds. Du Plessis in Pretoria was, kon hy die vergaderings

bywoon, maar origens moes dit alles deur korrespondensie gereël word” (Jooste, 1976:31).

3.4.6.2 *Distribution of the land*

From the onset, the Deputies of Mission of the General Synod of GKSA distributed the land at Siloam in the following manner:

- Part of the land which could be irrigated was given to the inhabitants of Siloam for ploughing;
- Part of the land was given to the missionary to cultivate, for his personal benefit;
- And another part was to be cultivated under the supervision of the foreman (Venter:58).

It is noteworthy that with the above-mentioned arrangements, the farm played a very significant role with regard to the mission activities there. The missionary was directly involved with the cultivation of the farm. “As gevolg van hierdie reëling was ds. Du Plessis van die begin af gemoeid met die bewerking van die plaas” (Jooste, 1976:29).

When the Mission Committee of the Sending church, Pretoria-Oos, took charge of the farm, things changed drastically. With regard to the new arrangements about the distribution of the land on the farm, the following can be mentioned:

- The eastern half of the arable land was given to the Farming Committee of the Mission Committee of the sending church, Pretoria-Oos. It should, however, be noted that all irregularities that may occur on the eastern side were to be reported to the Farming Committee of the Mission Committee via rev. Hugo du Plessis. It was only the internal running of the farm where the missionary did not have a say. “Die sendingleraar sou geen seggenskap hê oor die interne boerdery aangeleenthede van die Oostelike

deel nie, dog alleen in sake wat die sending as sodanig geraak het” (Jooste, 1976:30).

- The western half of the farm, which was about 30 morgen, was given to the missionary, the inhabitants of the farm, and part of it was put aside for school (Jooste, 1976:30).

3.4.6.3 *Farmers at Siloam*

Under the administration of the Mission Deputies and also under the Mission Committee, several farmers came to ply their trade at Siloam.

- The first farmer to come to Siloam was mr. Esterhuizen. Under his guidance, the canal to supply the farm with water was completed in 1931. He was not very successful. “Die boer, Esterhuizen, kon egter nie die mas opkom nie” (Spoelstra, 1999:120).
- On April 24th, 1933, mr. B.J. de Klerk, the father of mrs. Du Plessis came with dr. P.J.S. de Klerk to farm at Siloam. B.J. de Klerk had very successful years of farming at Siloam. He even had a very good relationship with his son in law and also with the natives on the farm. “Die boerdery het vreedzaam verloop totdat De Klerk in 1939 ’n rustiger lewe gaan seek het” (Spoelstra, 1999:120).
- The farmer who followed after De Klerk was D.J. Coetzee.

3.4.6.4 *Foremen at Siloam*

The Mission Deputies and the Mission Committee of the sending church alike, made use of the foreman at the farm. One of those people used at the farm as the foreman was Joël Mamphiswana. He was a helper at Bergplaas and was appointed as the

foreman at Siloam in 1933. He played a crucial role there, “Hy speel vir baie jare ’n leidende rol op Siloam” (Spoelstra, 1999:120).

3.4.7 The role of mrs. Du Plessis at Siloam

Mrs. Maria Cornelia du Plessis came to Siloam to join her husband in 1929. It is of uttermost importance to say a few things about the role of mrs. Maria Cornelia Du Plessis at Siloam. She played a very significant role in the life of her husband as a missionary there. She was a pillar of strength to her husband. She supported him fully in his missionary responsibilities. “Heel van die begin af het ds. Du Plessis die hulp en steun van sy eggenote ondervind by die vervulling van sy bykans onmoontlike taak in Soutpansberg” (see Jooste, 1976:33; cf. GKSA, 1959:185).

Under the extremely difficult conditions at Siloam, mrs. Du Plessis did exceptionally well.

- As a housewife, she managed to keep the family running, especially the welfare and education of the children, whilst Du Plessis was often away from home for several days visiting the outposts.
- She managed to receive and entertain many guests who visited the mission station, i.e. different deputies of mission, and, also at some occasions, members of the government. “Toentertyd het ons heelwat by die sendingpastorie aangekom (die gebied het in ons gemeente van destyds geval), en dit was altyd ’n baie opgeruimde gasvrou wat ons ontvang het” (GKSA, 1959:185; cf. Jooste, 1976:33).
- She trained black women in needlework, Biblical issues and other important issues related to the role of women in the family¹¹, and singing. Services of this nature were organised for Thursday afternoon, and Agnes

¹¹ Een boodskap wat sy aan elke moeder kan bring is dat die vrou moet lees en nogmaals lees om haarself daardeur op te bou en te ontwikkel en om haar man soveel beter in sy werk by te staan en te inspireer (GKSA, 1959:187).

(the wife of Jojakim) helped with the interpretation. “Cor het haar man bygestaan en die vrouens gehelp” (see Venter:53; cf. GKSA, 1959:186).

- She assisted her husband with regard to the medical services when it was started. She was there to act as a nurse to attend to native women and children. “Met die kennis van noodhulpwerk wat sy vroeër opgedoen het, moes mev. Du Plessis inspring as verpleegster as die naturelle by hulle huisie aankom met brandwonde, veldsere of seer oë” (GKSA, 1959:185).
- When the building of the school was completed, there was nobody who could to teach the Vhavenda children homecraft lessons, and mrs. Du Plessis had to take that responsibility. She taught them how to cook, make clothes, bake bread, and so on: “Dit was toe maar weer sy wat moes inspring om die meidjies te leer kook, klere maak, brood bak, vloer insit en figure op die mure teken om die huishoukamer aantreklik te maak” (GKSA, 1959:187).

Together with her husband, mrs. Du Plessis made a great contribution to the missionary efforts of the GKSA in the Soutpansberg, and specifically at Siloam and surrounding areas.

3.4.8 The general life at Siloam

It is of great importance to reflect on the general life of the missionary at Siloam. It helps to see how he adapted himself in the context within which he was involved as a missionary. With regard to the general life at Siloam, there are a number of issues that can be reflected upon, and for the purpose of this study the following will be mentioned:

3.4.8.1 The missionary and his family

Life at Siloam was never an easy thing for the missionary and his family. They had to serve the kingdom and fulfill their calling in difficult conditions. According to Spoelstra (1999:139), the following can be highlighted:

- Tropical diseases like malaria often troubled the missionary couple. To curb this problem, arrangements were made to find them other accommodation during summer times.
- Their children received education from home, with their mother as their instructor until they reached the level of grade 2, when they had to go to Louis Trichardt to study. They had to stay there and only came back during weekends and school holidays.
- The couple suffered financial constraints during the Depression of 1934, when his salary was lowered.
- Rev. du Plessis became so deaf (after about 1940) that he had to make use of a hearing aid. From that time onwards, he was no longer actively involved in house visitations.

The very fact that rev. Hugo du Plessis and his family were willing to endure such hardships, speaks for their dedication to the Lord and to the well-being of His church.

3.4.8.2 The relationship with his helpers

Rev. Hugo du Plessis had a very close relationship with his helpers, but he was not free from traces of racism or white superiority. There are certain instances that deserves to be mentioned to elucidate this fact:

The stalwart old Shona evangelist, Joseph Barure, told prof. J.A. van Rooy that he once in a discussion with Hugo became a bit exited, whereupon he was told, "Have you forgotten that you are speaking to a white man?"

In his relationship with the Venda and Shona helpers he was very paternalistic. Rev. Jojakim Matlakala once told to prof. J.A. van Rooy how Du Plessis would sent Matlakala, Aaron Machaba and another helper to Halambani in order to select a site for a church there, measure it and put in pegs. They were chased away by chief

Lambani, who threatened to kill or bewitch them (which amounts to the same thing). When they returned after the unsuccessful mission, they were immediately sent back on Hugo's authority to go and complete the task he had given them (Van Rooy, 1959:172).

Mr. Joel Nethavhani tells of times when Hugo sent people across the Nzhelele river to fetch the mail. If they failed to cross or ford the river because of heavy rains, their excuses were simply not accepted: "Didn't I tell you to fetch the mail? Don't you know what mail is? Go and fetch it!"

Sometimes he seems to have gone a bit too far. Rev. Jojakim Matlakala tells of an occasion during which the two of them visited Klein Tshipise in the winter time. They slept in Hugo's car. One night Matlakala was sent to conduct a prayer meeting in one of the nearby villages. When he returned, he found Hugo fast asleep and all the doors of the car locked. All Matlakala's efforts to wake Du Plessis failed. He was by that time quite deaf. Matlakala fastened his coat, crept under the car and lay down as near to the middle of the car as possible. Matlakala mentioned the fact that: "Every now and then I would hear the sounds of animals coming to drink at the source. I would look to the left or to the right whether it was hoofs or claws. When it was hoofs, I slept on". The following morning he asked Hugo, "Vhafunzi (for Reverend), what did you do to me? I could have been killed by a wild animal!" Hugo just laughed it off with the words: "Waar is jou geloof, man?" ("Where is your faith man?")

3.4.8.3 The relationship with Vhavenda people

Rev. Hugo du Plessis was very paternalistic in his relationship with the Vhavenda people. At that time it was "normal" for missionaries, and black people put up with it, and in some cases even expected to be patronised. Du Plessis had the conception that the Vhavenda, like other blacks, are inferior to the whites. When the autonomy of the churches among black people was discussed at the synod of 1954, Hugo objected to some of the recommendations of the Deputies for Mission. When the structure of the "national synods" and the "general synod" was discussed, he objected to the principle that black members could appeal against the decisions of their own

synods or classes: "Suppose they appeal and the appeal is upheld, then they would come back and claim: The whites have upheld our appeal, we are in the right!" Whereupon one of the members of the synod answered: "And suppose they are in the right, why should they not appeal?"

3.4.9 The second encounter between GKSA mission and the Vhavenda people

The following section is meant to provide an opportunity to make a necessary assessment of the work that Du Plessis did during in his second encounter with the Vhavenda people as a missionary of the GKSA.

3.4.9.1 The missionary's encounter with the Vhavenda people

As already highlighted, the second encounter between the missionary rev. Hugo du Plessis and the Vhavenda people took place from 1932 to 1950. There are a number of aspects that deserve mention in this regard, and the following can thus be highlighted:

3.4.9.1.1 Working conditions

Working conditions as highlighted in the first encounter remained basically the same, with some slow changes.

3.4.9.1.2 Love and trust

The missionary started to connect in a meaningful way with the Vhavenda people, so that he gained their love, respect and trust.

3.4.9.1.3 Favour by chiefs

The problems of the chiefs as encountered by the missionary in the first encounter, were short-lived. He gradually developed a good working relationship with the Venda chiefs, except in a few instances where this was not possible.

3.4.9.1.4 Initiatives

Du Plessis became instrumental in bringing about development in the lives of the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam. Through his initiatives, the school was built and registered by the government, a hospital was built and people got access to better medical services, and farming was started and many Vhavenda people received their shares.

3.4.9.2 The gospel's encounter with the Vhavenda people

The preaching of the gospel was intensified by the establishment of many outside preaching posts and the recruitment and in-service training of the helpers, who in actual fact were doing the work of evangelists. Consequently, there are a number of aspects that need to be pointed out in this regard:

3.4.9.2.1 Unbelief

The 'unbelief' element as stated in the first encounter also existed in the second encounter. This was basically because of the same reasons as stated in 3.2.3.5.

3.4.9.2.2 Belief

A number of Vhavenda people became more acquainted with the gospel with the result that greater numbers accepted the Christian faith. In 1942 there were about 163 confessing members and 78 baptised children of the church. At the end of Du Plessis' missionary work among the Vhavenda people, the number had drastically increased. The genuineness of their salvation and their intentions in becoming Christians, remains a matter of investigation.

3.4.9.2.3 Growth in faith

Among the Vhavenda people, there were those who came to faith and did indeed grow in faith.

3.4.9.3 Problems encountered by the missionary

There were a number of problems encountered by the missionary in his second encounter with the Vhavenda people.

3.4.9.3.1 Acceptability

Because of his association and the missionary work that rev. Hugo du Plessis did in Venda, he was not always acceptable to some people within the GKSA. Many white Doppers admired him, but there were also those who were very sceptical about the possibility of blacks becoming Christians.

3.4.9.3.2 Deterioration of his health

It was noteworthy that rev. Du Plessis' health deteriorated as years past by. He grew deaf by the day. This was probably because of the use of quinine to prevent malaria. One thing that contributed to such a state of affairs was the hard conditions the missionary had to endure for the sake of fulfilling his calling at Siloam and the area around it.

3.4.9.3.3 Cultural hindrances

Whilst working with the Vhavenda people from within the church, rev. Hugo du Plessis came to understand that there are certain cultural hindrances that shaped the rationality and actions of the Vhavenda people, and which form obstacles to acceptance of the gospel:

- It is rather unacceptable for a Muvenda to take a decision unilaterally, without consulting with the person in authority or the higher person in the hierarchy of human relationship. The one in authority would never try to

inquire about the issue before it is presented to him. “Volgens naturelle moet aan iemand wat enige outoriteit bekleë vertel word van die oortredinge van die onder hom; hy mag nie daarop ingaan, voor dit aan hom vertel is nie” (Du Plessis, 1934:151).

- An intermediary was used in resolving disputes. The offender cannot directly deal with the offended, he or she would send someone to ask forgiveness on his or her behalf. “Nooit sal ’n kaffer dan ook self na jou kom om vergiffenis te vra nie, nee, hy sal altyd ’n ander vra om vir jou vergiffenis te vra, en al is hyself by as die middelaar vergiffenis vra, sal hy niks sê nie, nee die middelaar moet al die werk doen” (Du Plessis, 1934:150).
- A token, like a goat was used, as symbol of one’s commitment to resolve the dispute. One would send a goat or sheep or whatever he or she thinks is worthy to the offended to ask for forgiveness. “’n Naturel ken nie so iets as vergiffenis vra, nee vergiffenis moet gewys word in die vorm van ’n dier; dit is heeltemal ’n natuurlike gemoedsgesteldheid wat hier tot openbaring kom” (Du Plessis, 1934:150).
- The responsibilities of the husband and a wife are strictly diversified in the family context. “So sal ’n vrou vandag nooit met die beste werk nie of ’n man sal nooit mielies stamp nie” (Du Plessis, 1934:150).
- A woman can possess certain properties privately without the knowledge of his or her spouse. When giving a typical example, rev. Hugo du Plessis (1934:151) pointed out that: “Eienaardig is verder dat die vrou ’n bok besit as privaat-eiendom.”

Du Plessis sought to change the idea of Mwali (God) from a remote deity to a near and dear God, the loving Father. This presented a formidable challenge, given the impersonality of the traditional Venda religion. Among the Venda, the ancestors are respected, but there is no personal worship of ancestors. The ‘*midzimu*’ represent impersonal forces to be feared. The Venda also knew nothing of an after-life or

judgement. In all of their religious life, then, there was scant opportunity for the development of personal piety. They were not used to personal religion and thus not quickly amenable to it, while this is the very essence of Christianity.

3.4.10 The end of rev. Du Plessis' missionary work at Siloam

After a long service of 23 years, rev. Hugo du Plessis' era at Siloam came to an end. The ordination of Jojakim Matlakala marks the end of Du Plessis-era at Siloam. "Matlakala kon die Sendeling se bediening van Woord en Sakramente oorneem, terwyl oefenaar Lessing van De Hoop, bygestaan deur ds. W.F. Venter van Louis Trichardt, die administrasie van die hospital en uitbetalings aan Matlakala en helpers beharting" (Spoelstra, 1999:179).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis received a calling from the Reformed Church Johannesburg-Noord to move to the Witwatersrand to pioneer the 'inland mission work' of the GKSA. He informed the Mission Committee of Pretoria-Oos that he received a calling from the sending church Johannesburg-Noord and that he is going to accept it (Spoelstra, 1999:183).

Rev. Hugo du Plessis was released from his duties as a missionary at Siloam on December 10th, 1950. "Van Du Plessis is op 10 Desember 1950 in gietende reën onder leiding van Louw van De Hoop afskeid geneem" (Spoelstra, 1999:183).

The occasion was graced by the presence of different church deputies, chief Matshisevhe from Uniondale, and the paramount chief of the Vhavenda people, Patrick Mphephu. Thousands of Vhavenda people attended the occasion. It was very sad for them to lose rev. Hugo du Plessis after such a long spell working in their midst (see Spoelstra, 1999:183; cf. Jooste, 1976:33).

3.5 SUMMARY

In short, rev. Hugo du Plessis engaged himself in the pioneering missionary work of the GKSA at Siloam for 23 years. It was pioneering missionary work in the sense that he had to initiate everything from the beginning. It is rightly remarked that: “Op elke plek moes alles van vooraf begin word – eers op Siloam: self skoolhou, self mediese werk doen, self boer en opsigter speel, self bou en bou-opsigter wees, self draadspan en paaie aanlê en driewe maak, stene maak, huisbesoek aflê, katekisasie hou en preek” (Van Rooy, 1959:173).

3.6 EVALUATION

Du Plessis’ positive and negative contributions towards the establishment of the Reformed Church in Venda shall be evaluated. The following questions shall be used as guidelines:

- ❖ Was Du Plessis the correct candidate for the mission work of the GKSA among the Vhavenda people in the Soutpansberg?
- ❖ How much did he know of their language and culture?
- ❖ How did he succeed in carrying his missionary mandates?
- ❖ What contribution did he make to redress the socio-economic situation of the Vhavenda people of his time?
- ❖ What contribution did he make to redress the political situation of the Vhavenda people of his time?
- ❖ How far did he succeed in building a lasting relationship with the Vhavenda people?

3.6.1 The Person of the Missionary

3.6.1.1 Positive: Rev. Hugo du Plessis was a suitable candidate for the GKSA mission work among the Vhavenda people for various reasons. He received proper theological training regarding mission work, had great love for the mission work, developed great love for studying the anthropology of the

indigenous people, including his Masters dissertation regarding the politics of the Vhavenda people.

He also had the charisma to exercise patience and endurance. When the work progressed at a very slow pace, he never lost hope. He continued to trust upon the Lord that He will bring about good results. When the conditions were severe, Hugo du Plessis persevered and also compromised his health for the sake of the gospel and the advancement of the kingdom of God.

- 3.6.1.2 Negative: Apart from the above-mentioned positive things about rev. Hugo du Plessis, it should be noted that he failed drastically in as far as communication was concerned. He never gave himself time to master the language of the indigenous people. It became very difficult for Du Plessis to reach out to the Vhavenda people without the help of the translator. He relied heavily on the translator, so much so that he forgot that he has the responsibility to learn and communicate using the Venda language. As a result, the meaning of the message that he wanted to communicate was either distorted or the truth diluted in the process.

3.6.2 His missionary mandates

- 3.6.2.1 Positive: Rev. Hugo du Plessis should be commended for his ability to fulfil his missionary mandates with distinction. He managed to establish the indigenous church of the Reformed faith among the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam. This was realised when the church council was formally instituted.

He turned Siloam into a missionary station, and established schools, a hospital, and also distributed land accordingly to the indigenous people on the farm, so that they could subsist themselves. In this regard, rev. Hugo du Plessis should be commended for his course in ensuring literacy, job opportunities, and better

health services to the Vhavenda people. He contributed a great deal with regard to the socio-economic conditions of the Vhavenda people of his time.

Du Plessis should also be commended for his work of training the evangelists or helpers who assisted him in his missionary calling. They came together for in-service training at least once per week. According to Aaron Machaba, helpers came together from all the outside preaching posts on Thursday every week. The training of Jojakim Matlakala to become the first black minister of the established indigenous church marked the success of Du Plessis' era at Siloam. Matlakala was very good in Afrikaans and Dutch.

3.6.2.2 Negative: Having mentioned all the positive contributions made by rev. Hugo du Plessis, it is also proper to mention all the negative contributions. Rev. Hugo du Plessis can never be commended for:

- ❖ His failure to recognise that the established indigenous church should be treated as an equal to the churches that gave birth to her via missionary work. During the synod of 1958 when the establishment of the national synods was discussed, he opted for the establishment of a separate ecclesiastical body for blacks, because they could never be treated as equals to their white counterparts.
- ❖ His failure to set proper Christian standards for those who were to be members of the indigenous church. Pagans were very easily accepted. If a person claims to be a believer, then he should be regarded as one, "*De intimis non judicat ecclesia*". In the practice of mission work, this often lead to the acceptance of unconverted members into the church.

What seems to be worse, was that Hugo trained quite a number of evangelists and (later ministers) whose lives left a lot to be desired. The son of Jojakim Matlakala, Jacobus, can serve as a typical example of this. He had to be removed from ministry after about a year at Siloam. Both his father and Hugo had known that he was an alcoholic, yet they

supported his ordination as a minister. It took the Venda churches a long time to recover from the effects of this policy on the life of the church. This is the most serious criticism that can be leveled at Hugo du Plessis.

- ❖ The use of rejects from other churches as helpers or evangelists. It happened that candidates were accepted for church work who had been suspended or expelled from the ministry in other churches. A black Dutch Reformed minister told rev. Francois Malan: “Modoporo ba haha kereke ya bona ke melora ya kereke ya N.G.” (“The Doppers build their church from the trash of the N.G. Kerk.”)
- ❖ Failure to liberate them from financial dependency. They depended on the whites for financial support in almost everything, i.e. building and renovating church structures, paying of the evangelists and so on.
- ❖ The indigenous people were not able to bring the gospel of Christ into their own context. They depended on the missionary for everything in the church. He was the one to give directives on how they were to conduct themselves inside and outside the church. At the end of the day they became living copies of the missionary’s life and his ways of worshipping God. They were not sensitive to indigeneity, or never had that understanding.

3.6.3 His personal relations with the Vhavenda People

3.6.3.1 Positive: The missionary should be commended for having established a lasting relationship with the Vhavenda people with whom he had contact. He had a close relationship with his helpers.

3.6.3.2 Negative: Rev. Hugo du Plessis’ relationship with his helpers was very paternalistic, and therefore it was not free from any trace of racism or white superiority, as highlighted in 3.4.8.2. It is true that paternalism was a normal practice among missionaries of his time, but rev. Hugo du Plessis should be

criticised for not having done enough to fight this practice. This just confirms that he is the child of his times, and therefore should also be criticised from that perspective.

3.7 CONCLUSION

Rev. Hugo du Plessis' era of working as a missionary of the GKSA among the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam, came to an end in 1950. He left for the new terrain in Witwatersrand and in Potchefstroom. In the Witwatersrand, he started his work as a missionary in black townships in 1951. He then became a theological educator with the opening of Dube as a Theological training center for black ministers and helpers in 1955. At a later stage he became the first professor of Missiology at the Theological Seminary at Potchefstroom and the Faculty of Theology of the PU for CHE. The following chapter will investigate his contribution as a theological educator and missiologist within an African context.

CHAPTER FOUR

HUGO DU PLESSIS AS A THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR AND MISSIOLOGIST WITHIN AN AFRICAN CONTEXT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

It is the objective of this chapter to study, outline and evaluate Du Plessis' work as a theological educator and missiologist within an African context. Reference is made to his work as a lecturer in the theological training center in Dube and Potchefstroom. The word 'African context' is used inclusively to refer to the black and white contexts. The question to be answered is: How did Du Plessis approach his tasks as a missiologist and as the first Afrikaner to train black theologians and introduce Missiology to the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom? What was his contribution to the shaping of the Reformed theology of Mission in South Africa? To answer this question and to reach the objective of this chapter, the following will be dealt with:

- ❖ Hugo du Plessis as a theological educator in Dube.
- ❖ Hugo du Plessis as a missiologist in Potchefstroom.
- ❖ Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed churches' struggle for a relevant mission.
- ❖ Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed churches' struggle for a relevant missiology.

4.2 HUGO DU PLESSIS AS A THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR IN DUBE

Hugo had a great reputation within the GKSA. He was the first Reformed missionary who stayed in a mission field for a considerable period, and who, as a result, could show a church that endured after years. Many people admired him as "our missionary, the expert on mission and on the language and cultural anthropology of the black peoples". Mission-minded Reformed members were not critical of him at all. On the

other hand, in those years mission and intensive contact with black people on a spiritual level were still relative novelties to the average Reformed mind. There were those who did not trust any missionary, because they suspected him of undermining "their Apartheid policy". Between these two extremes, there was a majority who were neither enthusiastic nor hostile towards mission. This picture only changed radically when Dr Jan Schutte succeeded in bringing Prof J H Bavinck to Potchefstroom for a year.

The visit of Prof. J.H. Bavinck brought about an upsurge in mission work in the GKSA during the early 50s. During Prof. Bavinck's visit in 1952, special services for mission was organised in different GKSA churches like: Krugersdorp, Johannesburg-Noord, Johannesburg-Sentraal and Benoni. Churches in the Classis of Potchefstroom resolved to get involved in mission work. The Reformed Church Sannieshof also took a decision to start with mission work right away. Churches in and around Johannesburg started to get involved in mission work in the townships of Witwatersrand. They did mission work in areas like Orlando West, Dube, Newclare, Moroka, Sophiatown, Kliptown, New Look and so on. Consequently, the Reformed Church for the blacks was started at Moroka. This church was officially constituted on March 18th, 1952 (Sendingsverslag Johannesburg, 1953:14; cf. Du Plessis, 1952:19).

The work at Moroka and the nearby farm of Strubensvallei, a farm owned by br. Toxopeus, progressed tremendously. "Die werk op Moroka en Strubensvallei het baie vinnig gegroei en daar is nou reeds 104 volwasse lidmate en 105 kinders wat aan die gemeente behoort" (Du Plessis, 1952:19). According to the mission report of Johannesburg, as published in the Kerkblad of February 6th, 1953, church services were held in 9 other posts and also in Turffontein and Krugersdorp. The high rate of the formation of black congregation called for black ministers, evangelists or helpers. With the advice of Prof. J.H. Bavinck, rev. Hugo du Plessis suggested to the GKSA that they should start with the training of black ministers and evangelists or helpers. The Mission Committee of the Reformed Church Lichtenburg supported this also. "Ons stem ten volle saam met die waarskuwing van ds. H. du Plessis in die Kerkblad van 19 Desember. Daar is net een weg om die sendingsaksie van ons kerk veilig te

loots en dit is dat blanke sendelinge opgelei word met die Bantoes as helpers" (Van der Walt, 1953:11).

4.2.1 The training centre in Dube

The training center for the training of black ministers was initially instituted at Moroka, where classes were given in the school building at night. From Moroka, the training center was then moved to Dube.

4.2.2 His calling

Rev. Hugo du Plessis was called to be a full-time lecturer to train non-White ministers in Dube in 1955. The decision was taken by the deputies of mission, Synod Potchefstroom, who held their meeting in the Church building of Welkom, Orange Free State. At that stage, Du Plessis was working as a missionary of Johannesburg-Noord and was working amongst the Bantu and Coloureds of the West Rand (Botha, 1976:40).

The choice of Du Plessis was an obvious case for the deputies of mission. According to Botha (1976:40;41), the following reasons can be cited to elucidate this fact:

- Hugo du Plessis had the missionary experience of working among the blacks of 28 years.
- Du Plessis was also academically well equipped with regard to the culture of black people. Apart from his diploma in anthropology, he also had a Masters degree in the same field. His research focused not only on blacks residing in the rural areas, but also those in urban areas. This was a very important factor to the deputies because Hugo's appointment was meant for the blacks, who were to be trained to go and work among their own people.
- Du Plessis had part-time experience of training helpers and ministers from the black community. Rev. Jojakim Matlakala and Jacobus Matlakala had completed

their studies and became ministers under the guidance and part-time training offered by him.

- Du Plessis was also a very modest man, which was a God given ability that enabled him to work within black communities with great humility.
- Within the circles of the GKSA, ds. Du Plessis commanded a great respect concerning matters related to mission, and therefor he could give advice with authority.

As for the title to be bestowed to ds. Du Plessis after his appointment, the deputies decided not to call him a professor in line with the normal procedure in the Theological Seminary at Potchefstroom, but a lecturer. They reached such a decision after Hugo himself advised them to do so (Botha, 1976:41; cf. Venter: 85).

4.2.3 His work context

Du Plessis worked and fulfilled his calling as a first lecturer of the theological training of the black ministers within a specific context. It is imperative to outline such a context in order to determine how he, as a white Afrikaner, managed to work within and with people of different cultures. This study should also determine how this context shaped his understanding of mission and also influenced his work.

4.2.3.1 A white Afrikaner in a black township

The training center was initially situated in Moroka before it moved to Dube. Like Dube, Moroka is one of the many black townships in Soweto. A school building was used at night as the training center (Botha, 1976:42).

When the training center moved to Dube, they had convenient facilities that were conducive for the lecturer and the students. The center had an office for the lecturer, a library, and part of it was a church building where preaching sessions were conducted. It was also situated in the most convenient vicinity as to the transport of the students. It was next to the train station of Dube and the main route for the taxis and buses (Botha, 1976:42).

With regard to the learning atmosphere and the life context within which the center was situated, it was not so conducive for learning. There was a criminal element. The center was also situated next to the beer hall with all sorts of noise that goes along with it. The power of darkness was so visible that, speaking of Du Plessis' work place, it is remarked that: "Die plek waar hy gewerk het moes immers wees 'n vestingwerk van die Here in sy stryd teen die magte van die duisternis" (Botha, 1976:42).

4.2.3.2 *Classes at night*

One of the most difficult aspects of Du Plessis' work context was the fact that classes were conducted at night. This was mainly because most of the students used to work during the day. The other aspect that contributed to this is that, whilst they were still in Moroka, they used the school building which was used by the students during the day (Botha, 1976:42).

Worst of all was the lack of electricity. A lamp had to be used to offer some light in the classroom that was used. Du Plessis had to drive to the center everyday. The entire township was covered by darkness because of the lack of electricity, pedestrians who were not so used to many cars using their bumpy streets, and tsotsies (Botha, 1976:42).

4.2.4 His workload

The training centre at Dube had two streams of training, that of helpers and that of ministers. Students training to be ministers had to follow a four year course which included the following subjects in the curriculum: Exegesis, Canonics, History of Revelation, Dogmatics, Church Polity, Church History, Catechism, Homiletics, Cathegetics, Pastoral and Liturgics. Although ethics was not offered as a course at that stage, Rev. Du Plessis did offer some ethical lessons. It later formed part of this course. Du Plessis had to offer all the courses on his own. In the training of helpers he was assisted by ds. C. Khoza (Botha, 1976:43).

Apart from teaching responsibilities, Du Plessis engaged himself in administrative duties. He served as the secretary of the senate of the training center, and he administrated the institution on his own. It was quite a heavy load for one man, but by the look of things, Du Plessis seemed to cope. There were basically two things that kept him going:

- God had given him the necessary gifts to fulfil his calling, i.e. wisdom and power, or work energy. It is remarked that: “Die Here het hom groot verstandelike gawes en werkkrag geskenk” (Botha, 1976:44).
- He was committed to using his God given abilities to fulfil his calling. “Die saak van die opleiding het vir ds. Du Plessis baie na aan die hart gelê. Hy het dit met groot toewyding aangepak” (Botha, 1976:43).

Du Plessis worked very hard. Within a period of three years after his appointment, he had completed the study material of all the courses that he was lecturing. His wife Cornelia assisted him with the typing, and the typed notes were handed to the students. At the end of each lesson, evaluation questions were outlined and students had to answer them in the form of writing and hand them in for control to Rev. Du Plessis (Botha, 1976:44).

4.2.5 His approach

There are a number of aspects that can be mentioned with regard to Du Plessis' approach as a lecturer training black ministers and helpers.

4.2.5.1 Relevancy

The lectures that Du Plessis presented to his students were the product of academic studies. However, they were brought to them with simplicity and relevant idioms were used. Difficult theological terms were explained in the language that suited the

students. Botha (1976:44) underscores this by saying: "Moeilike teologiese begrippe is vir die Batoestudent in verstaanbare en verteerbare vorm weer gegee."

4.2.5.2 *A missionary at heart*

Du Plessis remained a missionary at heart whilst serving as a lecturer. He was of the opinion that a preacher should always preach with the confidence and assurance that what you preach. He maintained that this always made a difference to the Bantu students, because they were not sure of anything (Botha, 1976:44).

4.2.5.3 *Antithesis approach*

Du Plessis rejected completely the sympathetic method that wanted to accommodate the religious aspirations of the Black people. He believed that the non-Christian Bantu pushed aside the revelation of God with untruth. For that reason he maintained that the missionary should come with the antithesis type of approach, where untruth is replaced by the truth about God. According to Botha (1976:44), the following can be mentioned as typical examples of the antithesis that Du Plessis speaks of:

- ❖ The word *spiritual power*, the power which the Bantu believe in, should be replaced by *the living God*.
- ❖ The Bantu idea of *self-salvation* must be replaced with *salvation through God*.
- ❖ Concerning their fear of *the spiritual supernatural powers*, it should be replaced with the idea of *the living God who is gracious*.

Du Plessis' approach was visible in his lectures and during his contact sessions with the students. Throughout his service, he remained true to the Word of God and also exhorted his students to preach the Word (Botha, 1976:45). When rev. Hugo du Plessis left for Potchefstroom to become the first professor of Missiology, rev. L.J. Botha and rev. J.L. Helberg succeeded him in the training of the Black ministers and evangelists or helpers.

4.3 HUGO DU PLESSIS AS A MISSIOLOGIST IN POTCHEFSTROOM

4.3.1 His calling

When it became clear that the time was ripe to introduce missiology as a theological discipline at the Theological Seminary of Potchefstroom, the electing commission of the curators came together on February 11th, 1959, in Potchefstroom in order to appoint the first professor for this task. Having called upon the name of the Lord, they appointed ds. Hugo du Plessis to be the professor of missiology. It was expected of him to also lecture Biblical Studies at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education per institutional agreement between the TSP and the PU for CHE.

In line with the institutional agreement between the two institutions, the Council of the University appointed ds. Hugo du Plessis to be the sixth professor in the Faculty of Theology. The Council of the University also appointed him as the Head of the Department of Missiology. He was granted to full membership of the Senate on the basis that he was appointed as the head of the department of Missiology. His appointment as a professor of Missiology in Potchefstroom had to commence on April 11th, 1959.

Du Plessis' vast experience in the missionary field, coupled with his knowledge regarding missionary literature and his ability to exegete the Scriptures exceptional well, made him an obvious choice.

4.3.2 His work context

The following section aims to recapitulate the context within which prof. Hugo du Plessis fulfilled his calling as a missiologist in Potchefstroom.

4.3.2.1 The missiological world and the challenges of Du Plessis' time

(a) Du Plessis became a professor of missiology during the commonly known as 'the post World War II' in the global context. Great changes were taking place on the

world scene, and the context within which the church had to fulfil its missionary mandate became more and more complicated. There were already visible signs of the world becoming more of a global village by the day. This was a result of the rise of western civilisation and all sorts of technological developments that accompanied it.

- (b) Technological and scientific developments brought about the notion of secularism. It should be noted that this was the period in which ideologies like secularism, Marxism, and scientific pantheism were given added emphasis. It is in this period that the church had to deal with missiological questions surrounding issues on the encounter between the Christian faith and other faiths, what came to be known as religious pluralism (Glasser, 1983a:9). In South Africa, it was the era known in the history of our country as the 'Apartheid era'. Prof. Du Plessis had to deal with questions related to race relations within the mission context, and also with the entire socio-economic and political context of this country.
- (c) Apart from secularism and religious pluralism, questions related to ecumenical togetherness started to come to the fore. This was necessitated by the impact made by the so-called Third World countries on the global scene. All this notable changes brought about new and challenging questions related to missiology and the mission of the church to the world. Prof. Hugo du Plessis had to work within this context.
- (d) The world was also characterised by resurgence of missionary activism. On one hand, many people were willing to become faithful witness of Jesus Christ in the world. On the other hand the church had to deal with the many articulate voices advancing theologies of mission. The 20th century's missiological debates varied from one school of thought to another. It is correctly remarked that: "We are boldly entering this arena of debate to listen and then respond to the contemporary missiological theologising of major segments of the church, whether conciliar, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, or evangelical (Glasser, 1984a:8)."
- (e) In the theological crisis as noted in (d), the issue on the nature of the church and her mission occupied the central place. Interpretations varied from one school of

thought to another. One's definition of mission and missiology depended solely on one's convictions regarding the authority of the Word of God. With relativism and humanism making inroads to the theological arena, many shifted from the position of accepting the authority of the Bible unconditionally to a position of 'derived authority'. They maintained that there are diversities amongst or even contradiction between Biblical writers (Glasser, 1984a:9).

- (f) It was an era of massive urbanisation. Many black people moved from the rural areas to bigger cities like Johannesburg for economic reasons. Issues related to poverty, employment discrimination through the job reservation act, a multicultural setting, and many more related issues characterised this period. Prof. Du Plessis had to make some contributions in this regard.
- (g) The distinct feature of South African religious life was that of religious plurality. This was the time in which many religions gained momentum, and a number of South Africans were already affiliated to these other religions like Islam, Hindu, African Traditional religions and so on. Prof. Du Plessis had to come up with principles and approaches that can enable the church to encounter other religions.
- (h) There was a growing African Nationalism that had a great impact in the life of the church with the propagation of the Bantu-Messiah. This was coupled with the danger of syncretism. The veneration to the ancestors became something acceptable within certain circles who claimed to be adherents of the Christian faith.
- (i) The context within which prof. Du Plessis fulfilled his calling as a professor could be best captured by his own words: "In hierdie nuwe wêreld, met sy baie aanpassings-, akkulturasie- en verhoudingsprobleme, met sy botsende belange en pynlike groeiprosesse asook met 'n vergaande disintegrasie, het die kerk as die koninkryksgemeente die roeping om profeties te getuig teen alle tirannie, geestelike en materiële verslawing en onware vryheid" (Du Plessis, 1960b:23).

4.3.2.2 Missiological debates in the African context

The so-called young churches in Africa were a force to reckon with in the early 50's. Max Warren noted among other things the following issues that were developing in the African context:

- Industrial development: More and more shifting from tribalistic entities – leading to the total disintegration of the old pattern of life in Africa as it has done elsewhere, but it provides changes for better life, providing new opportunities and enlarging horizons, and in doing so making it possible for Africans to take their own full place in the life of mankind and there to contribute some of their distinctive qualities to making of a genuine world community (Warren, 1959:24). Urban Africa is nothing but a reality to take note of if Christian mission is to make a meaningful contribution to the lives of the masses in Africa.
- Political development: Need for self self-affirmation was reinforced by the emergence of African nationalism (Warren, 1959:26; cf. 2.3.2.4.5).
- Stampede for education: A sense for the enormous vitality of the educational stampede became evident. Overcrowding and minimum of material aids became a serious problem, but many Africans were willing to receive education (Warren, 1959:32).

The above-mentioned developments had direct implications for the church's mission in African context.

4.3.2.2.1 The legacy of Western mission

Hugo du Plessis became the professor of missiology during the times when the quest for African theology and identity occupied the minds of African Christians and theologians. This quest has always been countered by the legacy of Western mission (or 'the legacy of colonialism') that African Christianity inherited. In their approach, Western missionaries marginalized everything that had to do with the traditional African worldview. Instead, they changed Africans names to the so-called Christian

names like Peter, John, Marry, etc. They also succeeded in convincing Africans to dress, talk, walk and eat like themselves, but they failed to make Africans realise that Christianity is comprehensive and seeks to address life in totality. Indeed, African religious experiences and culture were driven to the periphery. Everything, which was of African origin, was regarded as pagan. By so doing, Western missionaries failed to grasp the essence and dynamics of African culture. Consequently, the deepest core of African culture remained untouched.

To date Africans struggle to reconcile their Christian faith and their Africanness. Western missionaries laid much emphasis on the aspects of discontinuity between Christianity and African cultures and traditional religion. Because of this kind of approach, all elements of continuity were discarded. Consequently, some African theologians and scholars feel that their pre-Christian religions inheritance has been abused by the new religion. They feel a sense of betrayal. Their frustrations are justifiable in that Western missionaries condemned without proper evaluation African religious beliefs and practices. Instead, they encouraged Africans to embrace Western cultural and religious practices without any reservation. Western missionaries failed to identify themselves with the Africans (Warren, 1961:229).

4.3.2.2.2 Africanisation

Prof. B.J. van der Walt (1997:169,170) distinguish between five different connotations of Africanisation: "a racial or ethnic, an organisational, cultural, intellectual, and contextual meaning of the word". These should be considered as integrated dynamics of the concept 'Africanisation'. This kind of understanding and interpretation has far reaching consequences for theology. It implies that Africans should take charge of their own churches and theology as such. Martey (1993:65) correctly asserts that: "As a theological hermeneutical procedure, Africanisation represents the beginning of a new theological trend toward a search for an authentic Africa interpretation of the Christian faith."

The propagation of Africanisation as a kind of theologising found its way to the theological debates in the African context around the 50's and the 60's with prof. J. Mbiti as one of the pioneers. Mbiti (1971:2) appealed to African theologians to

Africanise Christianity and to give it an indelible African character. This involves Africanising Church structures, personnel, theology, planning, commitment, worship, transaction of its mission, and financial independence. In theologising, Africans are concerned mainly with the relating of the Christian faith to African cultures. Africans should in this regard use terms and forms that are suitable in African context (Hastings, 1969:251).

Africanisation of Christianity in Africa was not entirely separated from the emergence of African Nationalism. Africanisation of theology was, therefore, not only a counter Western theology, but also a product of the emerging spirit of liberation struggle in which Africans vowed to take charge of their own destinies, socially, economically and politically. Mission and missiology were no exception (Martey, 1993:65). To date, the call towards African renaissance as propagated by African leaders like President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa should not only take the social-economic and political faces, but also the religious face. Africans should move beyond the colonial period and beyond the syncretistic approach to the Christian faith and become true to the revelation of God in the Bible.

4.3.2.2.3 Indigenisation

Henry Venn & Rufus Anderson's understanding of self-propagation, self-support, and self-governance in church planting was aiming at indigenisation of churches in the third world countries. Efforts to indigenisation by Western missionaries did not materialise because of factors related to the foreignness of the gospel to Africans. Turaki (1999:16) agrees that the missionary classical indigenisation philosophy of the three selves formula did not materialise in bringing about the true African indigenisation because of paternalistic tendencies by Western missionaries. This parent-child relationship has always been worsened by the culture of dependency, in which many African churches still depend on foreign funding for the better part of their budgets.

For indigenisation to make grounds in African soil, paternalism and dependency syndrome must be acts of the past. Serious change should occur. Already in the 60's, Northcott (1963:30) called for the Christian Church to make up for the lost time

in Africa by moving out of the cocoon of colonialism and be established with a style and image that are recognizably African. Indeed, Christianity in Africa must speak to the soul of Africans and must genuinely belong and not be an importation.

In the quest for Africanisation, the indigenisation of African churches and theology will remain a focal point. In the gospel proclamation in African context, indigenisation helps not only to bring an African flair to Christianity, but also to remove its foreign elements. Christian worship in its mode, form, content, music, liturgy, prayers, places of worship should be granted African indigeneity. Consequently, the indigenous churches are the result of effective contextualization (Lingenfelter, 1998:12; cf. Turaki, 1999:18).

4.3.2.2.4 Contextualisation

Mazibuko (1992:21,22) defines contextualization as the effort to take seriously the specific context of each human group and person on its own terms and in all its dimensions – cultural, religious, social, political, economic and to discern what the gospel says to people in that context, so that the particular needs and hopes of people are addressed and met. Mamuli (2001:1) attests to the fact that: “Contextualisation seeks to relate the meaning and implication of Christian faith into the total context of a culture at a given moment in time.”

Indigenisation in the Africanisation of Christianity in Africa can always be tested by the question of relevancy. The question involved is: how relevant is the Christian message and theology to African soil, its people and problems? Contextualisation aims at making the revelation of God relevant and meaningful to a specific context. Contextualisation recognizes the reciprocal influence of culture and socio-economic life. It should be taken seriously as a theological method that entails particular ideological commitments to transform situations of social injustice, political alienation and the abuse of human rights (Kirk, 1999:91).

In the process of the Africanisation of Christianity in Africa, Contextualisation remains a key component. Indeed, Christianity can make inroads to the lives of Africans by presenting itself as a religion that meet the needs and close links with

African thoughts and their aspirations. The existing problem is that of the legitimacy of the process of Contextualisation. Part of Christianity in Africa is failing to come up with authentic and legitimate Contextualisation which may be developed and from which other churches could learn because of the confusion and distortion of the Christian proclamation due to syncretism (Daneel, 1999:325).

4.3.2.2.5 *Christianity and culture*

Culture is a dynamic system of life with three fundamental components: *beliefs, values and outward forms* (Kirk, 1999:85). It is subject to change, adaptive, integrated and ethnocentric. Mamuli (2001:2) attest to the fact that culture is the totality of learned and socially transmitted behaviour. To demonstrate this, we shall also reflect on two related terminologies, namely: *inculturation and enculturation*.

Inculturation is the terminology used within the Christian tradition to refer to the transformation of a culture by the Gospel, and at the same time the re-expression of the Gospel in terms of that culture (Kirk, 1999:90). It is the process by which one adapts in an active or passive way to another culture. Inculturation is used in Christendom to refer to the approach of evangelisation that seeks to find a home for Christian faith in different cultures and an accommodation of cultures in the Christian community. There are two processes involved. On one hand inculturation is a form of evangelisation that is sensitive to culture, and on the other hand it is a culturally based process of conversion (Keteyi, 1998:38). Indeed, Inculturation is an authentic way in which the gospel and Christianity should propagate itself. On the other hand, in the missionary encounter, interaction, observation and imitation takes place. This process is defined by Samoran & Porter (1995:53,54) as enculturation, the conscious and unconscious conditioning, occurring within that process whereby the individual achieves competence in a particular culture.

4.3.2.2.6 *Cross-cultural communication*

In the communication of the Christian gospel in Africa, knowledge of cross-cultural communication is a prerequisite. One needs to understand the dynamics of one culture to another for the process of Africanisation to succeed. The concern of

African theology is to attempt to use African concepts and African ethos as vehicles for the communication of the gospel in an African context (Pobee, 1979:39).

4.3.2.2.7 African theology

Turaki (1999:16) defines African Theology as “The outcome, results and products of the religious and theological works of the African theologians and scholars.” This definition is not complete if mention is not made that it was aimed at conveying the Christian message in a contextually relevant form and integrating Christianity with African life and culture. In this case I fully agree with Pobee (1979:22) who defines African theology as “The interpretation of essential Christian faith in authentic African language in the flux and turmoil of our time so that there may be genuine dialogue between the Christian faith and African cultures. This is the basis from within which the debate between European Christian and African religious thought took place (Daneel, 1999:325).

4.3.2.2.8 Trends in African theology

Characteristic features of African theology demonstrate that doing theology in African context is no easy task. It is rather very complex. Its complexity lies not only in the presence of religious, ethnic and language pluralism, but also in the plurality of African theologies as already stated above. It ranges from African Traditional Religion(s) where there is no claim to a particular ‘theology’ that shapes and directs the life of the church, to African theology, Black theology, Liberation theology, Feminist theology, Theology of Reconstruction (Maluleke, 1994:245) and so forth. Africanisation of Christianity in Africa (African theology) and Black theology has been interpreted by some scholars as representations of two hermeneutical schools of thoughts in African theology (Martey, 1993; cf. Pobee, 1979:38).

Indeed, Africanisation of Christianity is a form of African theology which must never be confused with Black theology because, unlike Black theology which stresses the dignity of black identity among those marginalised and oppressed, it lays emphasis on finding the authentic Christian message that can be made applicable in African context (Parratt, 1996:44).

4.3.2.2.9 *Methodology*

Issues discussed above are not new in the theological arena, neither to the efforts by African theologians to invent the Indigenous African theology. There is consensus among African theologians and the African community at large that “Africanisation” is the only route for Africa to find itself and to make inroads in the global context. I believe in Africa, and I believe in African Christianity. This is because of my belief in the life-giving gospel which is not only above all cultures, but which seeks to penetrate and transform all cultures from within. The diversity in understanding and defining what “African theology” is, lies in the differences of hermeneutical principles applied in doing theology. Some have adopted the approach of moving from the Text to the context, whilst others move from the context to the Text. Somewhere on the way, the uniqueness of Christ crucified is compromised or distorted. The inadequate interpretation of Scripture and various theological presuppositions underlying the formulations of Christian theology in Africa place the African Christian in an ambivalent position.

The diversity in methodology lies in the fact that there are lots of traditions and schools of thought which are points of departures of Africans as they engage themselves in the quest for ‘Africanisation of the Christian Message’ in Africa. This is a sign that Christianity in African soil inherited the vast diversities of Western denominationalism. There are different forms of Christianity in Africa, as much as there are different theologies, namely: Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, Pentecostalism, African Traditional Religion(s) as a reaction against the Western mainlines denominations, and many more. Consequently, theology in some African churches (especially those of Western origin) connotes reflective paradigmatic thought that has elevated philosophical reflection to high prominence. Some churches, however, place nearly all their emphasis on experience, on ecstatic worship, visions, healing, dreams and joyous bodily movement. Their members would perhaps not claim to have any ‘theology’ (Gifford, 1998:26-27).

4.3.2.2.10 *Religious plurality*

Africa is one of the continents with a plurality of religions. The 20th century was marked by the tremendous growth of Islam and many other religions. “Volgens ’n onlangse statistieke berekening is daar, afgesien van die soliede Moslemblok en ook met die uitsondering van Abessinië, in Afrika suid van die Sahara 140 miljoen mense waarvan 55.3% animiste, 22.4% Christene en 22.2% Moslems is” (Van der Merwe, 1968:9; cf. Du Plessis, 1965:246). Ideologies such as Marxism, Communism and the Mao-spirit were also a great threat to Christianity in Africa. In theologising, professor Du Plessis had to deal with the issue on the religious plurality from the Reformed perspective.

4.3.2.3 *Missiological debates in the global context*

4.3.2.3.1 *The reorientation of mission*

In the late 60's, the agenda of the World Council of Churches and other international interdenominational conferences, the reorientation of mission occupied the central place. The kind of reorientation included among others the definition of the word mission, the structure of the church, the office of all believers, the relevancy of the gospel in various terrains of life and in the face of the cosmic renewal of the creation. The church was seen as an instrument of God for all and churches contemplated the idea of cooperating with each other across the denominational lines in order to answer to human needs of that time. As a matter of fact, the reorientation of mission also dealt with the relationship between the mother and younger churches with the light of determining the role of the latter in the global society (Du Plessis, 1969:275).

4.3.2.3.2 *Theology of mission*

The debate surrounding the ‘the theology of the Christian mission’ was very prominent in the twentieth century. This was also necessitated by the fact that the church found itself in a missionary situation everywhere. Mission work was no

longer something necessary in the Third World countries alone; the West also became the mission field by day (Newbigin, 1961:xi).

Efforts by theologians to understand the theological basis for the church's missionary developed with time. The development of the theology of mission in Du Plessis' era had certain historical forces which have helped shape it. According to Anderson (1961:5-6) the interest to reformulate 'the theology of mission' in world context was stimulated by trends and factors. Those trends and factors prompted various questions that were dealt with in the International Missionary Conference and the following can be highlighted:

- The question "How missions?" as debated in Edinburgh Conference.
- The question "Wherefore missions?" as debated in 1928 at the Jerusalem Conference. It was in this meeting where secularism and syncretism were seen as the two major threats to Christian missions.
- The question "Whence missions?" as debated in 1938 at the Conference held in Tambaran. The key issue dealt with in this conference concerned mainly the relationship and approach of Christianity to non-Christian religions.
- The question "Whither missions?" as debated in 1947 at Whitby. The Christian mission at Whitby was defined in terms of evangelism and was seen by members of an indigenous world church as "Partners in Obedience."
- The question "Why missions?" was dealt with in the conference at Willingen in 1952. The discussions in this meeting considered the theological presuppositions for missions at a deeper level and within a broader context, but never reached consensus on the missionary obligation of the church.
- The question "What is the Christian mission?" was dealt with in 1957-58 at Ghana Assembly.

4.3.2.3.3 Ecumenicity

The first half to the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century was characterised by the passion among churches to join hands across denominational lines to draw the lost to Christ. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in

1910 marked what came to be known as modern era of ecumenical mission. It was in this meeting where theologians emphasised that mission is the task of the whole church. The missionary task demands from every Christian, and from every congregation, a change in the existing scale of missionary zeal and service (Bassham, 1979:17).

This was followed by the formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921 and the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 among others. The IMC was integrated into the WCC and became known as the Division of World Mission and Evangelism in 1961 during the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Dehli (Hoekstra, 1979:49; cf. Glasser, 1983a:8).

Churches were driven by the vision to reach out to all of humanity in the world, and at the same time churches had to cope with many articulate voices advancing theologies of mission. Each international meeting focused on major issues of how to best carry out this command within the framework of the classical-biblical understanding of mission. The International Missionary Council's conference in Jerusalem in 1928 dealt with the threat of secularism and syncretism. At this international missionary gathering the theology of mission was given primary consideration under the title on the Christian life and message in relation to non-Christian systems of thought and life. It was emphasised in this conference that the message of the Church to the world is and must always remain the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is the central content of faith – our motive and our end. It did not however penetrate the issue to any significant degree (Anderson, 1961:6; cf. Bassham, 1979:17).

The Jerusalem conference was followed by another one in Tambaram in 1938, which wrestled with the relationship of the Christian message to the messages of the non-Christian World. The 'witness-bearing' character of the church was crucial to Madras' understanding of mission. It is the church and the church alone which can carry the responsibility of transmitting the Gospel from one generation to another. The local church is the place where the task is centered (Bassham, 1979:24).

The following meeting was held in Whitby in 1947. Events at this meeting showed that the IMC's consistent priority was mission, with evangelism the core. Those at

Whitby had the vision to evangelise the world in such a way that all would soon hear the Gospel. It was in this meeting where mission and church were recognized as insolubly bound together. Missionary activity was seen as the service of the Church in the world and to the world (Anderson, 1956:35; cf. Hoekstra, 1979:32-34).

The new theological winds began to blow more strongly around the 50's and the 60's. The IMC's conference in Willingen in 1952 had to deal with the question of the missionary obligation of the church. Anderson (1956:14) acknowledges that Willingen was a step closer the goal where churches in the world could unite in their efforts to bring the gospel to all of humanity in the world. In its inner cohesion, Willingen should be understood as a progressive encounter between mission, Church, and theology, which has become even more intensive and has been directed towards a definite goal. At the meeting in Ghana in 1957 the assurance was given that the IMC would be able to do more for "missions and evangelism" from within the WCC than by remaining outside.

The following meeting in New Dehli in 1961 dealt with the question of joint action for mission, whilst the meeting in Mexico City in 1963 subsumed all the conferences in the new slogan, "Mission in Six Continents. Issues dealt with from that time onwards included among others the encounter with people of other faiths and ideologies, the structure of the missionary congregation, urban and industrial mission, the holistic approach to evangelism, service and justice and secularism (Hoekstra, 1979:55,61). It should be noted without doubt that all of the above ecumenical meetings undertook the task of providing an adequate theological basis for mission in the contemporary world.

4.3.2.3.4 *Secularism*

Secularism was one of the debated topics in the world of Missiology during Du Plessis' era. Like his contemporaries, Prof. Hugo du Plessis made a clear distinction between '*secularisation*' and '*secularism*'. Accordingly, secularisation leads to secularism (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman, 1984:99). By secularisation, he referred to the process through which everything considered to be '*secular*' was detached from

the church. He attests to the fact that Reformation and Renaissance set culture, science and technology from the control of the church. During this process, man relies mainly on his knowledge and findings, so that God becomes redundant. Consequently, man can no longer see the hand of God in his life, no need for salvation and blessing from God. "Hy wil wetenskaplik nagaan wat die oorsaak van sy onheil of mislukking is en hy soek verlossing daaruit by sy tegniek en wetenskap" (Du Plessis, 1968a:64,65).

This process of secularisation brings about the division between that which is secular and that which is not, and that which is sacred and that which is not. Religion and culture are also divorced from one another. It presents Christendom in direct confrontation with the non-Christian religions, because it offers an opportunity for religious plurality. This process of secularisation affected not only the Western, but also all of humanity in the world. On one hand it has brought great benefits to men, and on the other hand some negative implications. As a result, Du Plessis (1968a:66) sees an opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel, not only to the adherents of the primitive cultures but also to Western people. This is echoed by Kritzinger (1971:41) who attest that: "Goed onderskei is ons egter almal deel van 'n sekularisasieproses wat, hoewel negatief afbrekend in sommige opsigte, tog in positiewe opsig ruimte skep vir 'n vryer en inniger aanbidding van en diens aan God."

According to Prof. Hugo du Plessis, secularism is the state in which the process of secularisation is absolutised – 'when culture, science and technology are taken as God-substitute'. In his line of thought, he follows theologians like Verkuyl, Kuyper, and Newbigin. He maintains that we cannot divorce culture, science and technology from the religious realm. "Daar kan nie wees net 'n blote neutrale aanvaarding van die kultuursaak nie, dit moet uitgevoer word as 'n opdrag van en met verantwoording aan God; daar kan verder nie berus word in die strewe na bloot sekulêre doeleindes nie maar die hele lewe moet gerig word op die koninkryk van God" (Du Plessis, 1968a:67,68).

It is always the calling of the church in the times of secularisation and secularism to plan on how to approach men with the life-giving gospel. The following approach

should be adhered to in bringing the gospel to secularised people and those in the process of secularisation:

- ❖ In order to reach out to secular men, the church should preach about the kingdom of God, which is a present reality. People should be made aware that the first coming of Christ brought about the kingdom of God and this Kingdom will finally be realised in full during his second coming. “Dit is ’n koninkryk wat nie net betrekking het op die siel van die mens nie, maar op die hele mens en die ganse lewe; nie net op individuele mense nie maar op die hele mensheid, alle volke; nie net op die mens nie maar ook op die hele kosmos” (Du Plessis, 1968a:73).
- ❖ It should be emphasised that salvation concerns not only the human soul, but also the entire man. Christians are called to lead an exemplary life in order to demonstrate that they are in Christ and Christ in them through faith (Du Plessis, 1968a:74).

4.3.2.3.5 Indigenisation

The debate surrounding “Indigenisation” in the 20th century did not only take place in Africa, it was a worldwide phenomenon. According to a concise dictionary of theological and related terms, ‘*indigenisation*’ refers to “Relating the Christian message to the beliefs, customs (and language) of a people so as to remove its ‘foreignness’ and help them to grasp the meaning of the gospel, a process which may or may not entail adaptation” (Deist, 1984:124). According to Vern Rossman, the problem of indigenisation is threefold. It involves communication, adaptation and cultural synthesis. During this process, a new community is formed and the Christian culture or identity is founded. Missionaries should not only be made aware of this process, but also engage in it when bring the gospel to a specific people. Missionaries should be made aware of the danger of syncretism (see Rossman, 1963:130; cf. Du Plessis, 1965f:4).

4.3.2.3.6 Syncretism

Syncretism as a theological problem for mission was not unique in African context. Western theologians also wrestled a great deal with it. The resurgence of the non-Christian religions, as noted at the IMC at Jerusalem in 1928, contributed massively towards this problem. Consequently, Kraemer (1961:182) encourage churches to deal with syncretism in a practical way because it is shaking Christianity to its very foundations.

4.3.2.3.7 Universality

Universality, which is known today as globalisation, was high on the agenda of the theological debates during Du Plessis' time. People came to acknowledge that the world is becoming a global village day by day. Geographically, the macrocosm has become one and distances have shrunk and most remote peoples are reachable. This brought about the concept of a universal humanity, in which all of humanity considers itself as one and equal. This challenged the notions of white superiority and inferiority complex among the blacks of the world. Concepts like 'unity', 'ecumenicity', and 'independence' came to the fore as this concept of universality was debated. Du Plessis maintains that universality without differentiation leads to cosmopolitanism and liberalism, and nationalism without universality leads to ethnocentrism (Du Plessis, 1960c:74).

4.3.2.3.8 Urbanisation

With the massive changes in the global economy, especially the process of industrialisation, people flocked to urban areas to seek for greener pastures. Urban evangelism became part and parcel of the vocabulary of theologians and churches worldwide. Mission to the inner cities became a focal point in the strategic planning of churches (Takenaka, 1963:303).

4.3.2.3.9 Religious pluralism

Anderson (1961:7) rightly noted that the debate surrounding the theology of mission was also sharpened by the manner in which theologians responded towards men of other faiths. Du Plessis (1963:213) acknowledged that religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and many more were making inroads in the world scene during the 20th century. Christianity was no longer seen as a sole way to God, but the truth among others. The emergence of the World Parliament of Religions in the 19th century and the World Congress of Faiths, as led by Sir Francis Younghusband, in 1936 ensured that people from different faiths joined hands to promote the spirit of fellowship among mankind through religion. They aimed at guiding mankind towards truth, the Kingdom of righteousness and brotherhood and peace (Pollitt, 1996:5).

The problem of religious pluralism became so immense that the Christian church could no longer afford the luxury of brushing it aside as superstition or childish. The 20th century theologians dealt with this issue from diverse perspectives. Their approach ranged from 'exclusivism' to 'inclusivism' to 'pluralism'. Theologians like Hans Küng opted for a relativistic approach towards the non-Christian religions whereby they concluded that all religions are paths to God in one way or another. This amounted to universalistic type of approach to salvation.

Theologians like Friedrich Heiler opted for the inclusivistic approach whereby the non-Christian religions are seen as the *praeparatio evangelica*. Christ is sought to have come to fulfil what is lacking in other religions. J.N. Farquhar joined the ranks of these theologians by maintaining that the Christian religion is the crown of Hinduism. Karl Barth with his dialectic approach towards revelation and faith opted for a total discontinuity between divine revelation and any form of human religion. In this regard he opted for exclusivism whereby he maintains that there is no point of contact between the revelation of God and the non-Christian religions. Karl Heim influenced the International Missionary Conference held at Jerusalem in 1928 to opt for a position of 'an abiding paradox' between the religions.

Theologians like Emil Brunner maintained on one hand the sufficiency of salvation in Christ and on the other hand the universal grace of God. Hendrik Kraemer, who had a great impact during the Tambaram conference of 1938, maintained that there is a point of contact for the Gospel message with other religions. He encouraged the religious dialogue between the adherents of Christianity and other non-Christian religions. The fact that the world consisted of multiplicity of religions encouraged the so-called 'religious dialogue'. Mission was no longer seen as gospel proclamation, but also dialogue and liberation. Vatican II became the focal point in this debate (Yates, 1994:166; Denkema, 2003).

4.3.2.3.10 The kingdom of God and mission

The issue on the kingdom of God and mission also received serious attention in the twentieth century theological debates. This was necessitated because theologians wanted to establish the relationship between the church and the kingdom in the light of the church's missionary calling. Theologians came to a remarkable consensus that the Kingdom of God existed in both the "already" and the "not-yet" dimensions as it shall be noted below. At this stage the Kingdom was no longer seen as identical to the church. At Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church ceased to define the kingdom of God as identical with the Church. Protestant thinkers were increasingly coming to see that the eschatological questions regarding the kingdom affected their view of the relationship between the kingdom and the church (Denkema, 1995:71).

The definition of the 'Kingdom' also received diverse explanations. Adolf von Harnack reduced the Kingdom of God to the subjective realm and understood it in terms of human spirit and its relationship to God. It is in this regard viewed as an inward power that enters into the human soul and lays hold of it. Some, like Albert Schweitzer, define Jesus' message of the Kingdom as an apocalyptic realm to be inaugurated by a supernatural act of God when history will be broken off and a new heavenly order of existence begun. Some relates the Kingdom of God in one-way or another to the church (Ladd, 1959:15).

The concept "Kingdom of God" is best defined by Ladd (1952:80) who defines it as the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a

people over whom he reigns, and issuing in a realm or realms in which the power of his reign is realized. It is noteworthy that the Kingdom of God is a present reality (Matthew 12:28), and yet it is a future blessing (1 Corinthians 15:50). Theologians like Herman Ridderbos, Oscar Cullmann, John Bright, and others also demonstrated that the kingdom, the rule of Jesus Christ, is already present, but not yet complete; it has come but is coming (Denkema, 1995:71).

An initial manifestation of God's Kingdom is found in the mission of our Lord on earth. The Kingdom of God has entered into this present evil age here and now in the person and work of Christ. But, it will fully be realised in the age to come. The Kingdom of God will come with the inauguration of the age to come, and it will be manifested in power and glory when the Lord Jesus returns for the second time (Ladd, 1959:125). In this age, the God's Kingdom works through the power of the Gospel as applied by the work of the Holy Spirit. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. The message of the gospel is simply 'Christ' – the resurrected Christ is the good news of the kingdom (Ladd, 1959:125).

The redemptive purpose of God in Christ must be proclaimed among all of humanity in the world. God has been redemptively at work in history, and the divine action will yet bring history to a divinely destined goal. This is the mission of the church in this age to make salvation in Christ known to men from among nations of this world. It is God's programme for his church (Ladd, 1959:134). He noted that the 'end' should be a motivating factor for the church to fulfil its present calling of being a faithful witness to the coming Kingdom of God. As long as Christ is not here, has not returned, then the church should just continue to carry the gospel to the very ends of the world. Ladd (Ladd, 1959:140) acknowledges that the church can hasten the coming of the day of God (II Peter 3: 112) by engaging in the mission of the gospel of the Kingdom.

The main problem encountered in the twentieth century had to do with the church-centred missionary work that neglected the world and the kingdom of God, and confined all the missionary activity to the church (Anderson, 1956:38). As to the relationship between the church and the kingdom in mission, Ladd (1974:266 – 277)

noted five elements that are worthy of mention in this research. Firstly he notes that the church is not the Kingdom. The church is the community of the Kingdom but never the Kingdom itself. Secondly, he notes that the Kingdom creates the church. The church is the result of the coming of God's Kingdom into the world by the mission of Jesus Christ. The entrance into the Kingdom means participation in the church; but entrance into the church is not necessarily synonymous with entrance into the Kingdom. Thirdly, he notes that the church witnesses to God's Kingdom – to God's redeeming acts in Christ both past and future (this is the mission of the church to witness to the gospel of the Kingdom in the world). Fourthly, he notes that the church is the instrument of the Kingdom. The disciples of Jesus not only proclaimed the good news about the presence of the Kingdom; they were also instruments of the Kingdom in that the works of the Kingdom were performed through them as through Christ. And in the last instance, he notes that the church is the custodian of the Kingdom. People form among nations who accept the good news of the Kingdom become true sons of the Kingdom, God's ekklesia, who in turn become custodians of the Kingdom and are instrument of the Kingdom as it manifests its powers in this age. The keys to the Kingdom of God are given to the church (Matthew 16:19). Through the proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom in the world will be decided who will enter into the eschatological Kingdom and who will be excluded. We might conclude without doubt that the Church derives its dynamism to grow from its close association with the coming of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the impelling force of the kingdom moves life from the "already" to the "not yet" through the action of God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This has direct implications for the church to date. The church is a missionary people of God, his own property, to witness to the kingship of their King, Jesus Christ. In practice this means that missionary congregations live out their spiritual life not only as the church, but also as God's people in the world, as a force to transform society to more closely resemble the Kingdom of God. The proclaimed gospel of the kingdom deals with all of life as a whole and transform all of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ to be of service to God and to bring about glory to His name (see Colossians 1:9-18; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31).

4.3.2.3.11 Church growth and Christian mission

It was McGavran who introduced the concept “church growth” in relation to the Christian mission in the twentieth century. Is the church growing, or not; and if not, why not? This is a fundamental question that ought to be asked in every situation. Numerical expansion and quality of Christian life are not alternatives, but correlatives, inasmuch as each is vitally related with the other. Church growth was also central in the debates of the Christian mission in the 60’s. The numerical increase of Christians and churches became more and more the centre of debate (McGavran, 1965:9; McGavran, 1980:5).

The concept church growth is missing in Du Plessis’ theology. It was never adequately dealt with. This concept is Biblical and the church cannot afford the luxury of not attending to it. God commanded his church to engage in the proclamation of the gospel in order to win the lost souls for Christ (1 John 1:3). God gives the increase. It is the Holy Spirit who converts men to Christ, not the church. This was the case in Acts 2 (Vorster, 1996:135).

4.3.2.3.12 Communication

The issue on the missionary approach in communicating the gospel also occupied the central place in African and the international arena alike. Within the circles of the World Council of Churches, emphasis was laid to the fact that the church should exist for others, and that the creation of a new humanity in Christ should be the focus of the church in communicating the gospel to the non-believers (Du Plessis, 1969:281).

4.3.3 His workload

As the head of the Department and the first lecturer of Missiology, prof. Du Plessis had the responsibility of structuring the curriculum of the entire course, in line with the academic standards of his days. This included, amongst others, the development of relevant materials to shape and direct the GKSA’s understanding of mission and its the practical application.

4.4 DU PLESSIS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFORMED CHURCHES' STRUGGLE FOR A RELEVANT MISSION

In the face of local and international debates surrounding mission and missiology, the Reformed Churches looked up for its pioneer missionary and missiologist to provide relevant answers to keep them going and also to claim their rightful place in fulfilling God's missionary calling. Hugo du Plessis participated in a meaningful way in the debates of his time and also contributed a great deal towards the Reformed Churches' struggle for a relevant mission and missiology.

It is imperative to reflect on the hermeneutical approach that Hugo du Plessis adhered to in his interpretation of the Scripture. This will provide a clearer and broader picture of how he reached such an informed view of 'mission', and also of his use of Scripture and its place in his struggle for a relevant mission and missiology. He adhered to the Reformed principles of Biblical interpretation, which can be summarised as follows:

- ❖ Scripture is its own interpreter (*Sacra Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*).
- ❖ Variety within the Unity of Scripture.
- ❖ A further or later revelation by God about the same matter carries more weight than the earlier one.
- ❖ One starts from the clear to less clear text(s).
- ❖ Scripture is never time-bound, but it is preponderantly time-addressed (Coetzee, 1997:11-15).

The above-mentioned hermeneutical rules or principles remained within the Reformed tradition for ages, and they are basically based on the acceptance of the authority of the Word of God. The Bible is seen as the everlasting, constantly valid Word of God, which came into being through God's organic inspiration through human beings (Coetzee, 1997:4,5).

4.4.1 The concept mission

The quest to redefine mission and evangelism featured mainly in the theological debates of the end of the first half to the beginning of the second half of the 20th century. The words mission and evangelism were defined and used in different ways. The escalation varied from one school of thought to another. There are those who define mission and evangelism as synonyms that can be used interchangeably with the word witness. Some defined mission as something that the church does in the far-away pagan countries and evangelism as something done within your own people who are no longer interested in church matters (Bosch, 1993:11,12). In the World Council of Churches circles, mission was defined to encompass everything that the church does. Lesslie Newbigin defined the concept mission as referring to everything that the Church is sent into the world to do – preaching of the gospel, healing the sick, caring for the poor, teaching the children, improving international and interracial relations and attacking injustice (Hoekstra, 1979:27). If everything that the church does in the world is mission, what then is mission?

In line with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, prof. Hugo du Plessis Du (1963:74) defined mission as 'crossing the barriers'. This was more in line with the apostolate theology of Hoekendijk who laid too much emphasis on the missionary work of the church. The church was seen more and more as a witnessing community, which is always proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God. His understanding of 'crossing the barriers' entailed not only the objective preaching of the Word, but also the addressing of the specific needs of the objects of mission, as vindicated in their particular context. His definition was totally in line with that of Bishop Stephen Neill who defined mission as the intentional crossing of barriers from the Church to the non-church in word and deed for the sake of proclamation of the Gospel. Bosch (1993:17) echoed the same when he defined mission as a broader term (but not all-inclusive) that comprises more than the proclamation of the gospel. Mission is therefore the symbol of the Church moving towards the world. That is why Johannes Hoekendijk defined mission as proclamation, fellowship, and service – *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia*. He maintains that all these three aspects should be integrated in the church's work of evangelism and mission. Should the three be integrated then the church's methods for mission are justifiable (Hoekendijk, 1950:171; cf.

passages as Mark 13:10 and the fact that 'the command to world mission' was the last mandate that Jesus gave to his disciples. "Hulle vra die opgestane Heiland in Hand. 1 of Hy nou die Ryk sal oprig, en kry as antwoord die belofte van die Gees en die opdrag om getuies te wees tot aan die einde van die aarde" (Freytag, 1950:148). In the early 50's, W. Freytag identified the four schools of thought on this issue. He maintains that there are those who engaged in missionary work for the salvation of individuals (pietistic approach), church planting, humanisation, and eschatological drive - hastening the end of the world (Freytag, 1950:154-156).

It was only in the late 60's that many theologians and churches focused on humanisation as the goal of mission. The notion of "the Church for others" as propagated by Hoekendijk encouraged many in the church to seek for social justice and development of the poor. During the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968 humanisation was lifted up as the goal of mission and emphasis was put upon the horizontal rather than upon the vertical dimension of the Gospel. They wanted to attend primarily to the plight of the poor, the hungry, the exploited, the powerless, the voices of the minorities – youth and women, victims of racism, the imprisoned and the tortured. Those passages in the Bible dealing with God's concern for the poor and liberation took on vast new meanings with their own implications about our understanding of God and his intent for the world (Hoekstra, 1979:21,69).

Du Plessis did not agree fully with his contemporaries when they mentioned that the purpose of mission was to create a new humanity in Christ. The Biblical passages that were used to support humanisation as the goal of mission were selectively chosen. Du Plessis maintained that mission is first and foremost not about man, but the Missionary God. This is very clear in the following remark: "Hier moet baie duidelik gestel word dat die kerk in die eerste plek gesien moet word as die kerk vir 'the others' en dat in die benadering die hoofnadruk moet val op die 'new humanity' op die voorgrond moet wees, maar dat Christus die Gekruisigde verkondig moet word wat sy lewe vir die versoening van die sondes gegee het" (Du Plessis, 1969:281).

Du Plessis (1965a: 268; 269) summarised the purpose of mission in the following words: "Die werk van die Heilige Gees wat Hy deur die gemeente doen om so die werklikheid van die koninkryk van God asook 'n weerspieëling van die bestemming

van die mensheid en die kosmos te openbaar deur die prediking, planting van kerke en die lewe van gelowiges, om so die wêreld tot 'n beslissing te bring t.o.v. die keuse vir of teen Christus en vir of teen die bestemming wat God vir alles stel". There are five aspects involved in his understanding of the purpose of mission, namely:

4.4.2.1 The Obedience-motif

The motive of obedience is one of the central forms in which the church of God is motivated to bring about glory to God by being a missionary church. According to Van den Berg (1956:177), the church stood under the marching orders of Christ, given after his Resurrection in the "great commission" of Matt. 28:19, which we accept as an authentic testimony of the words spoken by our Lord himself in the period before his ascension. In line with J. van den Berg, Du Plessis sees this command as one of the motives for the church to engage in missionary work. He calls this is the obedience-motif, in that Christ gave the command to his servants for them to fulfil in obedience to Him (see Du Plessis, 1965a:266).

The obedience-motif is based on Jesus Christ's words in John 20: 21 "... Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you". Du Plessis (1965a:266) asserts this by stating that: "Omdat Christus gestuur is, moet ons nou sy voorbeeld volg en gesondenes wees, moet ons sending werk doen".

4.4.2.2 The mission of Christ

From the words of Christ in John 20:21, it is very clear that He was sent by the Father to set the world free and to bring everything to its true destination. He does this to bring everything to perfection in Him. This in itself becomes the motif for the church to do mission in that they call upon men to believe in Christ and to follow the way to the true human destination (Du Plessis, 1965a:266).

4.4.2.3 The purpose of the mission of Christ

The purpose of the mission of Christ in the world is also the purpose of the church's mission to the world. As to the purpose of Christ's mission to the world, Du Plessis

(1965a:267) remarked that: "Christus se sending beoog die verlossing en herskepping van die mensheid en die ganse kosmos, die verlossing en herskepping van die menslike lewe, die gemeenskapslewe, die menslike arbeid, kultuur, wetenskap, e.d.m. die verlossing en herskepping van die hele mens na siel en liggaam".

In this regard, Du Plessis is of the opinion that Christ's mission is the restoration of the fallen humanity by reconciling humanity to God in Christ. The restoration entails the re-creation of the new humanity of God's people from among all the nations of the world in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. The church, which is in communion with Christ, should by virtue of their faith in Him and communion with Him, engage in his missionary activities. Du Plessis explains it by saying: "Uit die feit van hierdie inlywing vloei vanself voort, dat die gemeente sendingwerk doen wat die werk van Christus is" (Du Plessis, 1965a:267).

4.4.2.4 Witnessing-motif

The church does mission work in order to witness to the deeds of God, those that He did and those that He is still doing today. Du Plessis (1965a:267) remarked that: "Ons deel en deelname in hierdie werk is beperk tot getuinis van wat Hy gedoen het en nog doen".

The church is thus the instrument in the hands of God, bearing testimony to the wonderful works of the Triune God in Christ, that is: creation of everything; reconciliation, salvation, recreation in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit (see Du Plessis, 1965a:267).

4.4.2.5 Kingdom-motif

The kingdom-motif is imperative in that mission does not only entail the renewal of fallen humanity in Christ, but it is also the purpose of God with regard to the destination of His entire creation. He aims to bring the whole of creation, including humanity, under the Lordship of Christ. "In die getuienis van die kerk hiervan moet getuig word van die koms van die koninkryk van God en van die komende koninkryk deur die prediking, planting van die kerk van Christus en deur die lewende geloof van

gemeente van Christus, soos dit tot openbaring moet kom in die gemeente” (Du Plessis, 1965a:268).

The kingdom-motif entails in itself the eschatological foundation of mission in that the kingdom of God will be fully realised in the second coming of Christ. It is asserted that the end of the world will come into being when the missionary mandate of the church has been fulfilled (see Du Plessis, 1965:238; cf. Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10). Professor Peter Beyerhaus echoed this notion of the Kingdom-motif as the goal for the Christian mission over against humanization. He maintained that the motive and goal of world mission is the Kingdom of God (Beyerhaus, 1971:11).

Du Plessis succeed in outlining the fact that the church should engage in the missionary task in obedient to their risen Lord, who instructed them to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom in order to make disciples from among peoples of the entire universe. The proclamation of the gospel, making of disciples, mobilization and integral growth and development remains central in the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

4.4.3 The Content of Mission

When it comes to the content of mission, Du Plessis maintains that mission should address the spiritual and physical needs of the fallen humanity.

4.4.3.1 The Word of God should be proclaimed

Man, in his context, should be confronted with the living Word of God. It must be proclaimed in such away that it addresses man in all his spheres of life. Du Plessis acknowledges that: “Hier lê dus nog ’n ontsaglike arbeidsveld vir die kerk in Afrika en vir die sending braak. Alleen wanneer die Woord in al sy waarheid en suiwerheid, en vir die hele lewe en vir alle lewensterreine, verkondig, kan die moontlikheid geskep word vir die groei van ’n lewenskragtige Christendom en kerk in Afrika” (Du Plessis, 1966b:13).

4.4.3.2 Spiritual needs of humanity

The spiritual needs of humanity, the needs in human life, were brought by the fall of man to sin. The communion of man with God was broken as a result of sin. Christ was sent to restore such a relationship and to re-integrate the creation in a harmonious unity with Himself (see Du Plessis, 1960c: 69).

The proclamation of the Word of God in mission should therefore entail the following aspect:

- Recreation of the fallen humanity through salvation in Christ, as applied by the work of the Holy Spirit¹. God, reconciles Himself with fallen humanity, and creates a new humanity from the believing people from amongst all the nations (see Du Plessis, 1963b:69; cf. Matthew 28:19).

4.4.3.3 Physical needs of humanity

The proclamation of the Word of God should bring hope for the specific context² of the people addressed. Some of the physical needs of humanity, as highlighted by Du Plessis, are:

- The socio-economic and political imbalances of humanity (see Du Plessis, 1963b: 64).
- Fear of the destruction of humanity in the threatening third world war (see Du Plessis, 1963b:65).

Du Plessis attended to this issue on 'word and deed', with a special emphasis on the justice for the poor and the oppressed, because it occupied the central place in the international arena in the 50's and the 60's. In the ecumenical circles, many thought it was time for the First World countries to engage in development programmes in order to offer deaconal assistance to the churches in the Third World. "Visser 't

¹ This is the redemptive work of God, of which Du Plessis (1963b:69) remarked that: "The mystery of it, partly revealed in the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, is the unity of Jew and non-Jew in Him, and only in Him, the glorified Son and Head of the new humanity which is His body".

Hooft, die vorige sekretaris van die Wêreldraad, het gesê dit moet vir ons duidelik wees dat die lidmate wat hulle verantwoordelikheid vir die noodlydendes in ander lande prakties loën, net so skuldig staan as kettere wat een of ander geloofswaarheid verwerp” (Du Plessis, 1969:275). Mission did not only take the form of the ministry of the Word, but also educational, medical socio-economic and political dimensions were catered for.

The proclamation of the gospel through ‘word and deed’ reminds us that one of the basic aspects of mission theology has to do with the relation of the Bible to mission theory and practice. Du Plessis succeeded in propagating for the balance between theory and praxis, and also the balance between gospel proclamation in words and deeds. In this regard, he contributed a great deal towards a relevant mission and missiology in that the church of all ages will always be reminded that all development programmes that are not accompanied by the love of God in Christ as proclaimed in the kingdom gospel remain humanitarian acts – which cannot be distinguished from what other governmental and non-governmental organisations do to respond to human needs of their time. The church should always make people aware that it is engaging itself in the development programmes because they are caught by the love of Christ such that they are compelled to reach out in love and for Christ to fellow human beings.

4.4.4 The agent of mission

There are two concepts that feature prominently in Du Plessis’ discussions of mission. The two concepts are *Missio Dei* and *Missio Ecclesiae*.

4.4.4.1 *Missio Dei*

The concept “*missio Dei*” has been used increasingly in missiological debates and literature in the twentieth century, and it refers to the mission of God. It was in this century where mission developed more and more in the direction toward a theocentric

² Compare with Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”.

point of view in thoroughgoing Trinitarian perspective (Anderson, 1961:15). Formulations varied from culture-centered, man-centered, revelation-centered, eschatology-centered, kingdom-centered, Bible-centered, Church-centered and Christ-centered points of view. "While all of these attempts have stressed various aspects of Christian doctrine that are essential for the missionary enterprise, it seems that when any one of them has been made the central point of focus and orientation for theology of mission, it has proven inadequate for the task, tending to narrow the scope of mission and causing it to go astray" (Anderson, 1961:15).

Abraham Kuyper was one of the first theologians to point out this explicitly. The *missio Dei* concept first surfaced clearly at the Willingen conference of the IMC in 1952 (Saayman, 1984:15). This was after Karl Hartenstein contributed in the whole debate via his presentation. He was following in the footsteps of Karl Barth and wanted to protect mission against secularisation and horizontalization, and to reserve it exclusively for God. Karl Hartenstein introduced the concept "*missio Dei*" in his "*Theologische Besinnung*" in order to place mission within the widest possible framework of the "*Heilsgeschichte*" and God's plan of salvation (Rosin, 1972:23).

The classical teaching that mission is primarily God's received a serious recognition in this conference. It was the intention of this conference to re-emphasise that the church is only an instrument in the hands of God to bring forth his kingdom. This conference succeeded in producing a Trinitarian approach to the theology of mission. God was correctly seen as the missionary God (Bosch, 1992:392; cf. Glasser, 1983b:91; Rosin, 1972:6).

Prof. Hugo du Plessis participated in this debate by clearly pointing at God as the subject of mission. He articulated without doubt that neither the church nor any other human agent could ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is Trinitarian in nature and character. In actual fact, Du Plessis perceived the Triune God as a missionary God. The missionary in that the Father sent His son Jesus to be the redeemer of man and to mediate between God and man. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit to apply the redemptive work of Christ and to assemble the church of God in the entire universe (Du Plessis, 1965e:231; cf. Kritzinger, J.J., Meiring, P.G.J. & Saayman, 1994:41).

Mission is 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. It is now very clear that mission has its origin in the heart of God. The ground of mission is God's agape (love) or his charis (mercy-love) (1 John 4:9). Du Plessis' contemporaries echoed the same sentiments at a later stage (Newbigin, 1978:20; cf. Bosch, 1993:240). It is therefore well articulated that in *missio Dei*, God becomes not only the Sender, but also simultaneously the one who is sent.

4.4.4.2 *Missio Ecclesiae*

The *missio Dei* concept had direct implications for the *missio ecclesiae*. Theologians and churches were now able to change from the ecclesiocentric view of mission. They could now define the right place of the church in the *missio Dei*. They returned to the source of the missionary nature of the church. With regard to the involvement of the church in mission, Du Plessis (1942:2) remarked that: "Dit het die Here behaag om hierin gebruik te maak van sy kerk op aarde aan wie die Woord gegee is om te bedien". That is why God chose to use his church in bringing the good news to fallen humanity. Therefore, *missio ecclesiae* is derived from the *missio Dei*. The *missio Dei* does not exclude the *missio ecclesiae* as also noted by Kritzing, J.J., Meiring, P.G.J. & Saayman (1994:41).

According to Du Plessis, the church is the only institution to which God entrusted the mandate to engage in missionary activities. Du Plessis saw this as acts of grace on the side of God, when He, in His free will, chose to work with the church to advance His missionary activities. The church is, therefore, privileged to participate in the mission of the Triune God. Du Plessis sees the church as the new witnessing community. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his church since Pentecost brought about this new dimension in the life of the church. He is of the opinion that the church can only be the true church of Christ if it does not neglect its missionary calling, to be God's missionary people. "Pinkster in die nuwe tydperk wat gekenmerk word nie slegs deur die vervulling van die Ou-Testamentiese beloftes nie, maar ook en veral deur die nuwe gemeenskap van die volk van God met die

opgestane Here, wat die Gees gestuur het as sy Gees om hierdie nuwe lewensverband deur sy inwoning in die kerk te bewerkstelling” (Du Plessis, 1959b:174).

Prof. Du Plessis’ contribution remains relevant also for the church in post-modern era. When the church engages itself in the missionary task, it will always be comforted, encouraged and strengthened to know that they are just instruments in the hands of the missionary God to fulfil His task on earth. The church can therefore not afford the luxury of inward looking and become an ingrown church. It must participate fully, utilizing all individual charismas given to them by the risen Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit, in the mission of God. It must do so with a clear conscience that it is an instrument to accomplish God’s mission in the world for the advancement of his Kingdom. The church is therefore not the end in itself, in mission it becomes an obedient servant of the missionary God.

4.4.5 The objects of mission

All the people from all the nations of the world are the objects of mission (see Du Plessis, 1965e:238; cf. Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47). During the life span of Du Plessis, the West viewed Africa in its darkness and other third world countries, as mission fields. As a result of the process of the de-christianisation and spiritual decline in the West, the Christian west also provides opportunity for the church to reach out. That is why the World Council of Churches at Mexico City in 1963 focused mainly on mission to the six continents of the world.

Through Christ, God creates a new humanity of His believers from amongst people of all nations of the world. The following remark elucidates the above-mentioned: “Daar moet ’n aaneenlopende getuienis hiervan uitgaan vir alle lewensterreine en vir alle mense van alle volke” (Du Plessis, 1959b:175).

Prof. Du Plessis’ contribution in this regard is greatly valued. It brings about the paradigm shift in the life of Reformed Churches in South Africa. The church is now able to recapture the promise in Acts 1:8 and move in the direction of participating in the world wide mission. There are many churches that are involved in bringing the

gospel within their localities, neighbourhoods, Africa and other parts of the world. Mission in this regard is no longer directed to blacks alone as it happened during Du Plessis' era. Mission is directed to all racial groups. This is in line with the spirit adopted in Mexico City where mission was directed to six continents with the local church being encouraged to witness to:

- Men of other faiths.
- Men in secular world.
- Men within and in the neighbourhoods of the local church.

The mission frontier changed drastically from the traditional understanding of geographical, racial, language, and cultural to that of belief and unbelief (Bassham, 1979:65).

4.4.6 The context of mission

According to Du Plessis, the entire world should be viewed as the mission field of the church. The world's spiritual and physical needs should be addressed. There is a need for the global context to be highlighted. Both its spiritual and physical needs are of uttermost importance. The following needs and complexities can be identified:

- Population growth.
- Religious plurality and modern ideologies.
- Universality and changes in world scenes.
- Participation of African churches in world mission.
- Western countries becoming mission fields.
- Socio-economic-political imbalances (poverty is increasing).
- Race relations (cultural barriers).
- Threats for the continued existence of humanity.
- Nominal Christianity.

In short, the world in its spiritual and physical needs provides the church, in its missionary endeavours, with ample opportunities and challenges. Therefore, the church of the Lord everywhere in the universe should engage itself in mission without

any excuse. The world wide challenges as highlighted above are still very much part of the 21st century (Greenway, 1999:3-8).

4.4.7 The methods of mission

4.4.7.1 The missionary – an ordained minister of the Word

Du Plessis maintains that a person who serves as a missionary should be an office-bearer who is called by God and sent out by the church. This is very clear in the following words: “Die sendingleraar moet as ampsdraer wat geroep is deur die Here en gestuur deur die gemeente, in opdrag van God en met die gesag wat ’n ampsdraer ontvang, in naam van die Here die heidene roep tot bekering” (Du Plessis, 1942:2).

In his theology, Du Plessis failed to expand more on the ministry of the laity. He still maintained the traditional understanding of a church where the clericals are sought to be there to minister to the laity, and the laity are there to be ministered to. In this regard he did not reflect adequately on the prophetic, priestly and kingly offices of believers because this would have enabled him to see the participation of all members of the church in the church’s missionary task, not only by finances.

The church should be structured in such a manner that the individual members of the church, clerics and laity alike, should join hands in their service, as the body of Christ, to serve God, one another and the world. Kritzinger, J.J., et al (1984:10) correctly noted that the mission of the church, as also outlined in Ephesians 4:11, depends primarily on its total membership. All members of the church should use their charismata to be of service to God and the body of Christ with the intention to draw the outsiders to Christ. Already in 1938 at Madras this point was clearly articulated. “According to Tambaram, missionary activity is not simply the task of a small number of people who have been seized by the idea; it is the task of the Church as whole” (Anderson, 1956:21).

4.4.7.2 *The preaching of the Word*

The preaching of the Word has been a central issue in the calling of the church of Christ to the heathens (see Du Plessis, 1933:429). Du Plessis maintains that the Word of God should be proclaimed in such a way that it does not ignore the context of the people addressed. This is very clear in the following words: "Christianity throughout the world is called by God to continuously protest against all injustice and it must make its prophetic witness heard against all forms of racial discrimination and warfare" (Du Plessis, 1960c:64).

When the Word of God is preached, God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, works the saving faith in the hearts of the heathens. It pleased God to use His church in the preaching of the Word, because faith results from the hearing of the Word (see Du Plessis, 1942:2; cf. Romans 10: 10-15).

4.4.7.3 *Training of the converts*

Du Plessis maintains that those who are converted to the Christian faith should be trained before they are baptised. They should be trained to know the Word of God and to be able to lead the Christian life. This is made clear in the following words: "n Heiden kan nie gedoop word voor hy blyke gegee het dat hy die grondwaarhede van die Woord verstaan en dat hy soos 'n Christen wil leef nie" (Du Plessis, 1942:2).

Du Plessis further maintains that the training of the converts should take not less than two years. He gives the following reasons for such a point of view:

- Om iemand sommer na geloofsbelydenis te doop, is dopers en oppervlakkig (Du Plessis, 1942:2).
- Nie alleen moet die geloof deur die verkondiging van die Woord gewerk word nie, maar dit moet ook daardeur versterk word (Du Plessis, 1942:2)
- Die Christene moet ook self leer om die Woord te lees; alleen dan kan hulle opgebou word in hul geloof (Du Plessis, 1942:2).

Prof. Du Plessis' contribution in this regard is still greatly valued by the church today. Training of the new converts is very much part of the missionary mandate in Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus instructed his disciples not only to make disciples, but also to instruct those who are incorporated in his body through baptism to be instructed in order for them to lead a new life by obeying Christ's instructions. The number of years are, however, no longer applicable in this generation because a lot of people are able to read and write on their own. Through the publications of the Christian literature and catechetical instruction books, which are accessible to a lot of converts also in the rural areas, many people get accustomed with Christian teachings in a short space of time. Small groups and Bible study teams, seminars and conferences also provide better opportunities for instructions and spiritual growth.

4.4.7.4 Churches must be planted

Du Plessis (1942:3) remarked that: "Die doel van ons sending is nie slegs om enkele tot bekering te bring nie, maar die ideaal moet wees om selfstandige, selfonderhoudende gemeentes te stig, wat in klassikale en sinodale verband met mekaar kan verkeer". He is of the opinion that churches should be planted with the following in mind:

- They should be independent.
- They should be able to maintain themselves.
- They should be organised in ecclesiastical assemblies of their own, i.e. own classis and own synod assemblies.

Du Plessis' insistence on the planting of the indigenous churches was highly influenced by the ecclesiology of his time. Many theologians viewed mission a movement of a church to a church with emphasis on the three-selves as propagated by Venn and Anderson in the 19th century. The principles of "self-support, self-government, self-propagation" were ideal to his mission. His quest for contextualization was successful in some respects, but the idea of indigenous churches that gather in the ecclesiastical assemblies of their own was highly influenced by the context of separate development and the system of apartheid of his time. He did not propagate for the 'pilgrim principle' that draws the newly founded church in the

direction of the universals of faith, rooted in obedience to Christ and the Scriptures as worked out and guided by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the indigenous people were pressured into independence and isolation so that they conform to their own cultural surroundings at the price of detachment from the universal church (Andrew Walls, 1982:97-99). Reformed Churches in South Africa are still to recover from this kind of isolation churches on racial basis.

Church planting as the purpose of mission will remain ideal for years to come, but yearning for numerical growth changes the whole complexion of the church's mission to the world. Churches planted should not only become independent, but also become God's missionary people who join hands in serving God and one another with the intention to win many to Christ and also network with the church of God in other parts of the world (ecumenical network). The pilgrim principle as outlined in John 17:13-19 also becomes theirs such that they join hands with other members of the body of Christ from all peoples of the world in witnessing for Christ to the ends of the world until his second coming. The pilgrim principle exposes the weakness in the three-self formula. It is very narrow, shallow, and self-centred. Local congregations are so much more than money, administration, and converts. As a provisional sign of the Kingdom they are so much more than cultural contextualization, or indigenisation of the gospel. Though these issues are important, they are only part of a much larger whole that involves the rule of Christ in the world and uniquely in the church through its local missionary communities of the King. This kind of understanding brings about a paradigm shift in the life of the local church. Instead of becoming inward looking and self-serving, the church becomes a servant of God that properly reflect His Kingdom that seeks to bring the whole of life under the lordship of Christ. Denkema (1995:83) correctly asserts that the missionary congregations must have structures and an administrative system that explodes outward into the world on the way to the coming Kingdom of God.

For the sending church to succeed in planting churches as highlighted above, Du Plessis maintains that the following principles must be adhered to:

4.4.7.4.1 Racial identity must be maintained

The national political and religious developments of universality and nationalism, and ecumenicity and independence respectively, had a great impact on Du Plessis' approach to mission. Along these lines, he developed an understanding of unity that maintains the racial identity. He sees it as a breakthrough in mission if it can be applied in the churches among the young nations (see Du Plessis, 1960c:64).

The spiritual and physical needs of the objects of mission should be identified and addressed. When the proclaimed gospel addresses the spiritual need of fallen humanity, it should also identify and address the physical needs of the world. Du Plessis is of the opinion that: "Christianity is also called upon to awaken the conscience of the world to the needs within it – teeming hungry masses; despairing, struggling demoralised, beings in many parts of the world" (Du Plessis, 1960:65).

4.4.7.4.2 The barriers must be crossed, but not abolished

With the religious development of ecumenicity and independence, Du Plessis came to terms with the fact that mission has to do with the crossing of the frontiers, but without abolishing them. He stated that because he came to the conclusion that unity of believers across boundaries of colour and nationality is unavoidable, it can be seen as a cord binding humanity together in the darkness of this world (see Du Plessis, 1960:63;65).

4.4.7.4.3 The Bantu to Bantu principle must be practised

With his sympathetic approach, Du Plessis maintained that the principle of a 'Bantu to a Bantu' be practised in mission fields. This principle helps the missionary to get to the bottom of issues surrounding the worldview of the people where mission is being done. This is very clear from the following remark: "Maar ook hierin moet ons vir die Bantoes 'n Bantoe wees deur te probeer om deur te peil tot die volle diepte daarvan en om die volle omvang van hierdie veelvormige Bantoeongeloof te besef" (Du Plessis, 1957:73).

Prof. Du Plessis should be applauded for having introduced this Biblical principle of contextualization in his contribution towards the relevant Reformed mission and

missiology. Without compromising the content of the gospel message, Paul also became all things to all men in order to win them for Christ. To the Jews he became as a Jew, to the Gentiles he became as a Gentile (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). This principle is still very much relevant in the 21st century. In this way the church in mission will do everything possible not to offend the recipients of the gospel (1 Corinthians 10:32; Kane, 1976:84).

4.5 DU PLESSIS' CONTRIBUTION TO THE REFORMED CHURCHES' STRUGGLE FOR A RELEVANT MISSIOLOGY

As the pioneer missiologist of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA), churches looked up for him to participate in the local and international missiological debates of his time and to make a meaningful contribution. Indeed, Prof. Du Plessis contributed a great deal towards the Reformed Churches' struggle for a relevant missiology and the following attest to the fact that he lived up to the expectations of many:

4.5.1 The inception of Missiology as a theological discipline

The 1950's are marked with a growing need, accompanied with a great enthusiasm, for a theology of mission. Up until this period, Missiology was not generally recognised as an independent theological discipline. It should be noted that in 1950 there were about 71 lecturing posts for Missiology in different protestant theological institutions and universities world-wide (Du Plessis, 1960a:1).

Du Plessis did not take long before his contribution in the field of Missiology could be felt and appreciated. In his time many theologians regarded him as the foremost missiologist in Southern Africa. It is therefore imperative to have an overview of some of his works in this field.

- **Die Missiologie as 'n Teologiese Wetenskap:** This publication was published in 1960. It was presented in the form of his inaugural speech when he was ordained

as a professor of Missiology of the PU vir CHO and the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom on March 17th, 1960. In this booklet he argues for the place of Missiology in the theological encyclopaedia, the theological character of Missiology, and the relevancy of Missiology in a concrete situation. This booklet was widely read by his peers. Bosch (1968:26) remarked that it was in this publication that Du Plessis supported theologians like A. Kuyper and J.H. Bavinck in placing Missiology under the diaconological group in the Theological Encyclopaedia.

- **Delayed Action:** This book was compiled by a number of theologians from the three Afrikaans sister churches. It was an ecumenical witness from these churches regarding the calling of the church to witness for Christ in the South African context prior and after the 60's. The title of Hugo du Plessis' contribution is called "*The New Era and Christian calling regarding the Bantu in South Africa*". It was printed by Craft Press in Pretoria and distributed by N.G. Kerkboekhandel in 1960. In his article Du Plessis called the church to consider its missionary calling seriously, to become vocal through its prophetic witness, and to act towards fellow human beings in love and bring about changes in the face of Western civilisation, technological and scientific developments, secularism, nationalism, and so on.

This publication was widely read and also received lot of attention from the public and theologians. In his response to the notions of 'universality and differentiation', as defined by Du Plessis in his article, S. du Toit from Potchefstroom wrote critically to 'Die Transvaler', September, 29th, 1960, that: "Universaliteit sonder differensiasie lei tot kosmopolitisme en liberalisme, en nasionalisme sonder universaliteit lei tot etnosentrisme". In his critique, Prof. S. du Toit accused Prof. Hugo du Plessis of being one-sided in his presentation. This is also noted by J.A. Greyling of Menlopark in his comments about the book 'Vertraagde Aksie' in 'Die Transvaler' December 23rd, 1960.

- **'n Banier van die Volke:** Pro Rege published this book of 205 pages in 1963 in Potchefstroom. In this book Du Plessis demonstrates without doubt that the Old

Testament is a missionary book. Prof. Hugo du Plessis maintains that God had the missionary intention with his creation that of humanity and all that is in heaven and on earth, and in his covenant with Abraham and Israel. It is very clear that the servant of the Lord will inaugurate the kingdom of God in the *eschaton*. The Old Testament attest to the fact that mission is primarily *missio Dei*.

This publication was highly rated by Du Plessis' peers. Among others D.J. Bosch commented that 'n Banier van die Volke' is one of the publications which highlights categorically that the Old Testament should also be viewed as a missionary book. "Uit die groot hoeveelheid noem ek slegs één, en dit seker een van die mooiste en mees geslaagde werke: H. du Plessis, *'n Banier van die Volke* (Pro Rege-Pers, Potchefstroom 1963), wat nie vanuit enkele "universalistiese" uitsprake nie, maar vanuit die sentrale boodskap van die Ou Testament sy sendingdimensie ontvou" (Bosch, 1968:20).

This is an important observation, since up to this point most missiologists looked for the missionary character of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, only in certain isolated texts where the sending of a person is implied. The approach of Du Plessis, who indicated the line from and the connection with the universality of the Old Testament and mission, is an important breakthrough in missiological literature.

The above-mentioned publications serve to highlight the contribution made by Prof. Hugo du Plessis to the field of Missiology. He also wrote many articles, which were used and are reflected in the bibliography of this research. His contribution was greatly valued, not only within the GKSA, but also his peers from other churches. We therefore discuss this aspect of his theology in detail.

4.5.2 The Biblical foundation of mission

The following section is aimed at giving a very intensive but general overview of prof. Hugo du Plessis' understanding of the Biblical character of missiology and the mission of the church to the world as such.

4.5.2.1 *The Old Testament foundation of mission*

The Old Testament has a great wealth of information regarding the theology of Mission, and therefore it must be regarded as a missionary book as such. In its universal message that is directed not only to Israel but to the whole world, the Old Testament depicts a very clear picture of the triune God's missionary intentions (Wright, 1961:17). The Old Testament missionary message entails the notion of the coming kingdom of God and the missionary responsibility entrusted to the church of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God to all nations of the world every day. Prof. Hugo du Plessis' understanding of the Old Testament foundation of mission include among others 5 main aspects:

4.5.2.1.1 *God's creation and mission*

In his reflection of the first three chapters of Genesis, prof. Du Plessis came to the conclusion that God created with a mission, and that the church's mission to the world today can find its foundation in that mission. He touched mainly on the issues of creation of the universe, man and the fall of man:

(a) *Creation of the cosmos*

According to the account of the first two chapters of Genesis, Creation is attributed to the triune God. He created the universe and everything in heaven and on earth *ex nihilo*. He also created everything in an orderly fashion (Du Plessis, 1963b:12).

God is portrayed as personal and transcendent Creator. God the Creator can therefore not be made one with his own creation as depicted in pantheistic tendencies. The Bible therefore teaches that we need to acknowledge and worship one true God. "God word nie vereenselwig met die natuur nie, maar is daarbo verhewe, hoewel Hy Hom tog in die natuur openbaar" (Du Plessis, 1963b:14).

The above-mentioned asserts the notion that the world and everything in it belongs to God. This cosmos should be understood in terms of its universality and unity, a world occupied by men who are all creatures of God. It is the Biblical teaching upon

which the theology of mission is founded. The world belongs to God, He is the creator who upholds and sustains, and reigns over everything in it. This world is the abode of all humanity and that is why “die Here nie die Here van net een volk met een klein wêreldjie kan wees nie” (Du Plessis, 1963b:15).

(b) Creation of man

All of humanity is from one blood. “Die mensheid is dus een groot geslag” (Du Plessis, 1963b:15). Du Plessis recognises the fact that all of humanity is from the same forefather, Adam – the first man to be created by God (see Acts 17:26a). Prof. Hugo du Plessis applied this Biblical truth in the South African context of the 60’s. White domination here at home and elsewhere in the world and attitudes of White superiority were prevalent. Whites did not regard themselves as equal to Blacks. He was severe by saying that white domination over non-whites is unacceptable (Du Plessis, 1960c:66). It took a lot of courage for Du Plessis to concretise this truth by pointing at its implications for the South African socio-political context.

All of humanity is created by God. Du Plessis maintained that man receives his life from God, and that his continued existence is dependent upon God: “Hierdie afhanklikheid van die mens van God het die mens gemeenskaplik met die hele skepping, en hierdie gemeenskaplike trek kom ook in hierdie afhanklikheid van die mens tot openbaring” (Du Plessis, 1963b:16).

All of humanity is created in the image of God, *imago Dei*. The distinguishing feature between man and that which is not, is founded on this biblical truth that man is created in the image of God (see Du Plessis, 1963b:16; cf. Genesis 1:27).

Du Plessis concluded that humanity is in unity. Consequently, human beings share a common problem, that of a spiritual need as a result of the fall of man to sin. Sin and the results of sin affect humanity, and that is why he maintained that the church, in doing mission, reaches out to all of humanity in need.

Apart from the unity of humanity as the image of God, Du Plessis also recognised diversity in humanity. He maintained the principle of diversity in unity: “Eenheid en

verskeidenheid, maar die eenheid primêr – dit is die bestemming van God vir die mensheid, die mensheid as 'n eenheid wat egter inhou 'n ryke verskeidenheid” (see Du Plessis, 1963b:39; cf. Acts 17:26, 27). He is of the opinion that this diversity is based on practical aspects, i.e. language, race, culture, geographical settings and so on.

Du Plessis maintained the universal relationship of all of humanity as grounded in the three elements mentioned above. Humanity cannot live in isolation from one another, and therefore the universality of humanity should be maintained: “Daarom is die skepping van die mens as beeld van God ook daarop gerig om die een mensheid van God in sy universaliteit, verskeidenheid en eenheid te openbaar en te verwesenlik” (Du Plessis, 1965e:230).

Man is created and given the cultural mandate: Man has been given the cultural mandate or creation command as highlighted in Genesis 1:28. The mandate entails the notion of being fruitful and multiplying, and that man should subdue the world and reign on behalf of God or as instruments in the hands of God (Du Plessis 1963b:18),

(c) The fall of man:

Chapter 3 of Genesis reflects mainly on the fall of man into sin. Man did not want to obey God, instead he wanted to be like God, “Hy wil sy eie wet wees en nie onder die wet van God buig nie” (Du Plessis, 1963b:20). Man now stands under the power of the devil. Man is guilty of his own transgressions. God could not just leave man in his transgression. A life of suffering and death was given as the penalty of what man did to God. Man could now only inherit eternal life when justified by God himself. “God alleen kan die lewe skenk en hy gee dit alleen in die weg van die gehoorsaamheid, in die regte relasie met Hom” (Du Plessis, 1963b:22).

Apart from the fall of man, God still extends His grace to mankind in Genesis 3:15. Already God was revealing His plan to defeat Satan and offer salvation to the world through His son. This is the gospel to be proclaimed to all nations of the world, “salvation is in the name of Christ”. This has direct implications for the theology of mission and theology as a whole. One of the direct implications is that man without

God can only be man with a god-substitute. This is a kind of understanding needed when confronting the adherents of other religions (Du Plessis, 1963b:25).

4.5.2.1.2 The covenant God and mission

Prof. Hugo du Plessis' emphasis on the Covenant of God was something new in Reformed theology where all the focus usually fell on the Kingdom of God theme. In the Reformed tradition, since the days of Bullinger, Bucer and Calvin, theology was strongly oriented on the Covenant theme (also the election). This we find in the Confessions. Du Plessis was one of the first to pay attention to the Covenant in defining a Biblical-missiological theory for the foundation of mission.

Prof. Hugo du Plessis saw God as the covenant God who enters into a personal relationship with mankind with a missionary intention. The concept 'covenant' makes provision for mission. He illustrates this by referring to God's covenant with Abraham and also with Israel. Regarding the two covenants, the following can be mentioned:

(a) God's covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12 depicts a very clear picture of what is to be understood by this covenant. God called Abram out of his heathen background, his people and his father's household, to enter into a personal relationship with Him. In this personal relationship God becomes a father to Abram and Abram becomes a son to God. The covenant with Abraham entailed the following:

- God will make a great name for Abram by blessing all of humanity through him. This covenant included not only Abram and his biological descendants, but also his spiritual descendants from all the nations of the world, those who will come to God through saving faith. This covenant has as its foundation the universal blessing of all nations. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, because He made him the father of all nations.

- The covenant aimed at the restoration of fallen humanity. The communion of humanity with God and with one another had to be renewed through the promise made by God to Abraham in the covenant. “Met hierdie roeping neem die herstel van die verlore eenheid van die mensheid en die verbreekte gemeenskap met God ’n nuwe aanvang” (Du Plessis, 1963b:49).

(b) God’s covenant with Israel

It is a Biblical truth that God chose Israel to be His own people out of grace, out of His compassion. The motivation of God’s choice of Israel is to be found in the sovereign will of God and His perfect love. “Die grond van die verkiesing was nie die goedheid of geloof van Israel en ook nie die geringheid of sondige swakheid van Israel nie, maar die soewereine welbehae en liefde van God (Deut. 7:8) wat vanaf die begin die karakter van erbarming en ontferming aangeneem het” (Du Plessis, 1963b:50).

The election of Israel found its historical realisation in their salvation from Egypt and found its firm basis in the covenant of God at Sinai (Exodus 19 – 24). The covenant of God with Israel entailed amongst other things the following:

- God is a God to Israel, whilst Israel in return becomes God’s people (Deuteronomy 7:6). God elected them to be His holy people who should serve Him in love and obedience. This would in itself entail mission. “Hierdie diens sluit in dat Israel ’n seën vir die wêreld moes wees, want met die verkiesing van Abraham en in hom Israel, het God die verlossing van die volkerewêreld in die oog gehad” (Du Plessis, 1963b:51).
- In Exodus 19:5-6, God chose Israel to be His kingdom of priests, a holy nation. This per se had a missionary character or intention. Israel were to reach out to other nations. God called them in order to serve the nations in obedience to their covenant God. “In hierdie verbondsrelasie moet Israel die mens as beelddraer van God weerspieël om so vir die wêreld ’n spieël te wees” (Du Plessis, 1963b:52).

- The missionary implication of this covenant could be best summarised with the following words: “Die missionêre betekenis van Israel in hierdie opsig was dat die volke deur hierdie verbondsverhouding, waarin God Israel tot Homself gestel het en wat gebaseer was op die genadige uitverkiesing van God wat steeds sy bewarende en koesterende liefde aan die volk betoon, oortuig kon word dat hierdie nuwe moontlikheid ook vir hulle geopen sou word” (Du Plessis, 1963b:53).
- The covenant had the implication that Israel is now under the direct rule of God (Exodus 19:4-6). They are now to be seen as a theocracy.

The covenant relationship between God and his people demonstrates without doubt that God's people are the covenant community of the King who participate in their Master's mission to reach out to all of humanity in the world. To be God's people meant a commitment to be an instrument on behalf of all the nations within the universal scope of God's lordship over the entire world. The same applies to the church today. In his ministry, Christ formed a community of renewed mankind – a community of faith, his disciples. When he gathered this community from among the fallen humanity and make them his own property, Jesus had the bigger picture in mind. Yes, he chose these men from among the Jewish people – but his purpose was not only intended for the Jews. They had a very special place in his ministry, but he also had all of humanity in mind. Salvation of all people was his ultimate goal. It should, therefore, be clear that Jesus formed his disciple community for the express purpose of continuing his mission. And that is the very nature of the church – “God's missionary people”. This is asserted by the words of Peter in 1 Peter 2:9. He speaks of the church as “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”. This is the identity of the church – “God's people from this world who are sent back to this world”. Yes - God's missionary people. It started with his disciples when he said to them “go” (Matthew 28:19). He was laying the foundation for the church's missionary calling of the church of all age – ‘we are therefore, also building upon that foundation with Christ as the chief-cornerstone’ (Ephesians 2:20). This kind of understanding gave birth to a Reformation ecclesiology that saw the church as people in community. Apart from Du Plessis,

Hendrik Kraemer also emphasized the importance of this kind of understanding in "A Theology of the Laity" (see Denkema, 1995:69).

This development has far-reaching consequences for the way missionary congregations should be viewed. They need constant reminders that their identity and calling do not derive from denominational affiliation or from institutional structures. They exist because they are covenant community of the King, who are called to be God's instruments for reaching out to the nations in obedient to the King's command as outlined in passages like Matthew 28:16-20 and many more.

4.5.2.1.3 The centripetal mission

The Old Testament missionary foundation is laid on the notion of centripetal mission. This notion suggests a movement from the circumference to the centre. Israel was chosen by God in order to draw people from outside Israel's territory to come and worship Israel's God. This was in a sense a fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham and to Israel respectively that they will be a blessing to the nations. Through Israel's proclamation of the mighty deeds of God and their lives as a light to the nations had to draw them to God (Du Plessis, 1963b:179; cf. Isaiah 42:6-7 and 60:1-3).

At the hand of the above-mentioned, prof. Hugo du Plessis came to the conclusion that:

- Israel's mission in the Old Testament entailed the centripetal idea. "Dit moes 'n sentripetale (middelpuntsoekende) sendingsubjek wees deur wie se voorbeeld die volke gestimuleer moes word om God ook so te dien" (Du Plessis, 1963b:162).
- Israel had to be an instrument in God's hands, through which He drew other nations to Himself by granting Israel salvation and performing other mighty deeds, including His judgement when Israel have disobeyed Him. God's acts stood as a *kerugma* to other nations. "Die verkondiging aan die volke is die werk van God in en vir Israel. Sy dade in en vir Israel, dit is die verkondiging, die *kerugma* aan die volke" (Du Plessis, 1963b:162).

- The servant of the Lord is the subject of mission in this centripetal understanding of mission. Du Plessis adds the eschatological expectation of the coming Messiah. “Hierdie Messias wat in Kneggestalte verskyn, verteenwoordig nie alleen Israel nie, maar God word ook in Hom openbaar en in en deur Hom kom God tot Israel en die volke” (Du Plessis, 1963b:163).

Prof. Du Plessis emphasised that the servant of the Lord is the light and blessing not only to Israel, but also to the nations of the world. Justice comes from Him, He is the norm of human relations and brings about peace, harmony and fellowship among human beings. The justice and righteousness that He brings about are grounded in love. Through Him and in Him all nations of the world are brought under one covenant of grace with God. He restores the unity of humanity (Du Plessis, 1963b:169).

The centripetal idea of mission in the Old Testament finds its fulfilment in the coming of Christ, the servant of the Lord: “Op hierdie koms van Christus is die ganse openbaringsgeskiedenis van die Ou Testament toegespits. Hy is in sy Persoon die kerugma van die heerlikheid, heiligheid en genade van God. As sodanig is Hy die sentripetale Sendingssubjek vir die volke” (Du Plessis, 1963b:169).

4.5.2.1.4 *The centrifugal mission*

Israel was not only used by God to draw other nations to himself, but He also used them to reach out to other nations in their respective destinies. This idea of mission is known as *centrifugal*, the movement made from the centre (Israel) to the circumference (the nations). Already we see something of the New Testament meaning of the centrifugal mission in the Old Testament (Du Plessis, 1963b:182).

4.5.2.1.5 *The eschatology and mission*

Prof. Du Plessis' voice was not lacking in the theological debate around the relationship between mission and eschatology. Like Bosch, he understood mission as an eschatological event. The Biblical eschatology manifests itself in terms of the past, present and the future. It is always understood from the Kingdom perspective, whereby the kingship of Christ is something of the present reality with a future accent. When mission is viewed from the eschatological perspective, Bosch maintains that it always reminds the church of its missionary calling and responsibility in the widest context: "to the ends of the earth and the end of time" (Bosch, 1993:236).

Prof. Du Plessis started off by pointing out that the Old Testament theology depicts a clear picture of the coming kingdom of God. It is the kingdom perceived in terms of God's kingship over his entire creation, yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever. God as the creator of the entire creation reigns over it. Old Testament eschatology also entails the notion of salvation of all nations in the last days (Isaiah 2:2-4; cf Isaiah 25:6-9). The realisation of this eschatological expectation cannot only be understood in terms of a remote future, but the present reality depicts a God who is using this eschatological message to draw many proselytes to himself. Hope in the coming of Christ is the final culmination of the break-through of the kingdom of God. This eschatological understanding of the coming of God constituted the Old Testament *kerugma* to nations. Hope for the coming of God and the eager and joyous waiting thereof in Israel constituted the *kerugma* to the nations, and the same applies to the church today. "Sonder die geloof op die koms van God, sonder die blye verwagting van hierdie werklikheid het ook die kerk vandag geen boodskap vir die wêreld nie en kan daar nie 'n ware sendingbesef, 'n geïnspireerde sendingroeping wees nie" (Du Plessis, 1963b:155).

The fulfilment of the coming of the kingdom of God in Christ already entails the fact that the Old Testament theology of mission has a christological character and foundation. The christological character and foundation of mission asserts the fact that "the Old Testament *kerugma* cannot be proclamation without Christ" (Du Plessis, 1963b:185).

4.5.2.1.6 *The kingdom of God and mission*

Regarding the relationship between the kingdom of God and mission, Prof. Hugo du participated in the theological debate of his time meaningfully as already noted in 4.3.2.3.10. He started off by highlighting the Biblical basis of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament. He was deeply persuaded that the Old Testament should also be viewed from the kingdom perspective. The Old Testament theology of mission is about the kingdom of God, where God is not only a king of Israel but of the entire humanity. God's kingship is both universal and covenantal (Du Plessis, 1963b:87; cf. Glasser, 1983c:32).

Du Plessis continued to point out that with the kingship of Saul, a new historical chapter was being written. In their theocratic monarchy, Saul had to be anointed king of Israel and had to rule over Israel as an instrument in the hands of God. God deposed Saul because he was not reigning in line with theocratic principles of governance, 'acting as an instrument in the hands of God'. God appointed the Davidic kingship that runs through until the coming of Christ as the descendent of David. In short "Deur die Dawidiese koningskap moes daar 'n afskaduwing van koninkryk van die God van geregtigheid en vrede wees, en die koningskap van Dawid moes 'n teken van God se koningskap oor die koning wees en van Hom as die koning wat nie net tot die grondgebied van Israel beperk is nie, maar wie se heerskappy oor die hele werêld uitstrek" (Du Plessis, 1963b:88).

Theocracy in Israel had to do with the coming kingdom of God that found its culmination in the coming of Christ. It is the eternal kingship in which the great son of David, Jesus Christ, is the eternal king of the entire universe. "Die voorlopige vervulling deur Christus hou ook in dat Hy 'n kwalitatief nuwe tyd inlui waarin vir en deur die verkondiging aan alle volke, as die nuwe van hierdie nuwe tyd, die koninkryk van God, die werêldheerskappy van Christus, vir die geloofsoog sigbaar word" (Du Plessis, 1963b:186; cf. Glasser, 1983c:36).

4.5.2.1.7 *God's mission in the Old Testament*

The *missio Dei* concept is not lacking in the Old Testament. It is God who chose Israel to be His holy people to witness to His great acts in history. Out of His perfect love for His people, God chose them, called them to be His own possession who witness to His mighty deeds to the nations of the world. Whilst mention is made of Israel's missionary calling in the Old Testament, the emphasis is on God as the subject of that mission. Du Plessis emphasised that Israel is not the subject of mission, but Yahweh himself. He is the one who gathers the nations to Himself and that is also viewed in the light of the eschatological activity as outlined in Joel 2:20,28 (Du Plessis, 1965e:231; cf. Du Plessis, 1963b:52).

The eschatological activity of God's mission in the Old Testament points at the coming of the kingdom of God, which will be realised through the coming of the eschatological figure, '*ebedh Yahweh*'. The servant of the Lord represents the kingdom of God in full because in Him it will be realised here on earth. The Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, was depicted by the Old Testament message as the coming servant of Yahweh. He came to fulfil the servant mission of the old Israel and to give birth to a people of God from among nations. He is the triumphant figure, worshipped by people of every language and the king of the kingdom of God. "Hy is die Hoof van die mensheid wat in die plek van Adam staan en in die plek van die mens die oordeel van God ondergaan, maar wat daarna alle mag in hemel en aarde ontvang en die heil vir die nasies verwesenlik (Du Plessis, 1963b:166; cf. Isaiah 42:1-4; Daniel 7:13-14). In short, Prof. Du Plessis emphasised that Israel is not the subject of mission, but Yahweh himself. The "proclamation" is not the spoken word, but the events concerning the *ebedh Yahweh*.

4.5.2.2 *The New Testament foundation of mission*

This section is meant to give a general overview picture of what the New Testament has in store about mission. The New Testament can be described as a book of mission. From the Gospels to Revelation, one encounters the missionary recordings of the early Christian church from within the Jewish community to different parts of the Hellenistic and European world. The church's missionary calling is dealt with in

a most comprehensive way. Prof. Hugo du Plessis' understanding of the New Testament foundation of mission included amongst other things the following:

4.5.2.2.1 Christ and the coming kingdom of God

Jesus started his ministry in the same tone as that of John the Baptist, who called his audience to repent in the light of the coming kingdom of God. In His kingdom message, Christ called his audience to repentance as the kingdom of God was at hand (Matthew 4:15-17). The coming of Christ and His ministry on earth inaugurated the present reality of the kingdom of God. Christ also looked forward to its final dawn in the *parousia* (Du Plessis, 1960a:18).

4.5.2.2.2 The mission of Christ on earth

From the words of Christ in John 20:21, it is very clear that He was sent before His believers were. He was sent by the Father to set the world free and to bring everything to its true destination. He does this to bring everything to perfection in Him. This in itself becomes the motif for the church to do mission in that they call upon men to believe in Christ and to follow the way to the true human destination (Du Plessis, 1965c:3).

4.5.2.2.3 The great commission

In Matthew 28:18-20, Christ gave a command known in mission as 'the great commission'. This command is connected with the coming of Christ into the world as depicted by John 20:21. "Omdat Christus gestuur is, moet ons nou Sy voorbeeld volg en gesondenes wees, moet ons sendingwerk doen" (Du Plessis, 1965c:3). The church is a community of God's people who stand in a covenant relationship with God in order to proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom of God in order to bring transformation in all of life. The great commission could be best understood as follows:

(a) *The authenticity of the church's missionary calling*

The great commission is based on the power and authority given to Christ. On the basis of the power and authority that Christ has as the *kurios* of the kingdom of God, He summoned His people to proclaim His kingship over the entire world. The church, therefore, derives its authenticity to engage in the missionary activity from the King of the Kingdom, Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:16-20 starts off by pointing out to the agreed meeting between the risen Lord and his disciples. "Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go" (v.16). When Jesus appeared to them, they reacted in a certain manner. They all worshipped – but their reaction can be categorized into two: "Those who worshipped him without reservations and those who worshipped him with doubts". The question of his Lordship was at stake. Some recognized that he is their risen Lord who should continue his Lordship over their lives, but at the same time others doubted whether they should still bow before him as their Lord. One should understand this kind of reaction from the Jews – they expected that their Messiah was there to set them free from the Roman domination and restore the Israel's kingdom, but when he died and was buried – they had to doubt his Lordship. This is attested by their question in Acts 1:6 "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?"

In his answer to their doubts, Jesus gives authenticity to their call to mission. Jesus said to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (v.18). Jesus highlights the fact that his kingship is directed not only to Israel, but the entire universe. He is the king of kings – the king of the kingdom of God. This Lordship and honour that is due to him is made possible by his death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day. To paraphrase the words of st. Paul in Philippians 2: 6 – 11, "On the account of Christ's death, God exalted him to be king over all of humanity and creation".

This had direct implications to their call to mission as commanded below. For the church's mission to be authentic, it must thoroughly be 'theocentric'. The Christian mission is fundamentally theological in nature, growing out of the person and character of the Triune God who reigns in Christ over all creation through His Spirit

and His Word. In carrying out the commission to world-wide mission, the disciples were therefore to be obedient to king of the church who is the author of its mission.

(b) The scope of the church's mission

In his call to the church to engage in the missionary task, Jesus also outlines the scope of mission that the church should cover. The scope of mission has always been the most debated issue on the theological frontier. In fulfilling its missionary calling, the church has to do the following:

- **Making of disciples of all nations:** This entails the proclamation of the gospel to the fallen humanity of the entire world. The church should, therefore, engage itself in the evangelistic programme – the scope of which is Christ. In paraphrasing the words of st. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, 'They need to proclaim Christ crucified'. They must believe in Christ in order to be reconciled with God and to one another. Making of disciples in this regard entails not only the proclamation of the gospel, but also teaching the new converts the basics of faith so that they can carry their cross and follow the king Jesus. In Reformed circles, therefore, new converts are subjected to catechism class aimed at the confession of faith.
- **Incorporating the new disciples into the body of Christ:** Jesus highlights the fact that those who embrace the gospel, and in short the Christian faith as theirs, they need to be baptised in the name of the Triune God – the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is a sign that they have died with Christ, buried with him and risen with him to a new life. This entails total submission to Christ and willingness to live God's way and to be identified with the covenant people of God - who are in turn His missionary people.
- **Teaching to obey what Christ commanded:** The missionary activity of the church does not end up with incorporation. Those incorporated in the body of Christ through baptism, they are called to live in the likeness of Christ whilst still in this world. They are expected to lead a new life – life of service to God and to one another and the world. That is why Christ told his disciples

that they need to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you”(v.20). What Christ commanded can be best summed-up in his law as outlined in Matthew 22:34 – 40 – “Love for God and fellow human beings”. Consequently, in honour of the risen king, the church will therefore seek to reckon his Lordship in every sphere of life. Indeed, men who are his disciples, from all walks of life, need to worship him that way – ‘In Spirit and in truth’ (John 4:23).

This kind of discipling others for Christ had direct implications to the missionary calling of the church. it ensured the continuity of the missionary mandate as entrusted to the first disciples of Christ. They were to produce disciples who will also carry forth the missionary mandate. This is what I call “reproduction” system in discipleship training. And of course it also has direct implication for our way of doing theology today – ‘It should be a scientific endeavor to bring others to Christ and to live in obedient to him’. Remember 2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”. Calvin in his time felt the divine imperative not merely to defend the gospel, but to preach it actively to men. This is our calling – ‘teaching others to obey what Christ has commanded’.

(c) Objects of the church’s mission

Jesus also points out categorically that the objects of God’s mission to the world is salvation of all humanity. That is why the mission of the church is directed to people from all nations. In terms of Acts 1:8 “they were to move from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth”. And if you ask, where is Jerusalem today? Your place of residence where you first came to know Christ as your personal Saviour and Lord. Wherever the Lord places u - you need to start proclaiming the gospel in its totality to your neighbour – to your neighbour’s neighbour, and to the ends of the world. God’s missionary people is the church consisting of people who are willing to cross geographical barriers, race barriers, language and cultural barriers in order to win the world for Christ.

(d) The promise to the church

In the last place, the 'Great Commission' entails the promise of the ever-presence of God. He is always with his church to see it. They need not fear of all the stumbling blocks – with the Lord of the church, they will be victorious over sin and Satan. The gates of hades will not overcome it (Mathew 16:18). That is why Christ said to them, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (v.20b). And indeed, Christ is ever-present in His church through his Spirit.

This is attested by the promise in Acts 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." He is the great comfort to the church in its short-comings and all the difficulties it encounters during its missionary pilgrimage. With the empowering of the Holy Spirit – the apostles could now proclaim the gospel 'Christ' with boldness. The mission of the church becomes dynamic by His ever-presence, "... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Mathew 28:20).

This highlights the fact that the mission of the church is very complex. It does not stop with the proclamation of the word (euangelion), those who come to faith must be incorporated as members of the body of Christ by participating in the sacrament of the baptism, and thereby continue to teach them to be obedient to what Christ commanded his church to do. The mission of the missionary ceases to exist only when he had succeeded in planting a local church which in turn is able to be a witnessing community of Christ, a missionary church.

4.5.2.2.4 *The Pentecost and mission*

The Holy Spirit brought about a total new dimension in the mission of the church in the New Testament. Christ promised His disciples the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to fulfil their missionary calling (Acts 1:6-8). "Die Heilige Gees is die

groot Getuie wat van die volk van die Here getuienis van God maak. Hy wil deur die volk van God getuig” (Du Plessis, 1965a:268).

The Pentecost marked the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the continuing work of mission in a dynamic way. The prophecy of Joel 2 finds its fulfilment in this regard. The Holy Spirit enables the church to fulfil its missionary tasks. In Acts 13:1-4, the church in Antioch remained in the background whilst the Holy Spirit took charge of setting apart and sending out missionaries to the mission field (Du Plessis, 1965c:5; cf. Bavinck, 1960:39).

4.5.2.2.5 *The people of God and mission*

During the first General Synod of the GKSA, Du Plessis gave another perspective regarding the people of God. The people of God are believers in Christ as their saviour and Lord, and they come from among all nations of the world. They stand in unity with one another as members of one body of Christ, the church. In His exegesis of Ephesians 2:19-22, Du Plessis remarked that there is neither Jews nor gentiles. According to him, it had a direct implication for the race relations in South Africa, and specifically for the GKSA as they gathered under one general synod, blacks, coloureds and whites (Du Plessis, 1965c:4).

Accordingly, people from all nations of the world are joined together as a building or the temple of the Lord where there is harmony, peace and unity. They are called by God to engage themselves in building the house of the Lord, the church. Believers from among all nations of the world are bricks that stand in unity in one building, the church. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets with Christ as the cornerstone. This has direct implication for the fact that a church can only be a church when it stands in relation to Christ its Saviour, and the unity of the members should be based on the truth of the Word of God (Du Plessis, 1965c:5).

Du Plessis also highlights the fact that the unity of the church does not do away with diversity. The unity of the church can be understood therefore as ‘unity in diversity’. Each nation is accorded its place in the church of God. The one church of God consists of believers from among all nations of the Word. “Die wonderlikste van

alles is dat, hoewel daar net die een volk van die Here is, die volke tog nie in die een volk verdwyn het nie, die stene smelt nie weg tot een massa klei nie” (Du Plessis, 1963c:6).

Du Plessis’ viewpoint regarding ‘unity in diversity’ had the direct implication in the GKSA structures that different racial groups will manifest the unity of the church of Christ in the General Synod. Each will keep its own national synod and diversities in the local churches. “Elke volk het sy plek en taak in die woning van God en al die nasies sal „hulle eer en heerlikheid” in die Nuwe Jerusalem inbring (Openb. 21:26)” (Du Plessis, 1963c:6).

The above-mentioned discussion has a direct implication for the church’s calling in the world in a twofold sense. The church should preach the Word of God to all the people from all nations of the world, and the church should do everything in its power to enhance the new era of unity for the advancement of the kingdom of God. 1 Peter 2:9-10 points out that those who come to Christ through saving faith are called people of God. They are described as the chosen people, the king’s priests, a holy nation, God’s own people who are chosen to proclaim the wonderful acts of God who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. This has direct implications for the church’s mission in the world. They can take up this challenge with hope knowing that God Himself dwells in the church through the Holy Spirit and He is the builder of His church (Du Plessis, 1965c:7).

4.5.2.2.6 Mission and eschatology

Oscar Cullmann (1961:42) contributed a great deal in the 20th century debate regarding the relationship between mission and eschatology. In his “Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament”, Cullmann succeeded in outlining that the missionary work of the Church is eschatological foretaste of the kingdom of God, and the Biblical hope of the “end”. The same sentiments were echoed by Prof. Hugo du Plessis who maintained that mission of the church should also be viewed in terms of eschatological expectations. In the light of the final consummation of the kingdom of God, the church should proclaim the good news to the world. “Die belangrikheid

van die eskatologiese in die sending in die sending blyk daaruit dat Christus self die twee momente in 'n wesenlike en fundamentele relasie gestel het met hierdie woorde: 'en hierdie evangelie van die koninkryk sal verkondig word in die hele wêreld tot 'n getuienis vir al die nasies; en dan sal die einde kom' (Matt. 24:14 vgl. Mark. 13:10 en Hand. 1:6-8, asook 2 Tim. 1:9-10, Luk. 24:46-49).

4.5.3 The theological character of mission

4.5.3.1 *The object and principium*

The importance and meaning of missiology should be seen in the light of its theological character. This position has been weakened by the emergence of the 19th century subjectivism and relativism. The two were emphasised over against the authority and the inspiration of the Word of God. There is no absolute truth, truth can only be viewed as subjective and relative. Consequently, "Die voorwerp van die teologiese studie was nie meer die kennis van God soos geopenbaar in die Heilige Skrif nie, maar die menslike religie, en in die vergelykende godsdienswetenskap het die pseudoreligies soms 'n relatief hoër plek ingeneem as Christelike" (Du Plessis, 1960a:2).

Over and against these growing tendencies of subjectivism and relativism, Karl Barth through his dialectic approach to the theology of religions brought about the understanding that the Word of God should be our starting point as we engage ourselves with theology. This had a great influence within the protestant circles. H. Kraemer came to an antithetical conclusion that: "Die nie-christelike religies gekonfronteer word met die openbaring van God in Christus" (Du Plessis, 1960a:3).

According to Bavinck, however, Barth's rejection of the general revelation and absolute position of antithesis, can never be a solution to the problem created by subjectivism and relativism in the 19th century. "In aansluiting by Calvyn en op grond van noukeurige Skrifstudie veral van Rom. 1:18-32 kom Bavinck tot die konklusie dat mens, selfs in sy gevalle toestand, nooit losgedink kan word van die

algemene openbaring van God nie, maar ook dat die geadresseerde mens hierdie openbaring steeds verdring en vervang met sy eie religie” (Du Plessis, 1960a:3).

If the authority and inspiration of the Word of God is denied or questioned, then theology is under attack at its very heart and we can, therefore, no longer speak of “n ware teologiese wetenskap waarin dit gaan om die kennis van God nie” (Du Plessis, 1960a:4). The Word of God is the basis of theology as a science. It should be seen as the only object and *principium cognoscendi* of the theological science or knowledge. It is therefore imperative to bear this in mind when engaging with theology due to the growing tendency in our times to undermine the authority of the Scripture.

4.5.3.2 Theological foundation of missiology

4.5.3.2.1 The foundation of missiology

Prof. Hugo du Plessis’ understanding of the foundation of missiology could be best understood in terms of three dimensions, namely: trinitarian, christological and eschatological. This understanding is fundamentally based on the trinitarian foundation of the church as the instrument of God’s mission to the world (Du Plessis, 1960a:6). It is imperative to look at each one of these dimensions separately in order to depict his clear understanding of each of them.

4.5.3.2.1.1 The trinitarian foundation

Prof. Du Plessis maintained that the Triune God is a missionary God. The three persons in the Trinity are all actively involved in history as a missionary God, the only true God who is Lord of the entire creation and all of humanity. “God die Vader in die eerste plek in die skepping en voorsienigheid, die Here wat alles in die geskiedenis tot die bestemde doel lei; die Seun wat gestuur word om die mensheid te verlos en die Heilige Gees om die volk van God tot aan die voleinding te bewaar, om

aan die volk die nuwe lewe te skenk en dit te bring tot die volheid van die bestemming van die mensheid” (Du Plessis, 1965e:231).

The primary basis, however, is not to be found in the Triune God’s involvement in the history of mankind as a missionary God, but in His divine decrees as agreed upon in the eternal Council of God as depicted by A. Kuyper or Voetius. The trinitarian foundation of missiology found its basis in the divine will of the Triune God (Du Plessis, 1960a:7).

4.5.3.2.1.2 The christological foundation

Apart from the fact that Du Plessis had a sound doctrinal view of the Trinitarian foundation of mission, he also paid attention to the Christological foundation of mission. He said: “..., maar daar is ook die Christologiese fundering, want wat eers met die voleinding ten volle verwesenlik sal word, is reeds in beginsel deur Christus tot stand gebring, sodat daar in Hom reeds die een nuwe mensheid is, die mensheid in sy eenheid, sy universaliteit en sy verskeidenheid” (Du Plessis, 1965e:231).

4.5.3.2.1.3 The eschatological foundation

Du Plessis was of the opinion that mission has an eschatological foundation, and therefore, his understanding of mission contained the eschatological dimension as taught in the doctrine on the final things, eschatology. He maintained that: “... die eskatalogiese volheidsbestemming van die mensheid moet reeds nou in ’n sekere mate in die volk van die Here gesien word, in al die verhoudinge en terreine waarin die gelowiges te staan kom. Die kerk moet op weg wees na die volheid, dit moet daarheen groei en beweeg” (Du Plessis, 1965e:231).

The emphasis in this regard has to do with the coming of the *basileia*, the king. In the salvation history of the church, the eschatological dimension reminds us of the fact that the christological church is the heir of the kingdom of God. The mission of the church is therefore to be directed to the nations with an eye to the coming of

Christ and his kingdom. This understanding is basically based on the fact that the church is founded by the king and exists for him. The church is therefore the people of the king (Du Plessis, 1960a:15).

The church can be understood in terms of 'the eschatological church', which is not only in principle differentiated from the world because of her holiness, but also reckoned as the kingdom church awaiting the coming of the *basileia*. She stands in the authority of her Lord as the light and salt of all of life, and that is why she is entrusted with the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel to all peoples of the world. In this regard "sending is eskatologies gerig op hierdie universaliteit van die koninkryk van God en daarom is sending, eskatologie en universaliteit onlosmaaklik met mekaar verbind" (Du Plessis, 1960a:15).

Christ himself instituted the relation between mission and eschatology in Matthew 24:14 and Luke 24:46-49. The good news of the kingdom will first be proclaimed to the whole world and then the end will come. Prof. Du Plessis notes four aspects in connection with the relation between eschatology and mission:

- The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God is not only a sign for the end, but also a sign that the end has broken through. Something of the future is realised now. The coming of Christ and the fulfilment of his mission on earth was indeed a breaking through of the Kingdom of God.
- The proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God brings about an assurance and guarantee that the coming of the kingdom in its final state is certain. Believers are sure of it through that which they can realise in the present reality. It is therefore imperative for the church to proclaim the salvation in Christ to the world so that all can come under his Lordship. Mission is therefore an earthly manifestation of the kingdom of God (Du Plessis, 1960a:18).
- The proclamation of the gospel in terms of the coming of the kingdom of God is the total essence and meaning of the church's proclamation to the world. Christ's command in Mathew 28:18-20 clearly communicates that it is a command with

totality in mind. The church is sent to the end of the world and the ages, to all nations, each day till the end comes and all should be taught to uphold this. “Alleen wanneer in alle sendingarbeid die uitsig so totalitêre-eskatologies is, het dit ware sin en betekenis en gaan daar ’n dinamiese werfkrag van die kerk uit en is daar ’n besielende en hoopvolle verwagting” (Du Plessis, 1960a:19).

- As already highlighted above, prof. Du Plessis maintains that mission is the sign of the end. The proclamation of the gospel to the end of the earth, Israel included (Romans 9-11), is a sign of the end. He notes, however, that it is not the work of the church of bringing the gospel to the end of the earth that will bring about the end of times, but the sovereign will of God. The end of times is the work of the triune God himself who brings about the total or perfect renewal of His creation and the world so that Christ will become everything to all (see Ephesians 1:20-23; cf. Du Plessis, 1960a:20).

4.5.3.2.2 *Missiology and mission in concrete situation*

For missiology and mission to be relevant and to have a lasting impact in the lives of humanity on earth, it must be contextual. Missiology must be relevant to the concrete situation of the people it seeks to address, and the same applies to the mission of the church to non-Christian humanity. Missiology should not be relegated to its historical past, but it should bring about some fresh innovations related to the questions and lifestyle of the contemporary world. In his attempt to depict a clear picture of his understanding of the concrete situation, prof. Du Plessis highlighted the following:

- In the concrete situation, humanity addressed is humanity in its fallen state. He calls them ‘heathens’. They should be confronted with the appealing *kerugma* that seeks to bring the total change in a holistic way. Missiology should therefore come up with principles and methods of understanding and approaching the fallen man in his primitive state, in his cultural and religious background. The whole of

life should therefore be addressed by the Word of God, the gospel of the kingdom of God (Du Plessis, 1960a:22).

The nature and meaning of heathendom should not only be reflected by the Word of God, but its essence (deeper meaning) should be understood and be approached through communication, confrontation and direct contact with the living Word through kerugma (Du Plessis, 1960a:22).

- Missiology should provide proper principles, methods and guidelines for church planting. Church planting should receive special attention in Missiology. The mission of the church as such should be directed at instituting the indigenous church for the heathens who come to faith. The foundational work should be grounded on a firm and sound theological basis. Missiology should therefore provide principles that deal with questions related to:

- The nature of the church,
- The identity and characteristics or marks of the church,
- The relation between the young and the old church,
- The confessions,
- Liturgics and church order of the young church,
- The calling of believers in their heathendom context and towards their own people,
- The agent and purpose of mission (Du Plessis, 1960a:22;23).

Prof. Du Plessis emphasised the fact that new methods and approaches to mission will vary from one context to the other. However, principles based on the Biblical truth of old remains. What God had to say in every context becomes more important, “Vir dit alles moet die teologiese antwoorde gevind word, wat God self sê in hierdie nuwe omstandighede en in die konkrete situasies en omgewing van die sendingarbeid self” (Du Plessis, 1960a:23).

On the basis of the above-mentioned, prof. Hugo du Plessis concluded that the theology of mission (missiology) should entail the following elements:

- Ecumenical;

- Reformatory;
- Confessional;
- Kerugma;
- Contemporaneity; and
- Scriptural (Du Plessis, 1960a:25;26).

To concretely apply what prof. Hugo du Plessis had in mind, his understanding of the church, of mission in the African context and of ecumenical aspects reflected in his theology of mission will be studied.

4.5.3.2.2.1 The Church

4.5.3.2.2.1.1 The concept church

Du Plessis' usage of the concept church in mission indicates that he has a solid knowledge of the doctrine on the church, "*ecclesia*". According to Du Plessis, Scripture uses the word church to refer to the local and catholic (universal) church of our Lord Jesus Christ. He maintained that "Die Skrif gebruik die woord kerk (ekklesia) net vir die plaaslike gemeente en die universele kerk" (Du Plessis, 1965e:234).

The church is a new and true humanity through which the image of God could be seen. It is a new humanity of God's people recreated in Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the preaching of the Word, God in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, is assembling His one and only true church. The church manifests itself visibly in a local church, and invisibly in the catholic church, which is the body of Christ (see Du Plessis, 1965e:232; cf. Ephesians 5:22,23; Heidelberg Catechism: Sunday 21; Belgic Confession: Article 27).

The only problem with Du Plessis was that his understanding of a local church was that of one ethnic, cultural group coming together on their own discriminating against other people from other language, ethnic, and cultural groups on the basis of these divides. He also did not pay too much attention on the four attributes of the church, 'unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity'. The church should always be seen as a

unifying force, gathering, inviting, and incorporating those who come to faith. The church should also be seen as a sanctifying force that proclaims forgiveness and healing of the wounded hearts and lives. It must minister as nation of priests. The church should also be seen as a reconciling force that brings people from across the racial divides together. This is the bridge-building movement that shows the way to renewal and fellowship with God for fractured, alienated humanity. And lastly, it must be seen as a proclaiming force through its apostolicity. It must always be ready to witness for Christ through its words and deeds (Denkema, 1995:22-36).

4.5.3.2.2.1.2 *Church and mission*

The issue on the relationship between the church and mission became crucial in the life of the church as early as the first half of the twentieth century. Since the 1930's missiologists have called for a closer relationship between the two. In the mind of laity, the two concepts are seen as distinct and sometimes conflicting ideas. To elucidate this point, Denkema (1995:4) present the following sketch:

COMMON CONCEPTIONS OF CHURCH AND MISSION

	CHURCH	MISSION
•	Institutionalized organisation	Individualized fellowship
•	Based in permanent facilities	Mobile; few permanent facilities
•	Led by paid clergy	Led by self-sacrificing missionaries
•	Institution-maintained orientation	Risk-taking orientation
•	A heaven from the world	Out among the world
•	Structured accountability	Unstructured independence
•	Self-supporting	Supported endlessly from the outside
•	Self-governing / self-propagating	Controlled and promoted from outside

This description fits the mind of the laity during Du Plessis' time and he did not succeed in changing this mindset. That is why the church's missionary task is left in

the hands of the so-called mission commissions or evangelistic commissions. The two concepts are interrelated, though not synonymous. There is no participation in Christ without participating in His mission to the world. Mission belongs to the very nature of the church, "God's missionary people". It is impossible therefore to understand mission without viewing the nature of the Church, and to understand the church without looking at its mission (Denkema, 1995:5; cf. Newbigin, 1954:164-165).

4.5.3.2.2.1.3 The establishment of the church

The goal of mission according to Du Plessis is to establish independent local churches. This is based on his understanding that the church is primarily a local church. The missionary church (sending church) should aim at establishing a self-supporting independent church within the community it is serving. The local church becomes a church immediately after it has been instituted by the availability of the local confessing members and office-bearers within them (see Du Plessis, 1965:23).

Du Plessis was highly influenced by the three-self formula, "self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting". The first two are more justifiable than the last one. A church can be an independent church even if it is still receiving the financial support or assistance from a sister church. The only thing that can be guarded against is paternalism, where the supporting church might want to dictate and also take decisions on behalf of the assisted church. A wealthy church has no right to take decision on behalf of the poor church on the basis of the financial assistance that they are giving. All local churches are equal partners and participate in the ecumenical networking on an equal basis, knowingly that they are just doing their parts in the realisation and the coming of the Kingdom of God in this world.

4.5.3.2.2.1.4 Church relations in mission

Du Plessis addresses the question of the relationship between the 'old' and 'young' churches. He uses the words 'old' and 'young' to refer to the establishing church (sending church / missionary church) and the established church respectively. The

bond between the two should in this regard be ascertained. This is necessary in practice. The 'old' and the 'young' churches are independent from one another (see Du Plessis, 1965e:230).

Du Plessis is of the opinion that there is unity, universality and diversity in the church. These three aspects in the church of the Lord are grounded in the unity, diversity and universality of the Triune God, which is also reflected in all of humanity as the image of God. He concluded that: "Omdat die kerk in sy volheid (pleroma) die nuwe, die ware mensheid is waarin die beeld van God gesien word en die Drieënige God self 'n verbondsdrieënheid is in die verskeidenheid en eenheid van die drie Persone en die universele Here is van die hele wêreld en die hele mensheid, is daar eenheid, universaliteit en verskiedenis in die kerk van die Here" (Du Plessis, 1965e:230).

On the ground of these three elements in the church of the Lord, Du Plessis concluded that the two churches stand in a relationship with one another, a spiritual relationship. For a better understanding of what he means by this, a reflection on each one of the three elements is inevitable.

(a) *The unity of the church*

The 20th century was characterised by the debate surrounding the relation between unity and mission. It was generally accepted in the ecumenical arena around the 50's that unity and the mission of the church cannot be separated from one another. As a result, the church struggled to see and live with that fact. This has been the problem for the churches in South Africa, especially the three Afrikaans sister churches, because of the race relations question and non-involvement of some churches within the Reformed tradition in ecumenical matters (Saayman, 1986:118).

The unity of the church of the Lord is not something that can be fabricated, it is established by God in Christ. It is, according to Du Plessis, the unity of the new humanity in Christ which Christ himself prayed for before his Father in John 17:21 (see Du Plessis, 1965e:232).

Du Plessis was of the opinion that the unity of the church should be realised in the local church. Members of the local church should work in unity with one another as members of one body of Christ. This is grounded on the fact that every local church is independent. For this reason, Du Plessis concluded that: "Hierin het die lidmate nie 'n keuse nie, maar vanweë die eenheid in Christus en vanweë hulle roeping as gelowiges is hulle verplig om oor te gaan tot kerkinstituering" (Du Plessis, 1965e:232).

The local church also stands in unity with other churches as members of one body of Christ. It is asserted that: "Omdat al die gemeentes op gelyke wyse aan Christus verbind is en almal openbarings is van dieselfde liggaam van Christus (Ef. 5:13), is al die gemeentes in kerkverband met mekaar" (Du Plessis, 1965e:233).

To support his point of view, Du Plessis provided a typical example from the apostolic era with its Biblical grounds:

- In die apostels wat die leiding in die gemeente gehad het en wie se leer die fondament van die kerk geword het, was al die gemeentes een (Du Plessis, 1965e:234).
- Altyd is die kerk as 'n eenheid gesien, die liggaam van Christus: "Dit is een geloof, een doop, een God en Vader" (Ef. 4:4-6). Daar is net een kerk van die Here en hierdie een kerk kan onmoontlik nie in twee of meer kerke opgebreek word nie (Du Plessis, 1965e:235).

Unity according to Du Plessis should be unity embedded in the Word of God and also in the same confessions. Unity can never and must never undermine the confessions of faith. He maintained that: "Daar kan alleen sprake wees van kerkverband van gemeentes wat een is in die belydenis, want die kerk van die Here word gebou op die belydenis van die apostels en profete (Ef. 2:20); omdat dit so is, moet die verskillende gemeentes van dieselfde belydenis ook in kerkverband wees, om op hierdie wyse iets te laat sien van die eenheid van die universele kerk van Christus" (Du Plessis, 1965e:236).

According to Du Plessis, this has direct implications for the relationship between the white and non-white churches of Reformed churches. Du Plessis (1965e:236) maintained that: “Die gemeentes wat een is in belydenis – en hieronder verstaan ons ’n fundamentele eenheid in belydenis, kerkregering en erediens – moet dus ook nadere institutêre verband tree”. As a result, the Reformed Church, which does mission should institute a Reformed Church which stands in unity within itself, and consequently an institutional relation should be sought.

(b) *The catholicity of the church*

In line with the teachings of Sunday 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism and article 27 of the Belgic Confession, Du Plessis emphasised the catholicity of the church. The universality of the church of Christ is grounded on the fact that Christ is the Saviour of the whole world (II Corinthians 5:15; John 3:16; 4:14); in Christ everything in heaven and on earth is reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20); and that Christ is the head of a new humanity (Romans 6:12-21).

In line with the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-19, Christ has been given the authority in heaven and on earth and that is why He commanded his disciples to make disciples from all people of all nationalities of the world. The breaking through and coming of the kingdom of God in Christ should be realised by the preaching of the gospel, instructing, and church planting among all people of the world (see Du Plessis, 1965e:238; cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Du Plessis maintained that the church should not only grow in quantity to the end of the world, but should also grow in quality, “Dit moet ook kwalitatief groei ...” (see Du Plessis, 1965e:238; Ephesians 4:13).

Du Plessis further maintained that the church should not only be viewed as an institution, but also as an organism that should transcend geographical boundaries. The church is therefore ecumenical and should engage in ecumenical relationships with other churches with the same confessions, church polity through ecclesiastical assemblies and correspondence (see Du Plessis, 1965e:238, 239).

(c) *The diversity of the church*

Du Plessis was of the opinion that the diversity of the church has a theological foundation. Like there is diversity in the Trinity, God instituted diversity within humanity, whom he created in His own image. There has been diversity within the unity of mankind even before the fall of man to sin. He cites Acts 1: 26,27 to support his argument (see Du Plessis, 1965e:241).

As a result, there is a rich diversity within the new humanity, the body of Christ. It is a body composed of different parts, with different responsibilities for its edification (see Du Plessis, 1965e:241; cf. Ephesians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12: 17, 19).

(d) *The ecclesiastical relationship in practice*

Du Plessis' era was characterised by the controversy regarding "volks christianisering" and fear of eliminating "volks eiendomlike". This understanding was based on the interpretation of the notion 'nation' (ethnos) in terms of the ethnic group or ethnic unity of a particular people and their identity. In order to enhance diversity within the church of the Lord, people from different races should be allowed to worship apart from one another on the basis of common language, culture, history, calling and aspirations. This developed an understanding also from within the Doppe church that the Afrikaners as a people are called by God (Du Plessis, 1957:56).

The idea of "volks christianisering" and "volks eiendomlike" came to be associated more closely with Afrikaner nationalism and as such encouraged the policy of Apartheid directly or indirectly. It provides an opportunity for everyone to listen and preach the mighty deeds of God in his or her own language, *within the* parameters of one's culture. As a result of the preaching an indigenous church should be planted. "Die logiese konsekwensie hiervan is dat vir die verskillende volke elk 'n eie selfstandige kerk tot stand moet kom"(Robinson, 1986:97).

In the light of the above-mentioned and on the basis of the unity, diversity, and universality of the church of the Lord, Du Plessis concluded that:

- There must be separate churches for different ethnic groups, “Daar aparte gemeentes onder die verskillende volke moet wees” (Du Plessis, 1965e:244).
- Ecclesiastical relations should operate up to a national level, “Die kerkverband van die gemeentes moet deurgaan tot op nasionale vlak” (Du Plessis, 1965e:244).
- Ecclesiastical relations should not stop at that level, but it should transcend people’s boundaries, it should become ecumenical, “Dit egter nie hier kan eindig nie, maar oor die volksgrense moet gaan, daar moet ’n ekumeniese kerkverband wees” (Du Plessis, 1965e:244).

On the basis of the above-mentioned, the synod meetings of the GKSA of 1961 and 1964 took a decision that:

- Different languages and ethnic groups should constitute their own churches, together with their own church relations up to the national level;
- Ecclesiastical relations across the national boundaries are necessary to reveal spiritual unity. For the mutual relations to be maintained deputies from churches and minor assemblies should engage in ecclesiastical meetings in line with the traditional Reformed understanding and practice, in line with the decisions of the General Synod of 1955 and the GKSA synod of 1963 together with the church order of Dordrecht of 1578 and 1618-1619 (see Du Plessis, 1965e:244,245).

Du Plessis concluded that these arrangements will bring about an ecclesiastical relationship along the lines of unity, diversity and universality from the local church to the ecumenical assembly. He maintained that ecclesiastical relations should be build without disregarding confessions of faith, church order, and liturgical arrangements (see Du Plessis, 1965e:244,245).

Du Plessis must be commended for his ecclesiology in that he stuck to the biblical principle that God's church is both local and catholic. He is therefore right in emphasising unity within the local church and also beyond the boundaries of the local church. The ecumenicity of the church of God is a direct answer to Christ prayer that his people should be one for the purpose of witnessing to the world that (John 17:18,20-21).

It should, however, be noted that Du Plessis failed to see that unity of God's people could also be realised in a local church in a multicultural context. That is why he emphasised those believers from young churches, of different language and ethnic groups should constitute their own churches. The possibility of a multicultural local church cannot be ruled out in mission. Churches should in actual fact open doors for all peoples of all nations if they are free and willing to worship the same God as theirs. They should be treated as members of one body of Christ without trying to throw them out of the church because of language and cultural problems. These kinds of problems can always be overcome by providing the translation services as provided to us by modern technology. In some instances where less than three ethnic groups are coming together for worship, a direct translation can be offered from the pulpit without doing any harm to the proclaimed Word of God, which transcends all human barriers.

A local church should also find it somewhere in its life the passion of not only reaching out to the unreached, but also to shelter those who in one way or another confess allegiance to Jesus Christ and call themselves Christians. This has direct implications for the church of every age. Church members should be prepared and be equipped to deal with new people who come to faith and decide to be members of their local church. The church's nature and its membership cannot be defined and be determined apart from its mission, and mission could no longer be defined apart from the church's relation in the world. This calls for a paradigm that it must become even more difficult to separate the "visible" from the "invisible". The *ecclesiae militans* should therefore live out its missionary nature in the here and now with full anticipation to realise its final victory (as won by resurrected slain Lamb of Judah on the cross) in the end of times. In its essence the church, the bride of the Lamb is one (Ephesians 4:1-16; Revelation 21:9-27). And therefore, it must be clear that as much

as we accept the catholicity of the church by faith, we must also strive to achieve it in this world (Ephesians 2:1-13). The church catholic is a completely one fellowship, with its doors always spread wide open, open to all. Indeed, all ethnic and social distinctions have been abolished in the fullness of one body, reconciled through the death and resurrection of Jesus, through participation in the death and resurrection of the believer in Christ (Ephesians 2:16-18).

4.5.3.2.2.1.5 The place of the Reformed Confessions of Faith in mission

For the purpose of this study the phrase 'Reformed Confessions of Faith' refers to the Three Forms of Unity adhered to by the Reformed Churches in South Africa and other churches in the world who also subscribe to them, namely: The Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordrecht. The focus of this research is on what these confessions say about 'mission', and on the place they occupy in the young established churches.

4.5.3.2.2.1.5.1 The Reformed Confessions of Faith and mission

Du Plessis had one critique on the Reformed Confessions of faith, and that is that they do not say much about mission. He maintained that: "As een van die besware teen ons Belydenisskrifte word gewoonlik ingebring dat dit nie die saak van die sending tot sy reg laat kom nie" (Du Plessis, 1961c:204).

Issues of mission are only touched upon here and there, i.e. under the Election, the Church, the Kingdom, the Office of the believers, and the relationship between Church and the State. "Dit is afgesien van meer indirekte afleidings wat uit verskillende artikels en antwoord gemaak kan word" (Du Plessis, 1961c:204).

Du Plessis motivated his point of view by outlining detailed examples of exceptional places where reference is made to mission in the Reformed Confessions of Faith. The following are such examples:

- *Election and mission*

In the introduction of the doctrine of election as taught in the Canons of Dordt, reference is made to certain issues of mission. This article makes the love of God in Christ as the Saviour of the world, more specifically those who believe in him, known (see John 4:9; John 3:16). Secondly, the message of the crucified Christ is made known to the world through those who are sent by God to proclaim the Word (see Romans 10:14,15; cf. Du Plessis, 1961:204; Canons of Dordt paragraph 1:2-3).

- *Grace and mission*

The promise of the Gospel, namely that everyone who believes in Christ shall not die but have eternal life, should be proclaimed to all of humanity without differentiation. It should be done with the aim of calling people to repentance and faith (see Canons of Dordt, 11:5-8; cf. Du Plessis, 1961c:204).

The grace of God in Christ is made known. This grace is God's will to save sinners who come to faith by the work of the Spirit. It is through that grace that a new covenant was made between God and people from all ethnic groups, languages and all those who were chosen to life and were given to Christ by the Father (see Du Plessis, 1961c:204,205).

- *Gathering and mission*

Reformed believers confess that they believe in the one Catholic Church of Christ throughout the whole world, which is the holy gathering of those who believe in Christ as taught in Article 27 of the Belgic Confession. The church is instituted by the elects of God, "Die kerk van Christus kan alleen uit hierdie uitverkorenes bestaan (Du Plessis, 1961c:205).

The confession confesses that the Son of God chose His church from all the people of all nations to eternal life, and that He is gathering the Church from the beginning to the end through his Spirit and his Word. We who believe in Christ

are members of such a church and would remain members of that church until the end (see Du Plessis, 1961c:205; cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Sunday 21).

The elects are the Church of Christ. They are chosen from generations of humanity and are being gathered, guarded, provided for from the beginning to the end of the world through the Word and the Spirit of God. The Word of God should therefore be preached so as to enable the Spirit of God to gather them (see Du Plessis, 1961c:205).

- *The kingdom and mission*

The coming and expansion of the kingdom of God should be done through the preservation and the gathering of the Church. Through the preaching of the Word, something of the kingdom of God is realised in the present. Therefore, the preaching of the Word should be directed to all people of all nations of the world (Du Plessis, 1961c:206).

Du Plessis concluded that: “Uit bostaande behoort dit dus duidelik te wees dat ons Drie Formuliere van Eenheid die sendingtaak as van wesenlike betekenis vir die kerk van Christus beskou” (Du Plessis, 1961c:207). Du Plessis did a sterling job in pointing out at the weakness of the Reformed confessions of not taking mission, which is the heart of the church, into serious light.

4.5.3.2.2.1.5.2 The Reformed Confessions of Faith and the young Churches

The national synod of the Reformed Churches in South Africa of 1961 made a decision that the young churches in mission areas should be organised in such a way that they have their own assemblies, from the classis to the particular synod, apart or separate from those of the whites. The time was not ripe for them to have their own General Synods (see Du Plessis, 1961b:202).

This decision had a great impact on the position of the Reformed Confessions of Faith within those young churches. Du Plessis was of the opinion that those churches should decide, within their synods, the kind of Confessions they wanted to accept or

not. In this regard he gave the example of the Javanese and Chinese churches of Middle-Java who, for practical reasons in their respective boundaries, accepted the Apostolic Creed as outlined in the Heidelberg Catechism as their Confession of faith (see Du Plessis, 1961b:202).

Du Plessis was of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the missionaries to make sure that members of the mission-churches (young established churches) know the contents of the Reformed Confessions of faith. The reason was the fact that when they take a decision on which confession(s) to accept or not, it should be based on knowledge: "Sodat wanneer hulle besluit om dit as hulle belydenis te aanvaar, hulle dit ook werklik in alle opregtheid en met volle oortuiging as die waarheid kan bely as 'n belydenis van hulleself" (Du Plessis, 1961b:203).

On the basis of the natural differences in language, worldviews, and so on, Du Plessis is of the opinion that the Confessions of faith should be broadened in such a way that they address the Bantu-life (in his own situation). He asserts that: "Die belydenis sal ook nog verder uitbrei moet word, want hoewel in ons konfessies die waarheid bely word, dek dit nog nie die volle ryke inhoud van die Skrif nie en ook nie die volle belydenis van die Skrif vir die Bantoe-lewe nie" (Du Plessis, 1961b:203).

Du Plessis should be commended for having pointed out at a possibility of the reformulation of the Reformed confessions of faith. He did quite well in highlighting that they are not written in such a way that they can reach to the hearts of the Africans. He opted for contextualization in this regard. But he could have done more other than just pointing at this possibility. For indeed, in the process of contextualization, missionaries should always look at the possibility of rewriting the confessions of faith or even formulating new ones in the language that the indigenous people can understand best. If a missionary is doing mission work in an African context (Black people in this case), a proper interpretation of what sin, salvation, and worship are should be given. This might also warrant a confession of the church with regard to the "ancestral worship" and a "form of burial". These kinds of issues are often neglected, but they provide a missionary with a toolkit that can help him or her up root syncretism.

4.5.3.2.2.1.6 The place of the Word of God in mission

The Word of God occupies the central place in Du Plessis' understanding of mission. This is very clear from the point of view which he adhered to, namely that the Word of God is given to the church by God so that she may proclaim it to all people from all nations of the world.

The motive behind his point of view is nothing else but the *Sola Sacra Scriptura* principle of the Reformation times. He maintained that the Word of God alone should be preached to the heathens, not only objectively, but its message should be able to reach out to the needs of humanity.

Du Plessis further indicated that the Word of God stands like a measuring rod of all our doings, including mission. He maintained that the Word of God should be used to test the validity of the principles and methods involved when the church is engaged in missionary activities.

His understanding of the Word of God indicates that he had a clear understanding of the doctrine of the Word of God, its authority and inerrancy. The message of the Bible, as manifested by the Holy Spirit in the life of the sinner, is sufficient to bring the sinner to salvation, Bantus included (see Du Plessis, 1957:70).

Du Plessis' point of view with regard to the place of the Word of God in mission is summarised in the following paragraph:

“Die Woord van God en die eeue-oue skatte van die Gereformeerde Kerk moet aan die Bantoes in alle suiwerheid en waarheid en in die volle rykdom daarvan verkondig en oorgegee word, maar dit moet altyd wees die Woord van God vir hierdie bepaalde Bantoes met 'n benadering van hulle in hulle eie lewe en lewensomstandighede, en dit is hierdie Bantoes wat self die Woord moet opneem en belewe en in hulle eie vorme, gedagtegang en uitdrukking moet weergee en as 'n lewenswerklikheid vir hulle tot eer van God produseer” (Du Plessis, 1957:67).

Du Plessis should also be commended for taking this position regarding the sufficiency of Scripture in a missionary context. And therefore, there is always a need to translate the Bible in the language of the indigenous people, but there is no need to rewrite the Bible in order to accommodate the indigenous people. The Bible as it is sufficient to bring salvation to its hearers across ethnic, language and racial lines. What is needed is a contextual interpretation of the Bible in the language (idioms and proverbs) that is understood by the local people. This will allow relevance but yet also protect biblical Christianity.

4.5.3.2.2.2 *Mission and missiology in the African context*

In the quest to redress the injustices of the past and to contextualise Christianity in Africa, factions among African academics developed. There are those who opted to overlook the existence of the Bible as the infallible Word of God. They look at Christianity as a Western phenomenon and the Word of God as a Western book. There are those who opted to redefining the Christian message in the manner that can be best understood by an ordinary African. There among others, Catholic theologians like Nyamiti and Bujo who used the ancestor concept to elucidate Christology in the context of African culture. For Nyamiti Christ may be regarded as Ancestor because, just as the human ancestor establishes a link between the spirit world and that of the living, so Jesus by His crucifixion and resurrection establishes a mystical link between God and the Christian community (Parratt, 1996:53).

There are also those, among African theologians, who opted for syncretistic approach, by allowing on one hand the veneration to the ancestors and worship of Christ on the other. It is the most regrettable thing that the primacy of Scripture is at stake in this regard. And this is the price that Christianity is paying as a result of the marriage between Christianity and the Western worldview and culture. The quest to define the authentic African theology will always remain the object of research. The following issues featured prominently in this undertaking:

Since prof. Du Plessis lived in the era characterised by the debate surrounding the Africanisation of Christianity and theology, it is critical for us to listen to his voice in

order to determine the role that he played to ensure the relevancy of the Reformed mission and missiology in African context. In his theology, prof. Hugo du Plessis used the word 'Africa' exclusively to refer to black Africans. In bringing the word of God in the African context, missionaries and missiologists will always encounter problems related to approach, encounter of cultures and religions, separatism, syncretism, communication and influence of other religions.

4.5.3.2.2.2.1 Approach

There are a number of practical guidelines that prof. Du Plessis suggested regarding the approach a missionary can use to reach out to black Africans. The following can be mentioned:

- One should understand that black people are also religious and cultural beings.
- One should get to know the religious and cultural aspects of the objects of mission. Without the knowledge of their worldview, it is not easy to reach out to them with success.
- One should perceive them as fellow human beings. Black people hate to be ignored and to be undermined. One should always be willing to learn their language, communicate with them, be there for them when they need you most and love them. The missionary should look at the black people just as Christ looks at them, so that they can also realise that the missionary is just an instrument in the hands of God to communicate with them.
- The gospel of the kingdom of God should be proclaimed in its purity. An antithetical method of presenting the gospel can be used. One should always look for points of contact with their traditional beliefs, and so guard against syncretism.
- The Word of God should be brought to the black Africans as a message directed to them. It should talk to them in their own situation and bring light to it so that they can come to Christ through saving faith as worked in their hearts by the Holy Spirit through the pure proclamation of the gospel. "Preaching must thus be an encounter, an encounter not with a part of a person, not only with his reason, or with his poetic feeling, but an encounter with the entire person, with the whole man, as he exists in this world, as he is

in flight from God, as he plays a role in that tremendous drama that is enacted between God and the rebellious human heart” (Bavinck, 1960:150).

4.5.3.2.2.2.2 Acculturation

When crossing the frontiers with the gospel message, the missionary has to cross a cultural barrier. It is an undisputable fact that the missionary is also a cultural-bearer of his/her own people (Bavinck, 1960:101). When encountering black people, the encounter entails an element of ‘acculturation’. The two cultures influence each other and some adaptation should take place (see Bavinck, 1960:102).

The missionary should always guard against the total rejection of every cultural aspect of the black Africans as heathenism, and the danger of syncretism, in which artificial Christians are produced. The missionary should note that acculturation not only takes place with cultural matters, but also with religious matters. The missionary should be alert, selective and engage in the process of re-interpreting all cultural and religious traits of the black people in the light of God.

4.5.3.2.2.2.3 Separatism

Prof. Du Plessis highlighted the fact that missionaries should be alert of the separatist groups. Already in the late 50’s to the early 60’s, the separatists were making inroads in the African context (Baëta, 1961:290). These groups have a strong appeal to the masses of black Africans because of their approach. In his discussions, Du Plessis included among others J.Shembe, Edward Lekganyane, Enoch Ngijima. In their sectarian groups, they emphasise the following aspects:

- Certain taboos are observed, i.e. the non-eating of pork.
- Emphasis on different clothes, i.e. black is the sign of death whilst white is for holiness.
- Attention is given to revelation through dreams and visions.
- Cleansing rituals are performed, i.e. cleansing of hands and feet and so on.
- They do dance in their services as something directed to God.

- The abodes of their leaders are taken as holy places and are associated with Jerusalem and heaven.
- Emphasis on healing using water and other elements in a more magical way.
- Offerings to the ancestors are encouraged.
- Their leaders are considered to be mediators between man and God and as having certain God-given powers of some kind.

4.5.3.2.2.2.4 Syncretism

One of the dangers that missionaries are faced with when doing mission among the black Africans is 'syncretism'. This notion has to do with the mixture of religions or elements of religion, i.e. Christian faith and African Traditional Religion. Many black people become more comfortable when some of their traditional beliefs (i.e. the veneration to the ancestors) are accommodated within Christianity. In his mediation, rev. G.M. Setiloane acknowledges that it is typical of African Christians to venerate to their ancestors. He is of the opinion that this defines his Africanness. That is why many Africans find themselves at home in the sectarian groups (Setiloane, 1969:204-207; cf. Du Plessis, 1965f.4).

To counter syncretism, prof. Du Plessis offered some practical guidelines, namely:

- The Word of God should be preached in its purity.
- The church should stand against everything that is contrary to the Word of God.
- The church should lead a Christian life as commanded by God in His Word.

4.5.3.2.2.2.5 Communication

Communication has to do with the verbal and non-verbal approach with the objects of mission through personal contact. Communication as such entails communication between people and includes that which is communicated (the message). For the missionary to succeed in the African context, he/she should be willing to learn the language of the indigenous people. Prof. Du Plessis emphasised that language is important in that it is the instrument of communication.

Apart from the use of the indigenous language in communication, the missionary should always be alert that he/she is there to communicate the Word of God to sinners. He must proclaim salvation in the name of Christ and call sinners to repentance and accept the kingdom of God in their lives.

4.5.3.2.2.2.6 Religious encounters

Africa is one of the continents with a plurality of religions. The missionary should be aware of this fact and plan on how to deal with it for the effectiveness of the mission work he/she is doing among the indigenous people. One of the typical examples that prof. Du Plessis mentioned regarding the religious encounter is the tremendous growth of Islam in the African context.

As to the approach to Islam and other religions, prof. Du Plessis emphasised the fact that there should be:

- Thorough knowledge of their beliefs (doctrines).
- Dialogue with them.
- An antithetical method.
- Proclamation of salvation and uniqueness of Christ.
- The spirit of humbleness and commitment to the Christian faith.

4.5.3.2.2.3 Mission and missiology in the ecumenical circle

The period between 1914 and 1938 marked a new era in the history of mission. The period from 1938 onwards brought about major developments regarding the science of mission (missiology) in many respects. The conference of mission in Tambaran (1938), just on the eve of the World War II, brought life to missiology. The conference dealt with the issue on "Rethinking Missions". Mission of the church had to come into real terms with the world crisis or real world conditions. The nature of missiology, the way in which it should be understood, its foundation and its development became the centre of the debate. Consequently, the following developments were noticeable:

4.5.3.2.2.3.1 The relation between the Christian faith and the non-Christian religions

Over and against the radical antithesis approach to non-Christian religions, the new development brought about a synthesis approach. The encounter with non-Christian religions can never be avoided, hence the nature, place and the task of elenctics should enable missionaries and missiologists to deal with it. Elenctics, according to Bavinck, should be considered part of Missiology. “Elenktiek is vir hom ’n missiologiese wetenskap wat alle valse religie as sonde teen God ontmasker en oproep tot die kennis van die enige ware God” (Du Plessis, 1970a:135). As a result, the theology of religion should find its basis in theology, and should also find the theological interpretation therein.

4.5.3.2.2.3.2 The church and mission

The question on the relationship between the church and mission remained at the heart of the theological debate for many centuries. There was a sharp distinction between the two before World War II. There are basically three factors that prof. Du Plessis noted in this regard. Mission as done by mission societies, the collegialistic and pietistic church concept or understanding that accompanied it. As a result of this differentiation, there was no clear church relation between the old and the young church. “Hoofsaaklik as gevolg van hierdie skeiding was daar geen kerklike verband tussen ou en jong kerke nie, het die gevaar ontstaan van die algehele skeiding van die ou en jong kerke, was die sendingwerk hoofsaaklik beperk tot die werk van die sendende organe, is die jong kerke nie geaktiveer tot sending nie, is hulle onder ’n voortdurende voogdy gehou, is ook die ou kerke nie geaktiveer tot sendingwerk en het die sendingleraar feitlik geen kerklike status gehad nie” (Du Plessis, 1960b:4).

Developments that took place during the post World War II era included amongst others the following:

- The independency of the young church was fully recognised in the mission conference held in Whitby in 1947. It was during this conference

that the relation between the old and the young church was defined as “partnership in obedience”. In this relationship, the old churches were still obligated to offer assistance to the young churches as long as they needed it. “En hoewel die formule “partnership in obedience” op papier na ’n doeltreffende oplossing gelyk het, het dit in die praktyk daarop neergekom dat dit die jonger kerke is wat bepaal of en in hoever hulle die hulp van die ouer kerke nog nodig het” (Du Plessis, 1970a:146).

Whilst it was agreed upon that the young church have a place in the universal church of Christ, the indigenous aspects were fully emphasised. Liturgical forms and related issues should not be the blue-print of the western churches, but the spiritual heritage of the nation and country where the young churches are planted should be taken into use or account (Du Plessis, 1970a:157).

- There was also an intensive debate on the ecumenical front regarding the nature, task and purpose of mission and the relationship between the church and mission. To elucidate this, prof. Du Plessis reflected on the works of J. Dürr and J.C. Hoekendijk. On the one hand Dürr pointed out that the agent of mission cannot be the missionary society, but the church. The church as a new community wherein Christ is the head is an independent church as compared to the old church. The missionary calling of this church is service to the up-building of the particular church, and he lays emphasis on the christological and eschatological aspects of the church. Hoekendijk on the other hand maintained a comprehensive approach in which man in his totality should be influenced in a Christian manner (Du Plessis, 1970a:148).
- The mission conference in Willingen in 1952 also addressed the issue on “The Missionary Obligation of the Church”. The conference agreed that mission is primarily the mission of the Triune God. God sends forth the church³ to carry out His work to the ends of time. Within the body of

³ Geen sending sonder kerk en geen kerk sonder sending (Du Plessis, 1970a:151).

Christ all are called to serve in oneness, and as result mission is the task of the whole church of all times to the whole world.

- The mission conference held in Newbiggin in 1963 addressed the issue on the Trinitarian foundation of mission and missiology further. They dealt specifically with "The Relevance of Trinitarian Doctrine for Today's Mission" (Du Plessis, 1970a:153).

4.5.3.2.2.3.3 Mission and eschatology

Theologians like O. Cullmann, W. Freytag and K. Hartenstein developed the theological foundation of missiology from an eschatological perspective. The coming of Christ and his coming for the second time is seen in terms of the history of salvation as qualifying the coming of the kingdom of God as a present reality and yet to come. According to Freytag and Hartenstein: "Deur sending berei die verhoogde Christus sy wederkoms voor, want Hy het self gesê: Die evangelie moet eers aan alle volke verkondig word en dan sal die einde kom (Matth. 24:14, Mrk. 13:10)" (Du Plessis, 1970a:154). Through the mission of the church something of the future coming kingdom of God is realised. Theologians also dealt with the future of Israel and the question on the relation between the Old Testament people of God and the New Testament people of God.

4.5.3.2.2.3.4 The principle of independence in mission

The question of the self-determination of the young church became crucial in the debate on the relation between church and mission. A number of aspects are noticeable in this debate:

- Despite emphasis on the self-determination of the young churches they always remained photocopies of the Western churches that planted them. They remained spiritual colonies of the West in terms of their structures, style of expression, liturgy and so on.

- Younger churches should be rooted in their own countries and everything should be dealt with in an indigenous way in order to accommodate the spiritual heritage of the indigenous people.
- Relevancy of the church's proclamation should always be taken into consideration. The church should always guard against the danger of syncretism.
- The nature of the church, the truth of the Word of God and the historical continuity with the universal church of Christ should never be compromised when the young churches develop their liturgy, church order and creeds. Biblical principles remain the same under all circumstances, hence they may be applied differently varying from one context to another.

4.5.3.2.2.3.5 Mission approach

Development in this regard does not entail the confrontation of the non-Christian religions, but the missionary approach through "communication and so-called comprehensive approach". In his discussion, prof. Hugo du Plessis touches on the following:

- *Communication*

In the encounter between the missionary and the object(s) of mission, communication is a very important element. It entails the notion of dialogue and it is the key to success or failure in this regard. Even in the reformed circles where they hold dear to the teaching of election, proclamation of the Word of God to all non-believers remains imperative. "Alle nie-Christene moet dus beskou as moontlike uitverkorenes van God" (Du Plessis, 1970a:163). Regarding mission approach through communication the following can be remarked:

- Language remains an integral part of communication. Language entails not only the translation of the Christian faith, but also the verbal and non-verbal ways of communication.
- The apostolate theology emphasises the aspects of *kerugma*, *koinonia* and *diakonia* in communicating the gospel message. “Hierdie drie is onafskeidelik aan mekaar verbind. As een daarvan verwaarloos word, loop alles verkeerd” (Du Plessis, 1970a:163;164).
- The fellowship (koinonia) becomes a living testimony of the truth and power of the gospel.
- All members of the church should make a point of becoming agents of God in proclaiming the gospel wherever they are, they must be a light to the world in all spheres of life.
- Humility must accompany the Christian way of communication in mission, especially when dealing with the adherents of Islam.
- Dialogue is also highly emphasised. According to the results of the International Mission Conference in 1963 in Mexico: “Die doel in elke dialoog moet wees om betrokke te wees in die dialoog van God met die mense en om ons gespreksgenoot en onself te beweeg om te luister na wat God in Christus aan ons openbaar en om Hom te antwoord” (Du Plessis, 1970a:164).

- ***The comprehensive approach***

The ‘comprehensive approach’ started to receive prominence in ecumenical circles after its introduction at the International Missions Conference in Jerusalem in 1928 (Bavinck, 1960:108). This mission approach entails that man should be approached in a holistic way. “Hieronder word verstaan dat die sending moet ingaan op die totaliteit van die mens en van sy bestaan, wat insluit ook sy ekonomiese, sosiale en politieke lewe” (Du Plessis, 1970a:165; cf.).

4.5.3.2.2.3.6 *The cosmic meaning of Christ and mission*

The cosmic significance of Christ also became a hotly debated issue in the ecumenical arena. During the World Council of Churches held in New Delhi in 1962, it was agreed that Christ is not only the head of the church but also the whole world. On the grounds of texts like Ephesians 1:10,23; Colossians 1:15-20 and 1 Corinthians 5:19 it has been concluded that it is God's purpose to bring everything into a harmonious unity (oneness) under the head Jesus Christ, the one who reconciled the whole world with God (1 Corinthians 5:19). "Aangesien dit die doel is van God en Christus ook die Hoof van sy gemeente is wat sy liggaam is (Ef. 1:22-23), partisipeer die gemeente nie alleen in die genadegawes van Christus nie maar ook in sy werk en om alles tot die bestemde doel te bring" (Du Plessis, 1970a:167).

In New Delhi, it was agreed upon that the Christian must always recognise that Jesus Christ is the Lord of history and he is at work today in every nation of the world in spite of, and through the ambiguous political, economic or social structures and actions in any given country. "Die doel van die sending moet in hierdie tyd, waarin daar enersyds fantastiese verwagtinge is van 'n asemrowende toekoms van menslike ontwikkeling in tegniek en wetenskap en andersyds die vrees is dat die mens self uiteindelik sal verontmenslik, veral as doel stel die verkondiging van die nuwe lewe van die "new humanity" in Christus" (Du Plessis, 1970a:169).

4.5.4 Encyclopaedic place of missiology

The encyclopaedic place of Missiology in the field of theology has been a hotly debated issue during prof. Hugo du Plessis' era. In answering the question regarding the place of Missiology in the theological encyclopaedia, prof. Du Plessis reflects on the following three possibilities:

- Integration of Missiology in all theological subjects: Du Plessis acknowledges the fact that it has been a growing tendency in the field of theology to try and integrate Missiology in all theological courses. The argument here is that every theological subject entails a certain element of mission, and therefore integration

would be easy. Prof. Du Plessis argues that this cannot be enough reason for integration as propagated by other theologians (Du Plessis, 1960a:26).

- **Missiology as a main subject-group:** Adherents of this possibility argued that Missiology should be granted a place in theology where it stands as the main subject-group alongside Ecclesiology, Dogmatology and Diaconology or Practical Theology. Prof. Du Plessis could not support this idea for the following reason: “In die praktyk sal dit daarop neerkom dat die missiologie dan tot ’n groot mate as ’n tweede selfstandige grootheid sonder organiese verband met die teologie in sy geheel en sy ander dele te staan sal kom” (Du Plessis, 1960a:27).
- **Missiology as an independent course within one or more main subject-groups:** The argument here is that missiology should be placed under the diaconological group. This idea is supported by renowned theologians like A. Kuyper and J.H. Bavinck. Prof. Du Plessis supported this idea for the following reason: “As ons onder sending verstaan die uitsending van die kerk deur Christus in sy **diakonia**, dan is, soos reeds aangetoon is, sending ’n **diakonia** van Christus en moet die amptelike karakter daarvan op die voorgrond staan en moet die **principium divisionis** vir die missiologie hierin geleë wees” (Du Plessis, 1960a:27).

4.5.5 The history of mission

This section will give a general overview on the outline of the history of mission according to prof. Hugo du Plessis. In his outline, he touches on the following:

4.5.5.1 The apostolic era

The mission of the church in this era occurred spontaneously. The church had little or no time to reflect on the motives, purpose and methods of mission. They were driven by the passion to bear testimony to Christ. “Die geloofsoortuiging was sò

sterk en die sendingtaak sò vanselfsprekend en voor die handliggend dat fundering byna nie nodig geag is nie” (Du Plessis, 1960b:2).

4.5.5.2 History until 1500

In his outline, prof. Du Plessis deals with the following periods:

4.5.5.2.1 The post-apostolic era

In this era, Du Plessis discusses the role and impact of the apostolic fathers (Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius) and apologists (Justinus Martyr, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullianus) in shaping and defending Christianity and the missionary calling of the church. The apologists had to deal with the actual problems related to the ‘Logos’, Jesus Christ (Du Plessis, 1960b:2; 5).

4.5.5.2.2 The post-Constantine period

This is the period in which Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire after the edict of Milan as issued by Emperor Constantine. Regarding the mission of the church in this period, prof. Du Plessis reflected on the contribution made by church fathers like Augustine and Chrysostomos.

This is the period in which there was a strong relationship between the church and the empire. Church mission meant the transference of the empire’s culture. The political dimension was added to mission, and false accommodation of the local customs was the common practice (Du Plessis, 1960b:5-7).

4.5.5.2.3 The early middle age

This is the period in which an unknown writer wrote about *De Vocatione Gentium*, in which he highlighted that all of humanity is called to salvation and the gospel should be preached to all. In this period Pious Gregory I, who was the great supporter of the mission of the church, laid the foundation of the Roman Catholic theory of accommodation (Du Plessis, 1960b:7-8).

4.5.5.2.4 *The late middle age*

The Islam religion was spreading rapidly in North Africa during this period. It was a period characterised by colonial expansion. The spiritual orders of the Franciscans, Dominicans and especially the Jesuits, were very active in mission work in this period. Prof. Hugo du Plessis reflected mainly on the work of Raymond Lullus and Thomas Aquinas (Du Plessis, 1960b: 8-11).

4.5.5.3 *The 16th and 17th centuries*

Prof. Du Plessis discussed the history of mission in this era from two different perspectives, namely: the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. The following transpires from his discussion:

4.5.5.3.1 *The history of the Roman Catholic Mission*

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the question of the Roman Catholic theory of accommodation became more actual in the practical mission in India and China. The Jesuit missionaries like Robert de Nobili, Matteo Ricci, Joseph Acosta, Thomas a Jesu used this theory using different approaches. “Hierdie akkomodasie-metode het van verskillende kante teenstand verwek en daar het ’n lang en verbitterde stryd, wat meer as ’n eeu aangehou het en ook na Europa uitgebrei het, ontstaan” (Du Plessis, 1960b:14).

4.5.5.3.2 *The history of the Protestant mission*

A cursory reading of the works of Protestants during this era reveals little regarding mission. It can, however, be said without doubt that the church during this era also engaged in mission work. This is very clear from the works of Zwingli, Luther, Martin Bucer, Erasmus and Calvin. They always maintained that God is the subject of the church’s mission. In his own time he will open doors for mission and that mission flows logically from the kingdom of God.

There were also several positive elements noticeable during the Reformation era that became motivating factors for the advancement of the kingdom of God via mission. “Sulke positiewe elemente was die verheerliking van God as die Soewereine Regeerder van die hele wêreld en vir alle terreine, die universaliteit van die evangelie, die soteriologiese spanning van liefde en barmhartigheid en veral by Calvyn, die teosentriese ideaal van die uitbreiding van die koninkryk van God” (Du Plessis, 1960b:24).

4.5.5.4 The 18th Century

In discussing the history of mission in this century, prof. Du Plessis touched on the Enlightenment, Pietism and Methodism. These elements brought about new challenges and changing contexts⁴ for the church’s mission. In his discussion, the following came to pass:

4.5.5.4.1 *The Enlightenment*

The enlightenment brought about such an emphasis in reason that the belief in God had to be rationalised. In this regard prof. Hugo du Plessis had to discuss the work of philosophers like John Locke, David Hume and so on. The intellectual quest did not shun away the spiritual needs. “Maar terwyl die Aufklärung die denke van die wysgere beheers het was die sendingsontwikkeling in die 18de eeu in ’n teenoorgestelde rigting, nl. In plaas van rasionalisties was dit piëtisties en later ook metodisties” (Du Plessis, 1960b:38).

4.5.5.4.2 *Pietism*

With the emergence⁵ of pietism, especially in Germany, emphasis was laid on personal piety and devotion to Christ. Missionaries had a very strong appeal to

⁴ The enlightenment brought about intellectual changes, socio-political changes, global and geographical changes (Pillay & Hofmeyer, 1991:201).

⁵ By the end of the seventeenth century the pietistic tradition had emerged in England and Holland also, but it was in Germany that it had its greatest influence (Pillay and Hofmeyer, 1991:204; cf. Du Plessis, 1960b:39).

emotions through pietism. Prof. Du Plessis discussed the work of Von Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut (the Moravians brothers) and their enthusiasm to engage in mission work without being attached to the colonial powers and propagating the western culture. However, their work was short-lived. “Die piëtisme het aanvanklik gelei tot kragtige aktiwiteite veral op die gebied van evangelisasie, sending en barmhartighedsdiens maar die invloed van die piëtisme was betreklik spoedig uitgebloei, mede as gevolg van gebrek aan leidende geeste en sistematiese opbou; die sendingaktiwiteite het verflou veral omdat daar geen gefundeerde sendingteologie was nie” (Du Plessis, 1960b:39).

4.5.5.4.3 *Methodism*

Methodism came into being as a result of John Wesley’s teachings and also the influence from pietism and the Herrnhut community, who showed tremendous commitment and love to Christ and the kingdom of God. Members were stimulated to take mission work very seriously. “Uit die metodistiese kringe in Angelsaksiese lande het daar dan ook kragtige sendingaksies ontwikkel maar nuwe materiaal vir die sendingwetenskap is nie deur die metodisme gelever nie” (Du Plessis, 1960b:44).

4.5.5.5 The 19th century

This century was marked by many missiologists as the great century in the history of Christian mission. It is known as ‘the great awakening’. It is in this century that the Protestant missionary expansion reached global heights. This was basically because:

- Mission was freed from the colonial powers; and
- The emergence of liberal theology;

Prof. Du Plessis mainly touched upon the works of William Carey, the Missionary Societies, H. Venn, Rufus Anderson, Roland Allen and so on (Du Plessis, 1960b:46-61). He also discussed the history of mission in Germany. In this regard he touched on the work of F.D.E. Schleiermacher, A. Schweitzer and so on (Du Plessis,

1960b:63-82). He also discussed the history of mission in the Netherlands during the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century. He touched mainly the works of A.C. Kruyt, F.E. Daubanton, A. Kuyper (Du Plessis, 1960b:84-88). Some of the great insights contributed by theologians like A. Kuyper are:

- The proclamation of the gospel should be made relevant to the indigenous people so as to develop the indigenous church;
- The church in the mission field should not be a replica of the Western church;
- The church is an official institution and should carry out the mission mandate with the purpose of planting churches that are independent.

In discussing the 19th century, Prof. Du Plessis discussed the development of evolutionism. It influenced the relation between the Christian faith and other non-Christian religions. In this regard he touched of the work of German idealists like Hegel and Feuerbach, and the evolutionist school of thought as propagated by Taylor, Troeltsch and so on.

4.5.5.6 The 20th century

This is the era marked with a great awareness regarding the ecumenical affairs of the church. In this regard prof. Du Plessis touched on the works of such conferences as the first global missionary conference held at Edinburgh in 1910; the one at Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram (1938). Emphasis was laid on church unity at the expense of doctrinal truth. Truth became more and more relative, and at the same time pagan religions were accommodated in those great mission conferences. An element of indigenisation, as accompanied by awakening of nationalism, in many third world countries brought about new dimension in mission (Du Plessis, 1960b:93-184).

4.6 SUMMARY

After having served as a missionary in Venda for 23 years, rev. Hugo du Plessis accepted a call to be a missionary on the Witwatersrand in 1950. He served as a missionary in the black townships until in 1955, when he was appointed to be the first educator to train black ministers and evangelists or helpers in Dube. In 1959, rev. Du Plessis received a call to be the first professor of Missiology at the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom and the Faculty of Theology of the PU for CHE.

4.7 EVALUATION

This section aims at evaluating Hugo du Plessis' work as a theological educator and missiologist in the African context. His positive and negative contributions towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology shall be evaluated. To succeed in doing so, the following questions shall be used as guidelines:

- ❖ Was Du Plessis the correct candidate to be the first educator of theology in Dube?
- ❖ How did he perform his duties?
- ❖ Was Du Plessis the correct candidate to be the first missiologist in Potchefstroom?
- ❖ How did he perform his duties?
- ❖ What contribution did he make towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology?

4.7.1 Hugo du Plessis as a theological educator in Dube

4.7.1.1 Positive: Rev. Hugo du Plessis was a pioneer in influencing and structuring the training of ministers for the young Churches in Dube, Soweto since 1959. He was a suitable candidate for many reasons. In the first place, he had the experience of 28 years of working with black communities. At least he had a better understanding of their culture. In the second place, his study of theology, diploma and Masters degree in anthropology made Du Plessis a

suitable candidate academically. He was quite at home in most branches of theology. This fact made him the obvious choice for the first lecturer for training black pastors. In the third place, he also had part-time experience of training helpers and ministers from black communities. Last but not least, Du Plessis was a very modest man who was equipped and called by God for this task. He commanded great respect within the GKSA in the field of mission.

As to the manner in which he fulfilled his duties, he should be commended for various reasons. He managed to keep up with the heavy workload of offering all classes on his own. In some cases helpers were used. He also received some assistance from ds. C. Khoza. Apart from lecturing, Du Plessis also had the responsibility of administrating the training center and also served as a secretary of the senate of the institution. He prepared and offered his lectures with flying colours. He presented his lectures to his students with simplicity and one could attest to the fact that they were relevant to the African context.

4.7.1.2 Negative: Hugo should be criticised for having trained a large number of ministers and evangelists whose lives left a lot to be desired. He trained and was instrumental in the ordination of a number of alcoholics. It also happened that candidates were accepted for church work who had been suspended or expelled from ministry in other churches. The son of Ds. Matlakala, Jacobus, had to be removed from the ministry after about a year at Siloam. Both his father and Hugo had known that he was an alcoholic, yet they supported his ordination as a minister. It took the young churches a long time to recover from the effects of this policy on the life of the church. As far as some churches among the Sotho and Tswana peoples are concerned, they have not fully recovered from it up to this day.

4.7.2 Hugo du Plessis as a professor in Potchefstroom

4.7.2.1 Positive: Prof. Hugo du Plessis was a great success as a theologian. He managed to publish a lot of articles and books that contributed a great deal not

only to theological debates, but also to the socio-economic and political debates of his time. His contribution is still greatly valued to date.

4.7.2.2 Negative: When the autonomy of the black churches was discussed at the synod of 1958 and 1961 respectively, Hugo du Plessis objected to some of the recommendations of the Deputies for mission. When the structure of the “national synods” and the “general synod” was discussed, he objected to the principle that black members could appeal against the decisions of their own synods or classes: “Suppose they appeal and the appeal is upheld, then they would come back and claim: The whites have upheld our appeal, we are in the right!”. One of the members of the synod answered, “And supposed they are the right, why should they not appeal?” It is a pity that Hugo du Plessis did not take a leading role in this process. Men such as Louis Botha and (D.C.S.) Demps van der Merwe were more prominent.

4.7.3 His contribution towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology

4.7.3.1 Positive: There are a number of positive aspects that can be noted in this regard. Hugo du Plessis contributed towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology in the following ways:

- ❖ He was a living example to the church that missionaries should adapt and endure the hardships in the mission field.
- ❖ He helped the GKSA a great deal in defining the *what, why, how and where* of mission and missiology.
- ❖ He insisted that the indigenous churches should be self-supporting, self-governing and self-expanding for them to grow towards autonomous churches.
- ❖ He brought a new dimension in Reformed Theology by not only focusing on the Kingdom of God theme, but also the Covenant of God.
- ❖ He contributed a great deal by publishing articles and books that addressed issues relevant to his time. His publications are still relevant for theology today.

4.7.3.2 Negative: He failed to propagate a paradigm of mission that could involve all members of the church in the missionary work. The prophetic and priesthood of all believers was in a sense lacking in his approach. He did not come up with a plan that could accommodate the multicultural setting of the urban South Africa. As a result, he was not prominent in propagating the unity of black and white on a grassroots level of the church's life.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Prof. Hugo du Plessis' life came to an end on December 28th, 1971, at the age of 69, after having served for years as a servant of God. He made a great contribution as a theologian. Du Plessis' legacy as an academic should remain with us for years to come. He contributed a great deal towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology and should be commended for that.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this research was to make a thorough analysis and evaluation of Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed Church' struggle for a relevant mission and missiology. The study focused mainly on his pioneer missionary work in Venda, his work as the first theological educator in Dube and professor of Missiology in Potchefstroom. It is the main objective of this chapter to give conclusive remarks on the findings and contribution of this research.

5.2 FINDINGS

5.2.1 Chapter 1

This chapter gives a detailed account of the background to the problem underlying the issue under reflection, **"Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the Reformed Churches' struggle for a relevant mission and missiology"**. The GKSA could not come up with a relevant paradigm for mission and missiology primarily because of the following three reasons:

- The local church was rightly viewed as the institution entrusted with the mandate to World mission. However, few members participated in that regard. In 2.2 of chapter 1, it is very clear that mission was done by the 'Deputies for Mission of the Synod' with the help of the 'Mission Committee' of the 'Sending Church' via the 'Missionary' in the so-called mission field. The approach used by the GKSA in this regard failed to produce desired results because in many instances it failed to address the cultural aspects of the indigenous people.
- Adaptation of the church to approach mission from the Kingdom perspective.
- Failure to deal in the most effective way with the notion of 'contextualization'. The GKSA was not very vocal in terms of addressing the socio-economic and political challenges prior and after World War II. Few voices were heard on the

periphery crying out against the injustices towards fellow human beings during the Apartheid era. The majority of Christians either supported the *status quo* or opted to remain silent.

Chapter 1 dealt mainly with the forces that shaped Du Plessis' understanding of mission and missiology, and the contribution he made in shaping the Reformed paradigm of mission and missiology. The issue underlying the problem under reflection has to do with finding a relevant model for mission by the GKSA, and also to be involved in mission and missiology from the Kingdom perspective.

By way of a hypothesis, Chapter 1 presupposed that "Hugo du Plessis contributed immensely in the GKSA' struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology, but his contributions were not without negative aspects, they can be corrected, supplemented and superseded in the light of present and future demands placed upon the Churches to respond to the socio-economic and political context of this world from the Kingdom perspective".

5.2.2 Chapter 2

In Chapter two, research was done in order to get a clear understanding of the man Hugo du Plessis within the context of the 20th century. Forces and influences that shaped his life, character, worldview, religious affiliation and commitment were investigated. According to the findings of Chapter two, Du Plessis was born and reared from within an Afrikaans family with an affluent history. It is also very clear that he was born and raised within the Christian tradition of the Reformed heritage, and to be more precise, the Dopper denomination.

Chapter two documented that Hugo du Plessis received his primary and secondary education under the National Christian Education system. He received his theological training at the Theological Seminary of the GKSA in Potchefstroom, with prof. J.D. Du Toit and Dr. A. Kuyper as his local and international mentors respectively.

It became apparent in chapter two that Du Plessis lived within a specific context. In South Africa, hotly debated issues surrounding race relations, Apartheid, and related words, shaped the socio-economic and political context. In the global context, issues surrounding Western civilisation, secularism, awakening nationalism, religious plurality, communism, and World Wars were the most dominant issues. Chapter two gives a vivid picture of Hugo du Plessis as a man of his century. His personal upbringing, personal commitment to Christianity and his studies of theology prepared him to be a missionary and missiologist portrayed by the findings of this research. His work as a missionary and missiologist was shaped in many ways by the context in which he lived, and he should be understood and be evaluated as such.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

In Chapter three, the research dealt specifically with the missionary work of Hugo du Plessis among the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam. It was demonstrated that the Vhavenda people are a composite people who speak one language, 'Tshivenda' with slight dialectic differences, namely: Tshiilafuri, Tshironga, Tshiphani, Tshinia, Tshimbedzi, and Tshitavhatsindi. It was also obvious that the Vhavenda people are a cultural, social and religious people. They believe in the mysterious and enotheistic deity called '*Raluvhimba*' or '*Mwali*'. It should also be noted that the ancestor cult remained central in their belief, so much so that their relationship with the dead ancestors has much more meaning than their relationship with Raluvhimba. Their worldview can be best defined as comprehensive, communal, egalitarian, timeless, sacral, rural and agrarian. Their cultural, social structure and belief systems continually changed, grow and adapted to the changing situation in South Africa and the entire globe as such.

The above-mentioned changes were also notable during their encounter with the GKSA. In his encounter with the Vhavenda people, rev. Hugo du Plessis was confronted with a number of problems. According to chapter three, the following are some of those problems:

- The foreignness of the Venda language and culture;

- Suspicion and animosity from the indigenous people and their chiefs, who were totally negative about the bringing of the gospel to their respective areas. The land issue was a factor in this regard;
- The traditional set of beliefs, which also determined the comprehensiveness of their worldview.

The missionary had to cross cultural, language, social and religious barriers in order to reach out to the Vhavenda people in the most effective ways. Rev. Hugo du Plessis started to learn their language and their customs, but he only mastered either the latter. He made use of helpers in line with his missionary mandate as outlined in the Mission Order of the GKSA of 1913, which was revised in 1924. Through the help of the evangelists, rev. Hugo du Plessis managed to reach out to the masses of Vhavenda people in and around Siloam. In line with his mission mandate, the missionary struggled to institute an indigenous church. The ways of worship, church structure and pattern of living did not resemble that of the mother church. His missionary work among the Vhavenda people leaves much to be desired. Rev. Hugo du Plessis was not free from any trace of racism or feeling of white superiority (paternalism).

It is in the light of chapter three that the missionary should be commended for being instrumental in bringing about development in the lives of the Vhavenda people in and around Siloam, i.e. introduction of elementary education, health services and farming in line with the Mission Order of the GKSA. In the light of severe conditions under which he had to serve, the missionary must be commended for the job well done. He compromised his life and that of his family in order to reach out to the Vhavenda people.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

In chapter four, the research dealt with the work of Du Plessis as a Theological Educator and Missiologist in African context. The contribution that Du Plessis made towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology was investigated. It became clear that in the first place, Du Plessis was a pioneer in the

GKSA in influencing and structuring the training of ministers for the young churches (black churches) in Dube in 1955. He became the first lecturer to train black ministers and evangelists or helpers since the establishment of Dube as a training centre in 1955. Before he engaged in this responsibility, he used to train black ministers and helpers on a part-time basis when working as a missionary on the Witwatersrand. It also became apparent that Du Plessis was the qualified man for this job because of his academic record and experience in working in black communities.

After having worked as a theological educator amongst the blacks of South Africa, he was appointed as a professor of Missiology in the Theological Seminary in Potchefstroom and the Faculty of Theology of the PU for CHE in 1959. This was the same year in which the GKSA celebrated its 100 years of existence. His vast experience in the missionary field and his ability to exegete the Scriptures exceptionally well made him an obvious choice. He worked during times when 'secularism', 'indigenisation', 'universality', 'urbanisation', 'religious plurality' and related terms were the most debated concepts in the world context. In the African context, the most debated concepts were 'approach', 'acculturation', 'separatism', 'syncretism', and 'communication'.

It is apparent that Prof. Hugo du Plessis succeeded in defining the *what, who, why, how and where* of mission and missiology from the Reformed perspective. He participated in the theological debates of his time in a meaningful way. His publications were widely read, made a great impact on society and were highly appreciated by his peers. He brought a new dimension in the Reformed theology of mission by not only focusing on the kingdom theme, but also on the covenant of God. It became clear that he did not succeed in bringing about a missionary paradigm that seeks to involve the entire congregation in mission work in the most effective way. And therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed: "Hugo du Plessis contributed immensely in the GKSA's struggle for a relevant mission and Missiology, but his contributions were not without negative aspects, they can be corrected, supplemented and superseded in the light of present and future demands placed upon the Churches to respond to the socio-economic and political context of this world from the Kingdom perspective". Without doubt, the GKSA should develop new policies, methods and

strategies to participate in meaningfully in the mission of the great missionary God. Indeed, we can assert without doubt that mission is the work of the Triune God, which he entrusted to the local church where all members have the calling to proclaim the gospel within the framework of the Kingdom of God, and thereby develop Biblical principles that are sensitive, adaptable, and convergent to the context of our socio-economic and political realities for the glory of the covenant of God”.

5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS

It is the aim of 5.3 to focus mainly on the evaluation of Hugo du Plessis’ contribution to a Reformed mission and missiology from the perspective of the 21st century and its insights on Du Plessis’ understanding of mission and the missiological problems. One should, therefore, at this stage outline the perennial issues in the missiological debate of the 20th century and the efforts of a Reformed approach.

5.3.1 The struggle to understand mission in the context of the Reformed tradition

The struggle to understand mission in the context of the Reformed tradition existed during Du Plessis’ time. It was easy to write on mission. However, matters of conversion, regeneration, surety of faith and a holy life are matters of utmost importance to Reformers, filled with existential tension. These things are not “instruments” in man’s hand, but rests on God’s election. For further reading, “Sending en Uitverkiesing” and “Die Gereformeerde Verbondsleer in sy Betekenis vir die Sending” by D.C.S. van der Merwe are recommended. Hugo du Plessis tried to exercise or develop Missiology within the sphere of the Reformed confessions / doctrine.

Election and covenant should not be viewed as special privileges that encourage the church not to engage in the missionary calling. God enters into a specific relationship with those he calls, entrusting them with a special responsibility of transmitting His Word of salvation in Jesus Christ to all who can hear. The people of God are not called because they merit, they are called to service God and fellow

human beings. “God’s people are judged not by their formal piety but by the spontaneous compassion they show – or fail to show – to those in need with whom Jesus Christ identifies himself (Matt. 25:44; Acts 11:29; 12:25)” (Kirk, 1999:32).

5.3.2 The calling of the church in and for the world

Hugo maintained the point of view that missiology’s task is to give an account of the context of Scriptural truth and the way the church should proclaim this to the world. Therefore, he placed missiology encyclopedically within the Practical Theology. In this regard, Hugo was in the same category as Bavinck and Verkuyl, although Verkuyl broadened the definition of mission.

The world and its context always change, and our current context is no different. Today Christians are called to a theological reflection on the challenges the world and the ecumenical movement is presenting the church. There are new things developing, new ways of looking at things. “Each new generation of Christians may have to tackle issues not faced or adequately addressed by previous ones” (Kirk, 1999:14).

Christians now live in the post-modern era, in which issues are related to *enculturation, interfaith dialogue, pluralism, development, poverty, globalisation, environmental care (in which cultural mandate plays a significant role), secularism, humanism, urbanisation and post-modern culture*. In South Africa post-Apartheid presents lots of challenges and new opportunities, i.e. *human rights, environmental care, development, neo-capitalism, privatisation, moral regeneration and quality of life*. Does the Reformed mission and missiology have an own contribution to make in this regard? Reformed Christians are called to an encompassing reflection on the position of the believer and the church in relation to the Kingdom of God and the world, and the practical implications of this. This is a holistic approach to mission (Kim, 2000:286).

5.3.3 The changing of the object of missiology since Hugo’s day

The object of Missiology has been changing (evolving) since Hugo's day. For him and his contemporaries it was the bringing of the Gospel to non-Western heathen people in the up-building of the Young churches planted on the mission fields. Today Christians understand that mission on six continents (since the sixties in vogue) implies much more than problems of "poor countries". Today problems of language, culture, economics, justice, HIV/AIDS pandemic, training in the Western world should also be addressed.

The world is becoming a global village. Consequently, the world's no-go zones are now easily accessible. The mission frontier is not primarily a geographical one, but one of belief, conviction and commitment. Mission is no longer viewed in terms of the church sending missionaries from overseas or into another culture (Kirk, 1999:24).

5.3.4 A call to protect all aspects of service to the world

Today Christians are called to guard all aspects of service to the world by placing them in the big contours of God's deeds, of His calling of man and His will to renewal of the structures in which man lives. Dangers of ideology and humanising are present. Development features prominently in today's missiology. The search for appropriate patterns of development is on, and issues such as environmental care and materialism feature prominently in theological debates (Kirk, 1999:164).

5.3.5 The progression of the classical word-deed problematic of Hugo's day

The classical word-deed problematic of Hugo's day has progressed. It has progressed from the dichotomy between the ecumenicals and the evangelicals to an independent positioning of the Reformed Theology. It combines the heart of mission with the broader spectrum of mission work. The question is not: Via what channel the confrontation of man and Gospel should take place, word or deed? The primary question today is: What is God's will and how can His work be seen in the context in which we are? And on account of that – how is the church motivated to crossing boundaries?

5.3.6 Pneumatology

In Hugo's day the work of the Spirit was seen as awakening new life, which was then used to proclaim and lead others to new life. Theologians took position against seeing the work of the Spirit in the structures of society. This was one of the distinctive aspects of a Reformed Missiology: The Spirit does not only work in the hearts of individuals, but also in the larger context of the world. Pneumatology is not only concerned with one's heart and faith, but also with experiencing the world and discovering God's footprints in the created order. Today, the battle is to guard this truth against a derailment of pluralism: man can partake in God's salvation without naming Christ (through the work of the Spirit in all religions!)

5.3.7 Gaps in Hugo's missiology

The judgement-character of the Kingdom of God or the judging component of the Kingdom is missing in Hugo's missiology. Mission is not only an invitation to accept Christ! The mission commission must be seen in a broader biblical perspective in which protology and eschatology and thus also pneumatology finds its place. Previously the mission mandate was placed exclusively within the motivation of obedience to Christ's commission, but this is one-sided.

As a child of his time and disciple of Abraham Kuyper, Du Plessis also displays the shortcomings of Reformed theology and Kuyperian theology with regards to pneumatology. In his voluminous work "Het werk van de Heilige Geest" Kuyper concentrates on the work of the Spirit in creation and salvation (regeneration, faith, sanctification), but seems to have little insight into equipping of the church with "power from on High". This is reflected in the theology of Du Plessis. the equipping work of the Holy Spirit has only come to the fore in reformed theology during the last thirty years.

5.3.8 Underlying Principles

Du Plessis' theology of mission and the discussions above contributed a great deal in providing the broader framework from within which the GKSA operates in mission and missiology relevant to the present day context.

- **Trinitarian:** Reformed view of mission is Trinitarian because the Church's mission to the world finds its basis in the Triune God, the missionary God.
- **Christological:** The mission of the Church does not only find as its basis in the mission of Christ to the world, but also on the fact that the message proclaimed is Christ-centered. Christ is the gospel, and without him there is no message to be proclaimed.
- **Pneumatological:** The Holy Spirit applies the redemptive work of Christ in the lives of the believers. The Holy Spirit equips the believers with the necessary gifts to proclaim the Word of God. He also empowers them to preach the Word with boldness. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit gathers the Church of God from eternity to eternity.
- **Scriptural:** Scripture receives primacy in the Reformed view of mission and missiology. In our understanding of mission and as we engage in the theology of mission, we should submit ourselves under the authority of Scripture, the Old and the New Testaments alike. The Word of God is relevant to all of humanity from one generation to another.
- **Ecclesiastical:** It is the church that is entrusted with the responsibility of engaging in God's mission to the world. All members of the local and visible church should be held accountable for not responding to God's call.
- **Covenant based:** The covenant God is the missionary God, who seeks to enter into a covenant relationship with mankind, i.e. Abraham and Israel, in order to reach out to all of humanity in a centripetal and centrifugal way.
- **Kingdom Focus:** The Reformed view of mission is kingdom focused in that it seeks to bring all of humanity under the Lordship of God so as to bring glory to His name.
- **Totalitarian:** The Reformed paradigm of mission attests to the fact that mission is directed to all of humanity in the whole world seeking to penetrate all spheres of life in order to transform them from within and re-direct them to serve God.

- **Contextual:** This follows inherently from the above-mentioned. Mission is not done in a vacuum. It is directed to people of this world within their specific context, seeking to address their spiritual and physical needs in a relevant way.
- **Eschatological:** Accordingly, the kingship of God is not only realized yesterday and today, but it will be realised in full with the second coming of Christ. As the church engages in its missionary calling, it should do so having the end in mind – the reign of God to eternity.

5.3.9 Practical Suggestions

- Mobilise the entire church for world mission;
- Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts, 1:8);
- Pay special attention to corporate witness (Acts 2:42-47);
- Christ's agenda becoming ours (Luke 4:18-19);
- Our worship be part of our witness (1 Corinthians 14:1-25);
- Our ministries of mercy be part of our witness (Matthew 25:31-46);
- Our hospitality be part of our witness (Acts 2:42-47);
- In short, we should be ready to witness in 'words' and 'deeds';
- Formulate mission policies and strategise around God's purpose for mission.

5.3.10 Suggestions for Future Studies

- The Relevance of Hugo du Plessis' Lectures in the African Context.
- The Relevance of the reformed paradigm of mission in the post-modern era.
- Reading the signs of our time: A Reformed paradigm of mission and missiology in the 21st Century.
- Christian mission in the face of globalisation.
- The Relevance of the doctrine on the Trinity for mission in the post-modern era.
- Missiological challenges in Africa in the 21st century.
- The prophetic witness against corruption in South African politics.
- Trends on the development of contemporary missiology.

- An encounter with Islam: Taking the gospel to the Muslims.
- The GKSA's pilgrimage: A missio-historical perspective.
- The Church's missionary calling in the face of post-modern idolatry.
- Strategic planning for urban harvest in the 21st century.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The investigations and argumentation affirm the central theoretical argument of this study: "Mission is the work of the Triune God, which he entrusted to the local church where all members have the calling to proclaim the gospel within the framework of the Kingdom of God, and thereby develop Biblical principles that are sensitive, adaptable, and convergent to the context of our socio-economic and political realities for the glory of the covenant God".

SUMMARY

It was the aim of this research to investigate Hugo du Plessis' contribution to the GKSA' struggle for a relevant mission and missiology. It became apparent in the course of the research that Du Plessis contributed in a meaningful way towards the Reformed paradigm for a relevant mission and missiology. In the Dopper churches, Hugo had a great reputation, which is fully justified. He was the first Dopper missionary who stayed in a mission field for a considerable period and who, as a result, could show a church that endured after years. Many people admired him as "our missionary, the expert on mission and on the language and cultural anthropology of the black peoples".

Mission-minded Doppers were not critical of him at all. On the other hand, in those years mission and intensive contact with black people on a spiritual level were still relative novelties to the average Dopper mind. There were those who did not trust any missionary, because they suspected him of undermining "their Apartheid policy". Between these two extremes, there was a majority who were neither enthusiastic nor hostile towards mission. This picture only changed radically when Dr Jan Schutte succeeded in bringing Prof J H Bavinck to Potchefstroom for a year.

Knowing how much suspicion he might create, Hugo was very careful not to offend the Afrikaners. One should understand this attitude, since suspicion against him of being a "liberalist" might slow down the flow of funds for mission and eventually force him to leave the mission field. At that time the very fact that one was a missionary was sufficient to mark one as "eccentric" in some circles. So if one finds traces of racism and support of "Apartheid" in the life and works of du Plessis, one should keep in mind that he was a child of his times, even though he was ahead of most of his compatriots in his views. The very fact that he and his wife were willing to endure the hardships of a mission field at that time speaks of his dedication. However, it seems he was a far greater success as a theologian than as a missionary.

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ADDENDUM 1

HUGO DU PLESSIS AS A HUMAN BEING

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

The world in which Du Plessis lived in has passed. However, through the eyes and recollection of his children; it can be made alive again.

1. DU PLESSIS AS A CHILD

1.1 When and where was Du Plessis born?

1.2 How can you describe the family of his birth?

1.2.1 His father and mother:

1.2.2 His brothers and sisters:

1.2.3 The social status of the family (poor family/ middle class family/ affluent family):

2. DU PLESSIS AS A STUDENT

NB. In answering all the questions on Du Plessis' life as a student, mention also his achievements, relevant years, and the subjects he enjoyed most.

2.1 When and where did Du Plessis receive his primary education?

2.2 When and where did Du Plessis receive his secondary education?

2.3 When and where did Du Plessis receive his tertiary education?

3. DU PLESSIS AS A CALLED MAN

- 3.1 When, where, and by whom was Du Plessis baptised?
- 3.2.1 Did he occupy any office in the Church as a young man?
- 3.2.2 If yes, when, where, and by whom was he ordained?
- 3.3 When, where, and by who was he first ordained as a minister of the Word?

4. DU PLESSIS AS A FAMILY MAN AND A HUMAN BEING

- 4.1 When and to whom was Du Plessis engaged?
- 4.2 When, where, and by whom was Du Plessis married?
- 4.3 Name all the children of Du Plessis in succession? Mention also their date and place of birth.
- 4.4 How would you describe his love towards his family?
- 4.5 How can you describe him as a human being? Mention his strong points and also his weaknesses.
- 4.6 How would you describe his social life? Touch on issues concerning his friendship towards other human beings, sports that he enjoyed most, his involvement in community structures.
- 4.7 How did he relax in his spare time? What are the jokes that he shared with you?

5. DU PLESSIS AS A MAN TO BE REMEMBERED

- 5.1 When did Du Plessis retire?
- 5.2 When and where did Du Plessis die? Mention also the cause of his death.
- 5.3 When, where, and by whom was he buried?
- 5.4 How would you like him to be remembered? Mention the qualities through which Du Plessis can be remembered.

ADDENDUM 2

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

1. When was your first encounter with Du Plessis?
2. For how long did you work with him and what was your experience?
3. What is the foundation that he laid regarding the new converts?
4. How successful was Hugo du Plessis in establishing the indigenous church?
5. What was his contribution with regard to the training of local leadership?
6. What was his contribution regarding the socio-political life of the Venda people in and around Siloam? or How far did he succeed in making the gospel relevant to the context of the Venda people?

