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A dialogue between African philosophy and *missio Dei*: koinonia and ubuntu

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BTh, Hons BA (Theology)

Dissertation submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for *Master of Arts in
Theology (Missiology)* at the North-West University (Mafikeng Campus)

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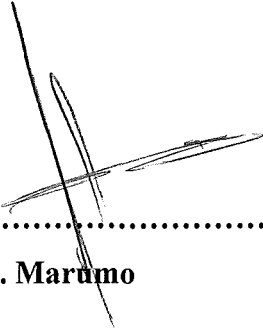
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DECLARATION

I declare that this mini-dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been appropriately acknowledged. The mini-dissertation is being submitted for the Masters of Arts Degree in Theology (Missiology) in the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, in the Department of Theology of the North West University: Mafikeng Campus, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.



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P.O. Marumo



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Date

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PREFACE

This study culminated from a concept that is prevalent among blacks, namely that Westerners brought the Bible with them, gloved in Christianity, and took the land. This is misconstrued as a fallacy, because what they mean is that if the African culture was well understood and the Westerners saw God's glorification embedded in it, the situation could have been the other way round.

This study tries to showcase that the misconception of "saving souls" of the Africans was not achieved, because their cultural ethos was ignored and marginalised. The church also failed in its endeavours to attain that, due to its non-missional attitude. What is needed, is a missional church with missional ministries that are spearheaded by missional leadership that can bring forth an establishment of reconciled communities.

ABSTRACT

Missionaries came along with colonial powers with the sincere, but culturally misguided, attempt to save primitives, ignorant of the true religion of Africans. An African was regarded as a child who needed to be nurtured and guided (Ukpong 2001). However, the dissertation will show that there is reciprocal enhancement between koinonia and African philosophy which can establish missional communities. Therefore, the main question that this dissertation raises, is the following: Can koinonia, as part of the missio Dei, inculturate African philosophy to build reconciled societies?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1. Formulating the problem.....	1
1.2. Background and problem statement	1
1.2.1 Background	1
1.2.1.1 African philosophy	3
1.2.1.2 Tribalism	5
1.2.1.3 Xenophobia	6
1.3 Problem statement.....	8
1.4 Central research question	8
1.5 Aims and objectives.....	9
1.5.1 Aim	9
1.5.2 Objectives.....	9
1.6 Central theoretical argument	9
1.7 Method of research	10
1.7.1 Study limitations.....	10
1.8 Tentative chapters.....	11
CHAPTER 2: <i>MISSIO DEI</i> AND CHRISTIAN KOINONIA.....	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Background	12
2.3 <i>Missio Dei</i>	16
2.3.1 Definition of <i>missio Dei</i>	16
2.4 <i>Missio Dei</i> in action	18
2.5 <i>Missio Dei</i> in culture.....	20
2.6 The Biblical historical developments of koinonia in <i>missio Dei</i>	22
2.6.1 Background	22
2.6.2 Koinonia and creation	24
2.6.3 Koinonia and the Old Testament	25
2.6.3.1 Koinonia and covenants	27
2.6.4 Koinonia and the New Testament.....	28
2.6.5 Koinonia and atonement	28

2.6.6 Koinonia and the Holy Spirit.....	29
2.6.7 Koinonia and the Trinity.....	31
2.6.8 Koinonia and the new creation.....	33
2.6.9 Koinonia as the washing of feet (humility and service) (John 13:1-20).....	34
2.6.10 Koinonia and Holy Communion/Eucharist/Sacrament (John 13:21-30).....	36
2.6.11 Koinonia, loving each other and being in God (John 13:34-35 and John 15:1-17).....	36
2.6.12 Koinonia as knowing and be known by God (John 14:1-12).....	38
2.6.13 Koinonia and prayer (John 17).....	39
2.6.14 Koinonia and baptism.....	40
2.6.15 Koinonia and worship.....	42
2.7 Conclusion.....	42
CHAPTER THREE: TRADITIONALISM, UBUNTU AND COMMUNALISM.....	44
3.1 Introduction.....	44
3.2 Traditionalism.....	44
3.2.1 Background.....	44
3.2.2 Understanding of traditionalism.....	45
3.3 Attributes of traditionalism.....	45
3.3.1 Traditionalism and the Supreme Being.....	45
3.3.2 Traditionalism and time.....	46
3.3.3 Traditionalism and social hierarchies.....	47
3.3.4 Traditionalism and women.....	47
3.3.5 Death and the 'living dead'.....	48
3.3.6 HIV/AIDS: Secrecy and denial.....	50
3.4 Conclusion.....	51
3.5 Ubuntu and communalism.....	52
3.5.1 Background.....	52
3.5.2 Different definitions of ubuntu and communalism.....	52
3.5.3 Attributes of ubuntu and communalism.....	55
3.5.3.1 Relatedness.....	55
3.5.3.2 Collectivism.....	59
3.5.3.3 Spirituality.....	60
3.6 Communalism and African humanism.....	62
3.7 Conclusion.....	62

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTACT POINTS BETWEEN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND KOINONIA.....	64
4.1 Background	64
4.2 African theology that is based on African philosophy.....	64
4.3 Relational contact points.....	65
4.3.1 View about spirituality/beliefs	65
4.3.1.2 View on God.....	65
4.3.1.3 View on sin and salvation.....	66
4.3.1.4 View on faith in community.....	70
4.3.1.5 View on ancestorism.....	71
4.3.2 View on rituals	74
4.3.2.1 Rituals of belonging.....	74
4.3.3 View on humanity.....	75
4.3.3.1 Human relatedness and collectivism.....	75
4.3.3.2 Feminism.....	77
4.4 Conclusion	78
4.5 Practical implications.....	79
4.5.1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission.....	79
4.5.2 Restorative and retributive justice in ubuntu and koinonia	80
4.6 Contextualisation of ubuntu and koinonia	83
4.7 Inculturation of ubuntu and koinonia.....	85
4.8 Conclusion	88
CHAPTER FIVE: THE WAY FORWARD	90
5.1 Introduction.....	90
5.2 Background	90
5.3 Missional church	91
5.4 Functions of the <i>missio ecclesiae</i> in bringing inculturation	92
5.4.1 Leitourgia (worship) and the view on God and ancestorism.....	92
5.4.2 Koinonia (fellowship) and the view on relatedness, collectivism and feminism.....	95
5.4.3 Kerugma (Proclamation) and the view on sin, salvation and a faith community.....	98
5.4.4 Diakonia (service) and the view on communalism.....	101

5.5 The author's own point of view.....	101
5.6 Conclusion	103
REFERENCES.....	105

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Key words: *Missio Dei*; Koinonia; Traditionalism; Ubuntu; Communalism; African philosophy; Fellowship; Missional communities; Contextualisation; Inculturation; Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Healing; Reconciled communities.

1. Formulating the problem

1.2 Background and problem statement

1.2.1 Background

With the dawn of democracy in South Africa, secularism and pluralism gained impetus. According to Mashau (2009:118), Christianity was no longer regarded as a state religion, but as one of many religions that are recognised and protected by the Constitution of our country. He further states that, since the declaration of freedom of religion in South Africa, traditional African religion has been practised more openly. Its rise has coincided with the call to revive the cultural heritage of African people, a movement that aligned itself with the concept of an African renaissance that was propagated by the then deputy president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, in his famous “I am an African” speech to the Constitutional Assembly of South Africa on 8th May 1996.

The call for an African renaissance that was embedded in Mbeki’s speech (1996) was culturally and politically motivated, but, at the same time, a religious call to reincarnate the traditional religious systems, taking into consideration that Africans are religious people, whose religion permeates their whole lives. Secondly, Africans believe in God and have different ways in different cultural and language groups to address or call God. Thirdly, Africans believe in the spiritual world, including venerating or paying homage to their ancestors (the “living dead”). Heeding this call to find their traditional roots was supposed to

help African people in regaining their African identity and taking charge of their own destinies (Mashau 2009:118).

Sequel to Mbeki's "I Am an African" speech, Friedman (2004:30) responds as follows:

This tendency to use continental identity to refer to racial category makes a refusal to simply admit white residents of Africa to Africanness more understandable. It could also be argued that the cultural identities of white residents of Africa may not be particularly African: white South Africans often tend to derive their models and inspirations – whether in politics or the arts or in their views on economic organization – from Europe or North America.

In the South African context, there is another reason for reticence: "white Africanness" has been used at times as an excuse for behaviour, which suggests that identity is being used purely as a convenience.

Thus the South African democratic government, particularly in its reformist period, was known to insist on its Africanness in an attempt to relieve diplomatic pressure: it was an African government like any other and should therefore not be singled out for special treatment; to do so was to discriminate against Africa's white inhabitants. While the African continent and the world were clearly not fooled, for some, this discredited the notion of white African identity. Some on the continent might also feel that white-owned, major South African companies rely on Africanness as a route to commercial advantage, but that they find no other use for it as they happily list on the London Stock Exchange, while flaunting their Africanness south of the Sahara.

Given this context, a tendency by black African intellectuals (particularly in Southern Africa where the white settler presence has been most evident) to insist that authentic Africanness is beyond the reach of Africa's whites, is more understandable.

In supporting Friedman's stance (2004), Van Hensbroek (2001:3), editor of *Quest*, says the following:

To begin with, the concepts 'African Renaissance' and 'Ubuntu' seem to function in at least two quite distinct worlds. One is political and administrative, where they are explicitly forward-looking ideas to inspire and legitimate the bold development efforts of the new South Africa. The other is cultural and philosophical, where these concepts refer to past and present African life-forms as a foundation for not just development, but African development.

The meaning, the users, the contexts of application and the 'politics' of these concepts in both worlds are so different that there often seems to be only a thin line connecting them.

Van Hensbroek (2001) further adds that the political use of the concepts focuses on issues of modernisation and liberation of the continent, rather than on 'deep' cultural issues. For instance, when Mbeki states, "I am an African", he tries to avoid references to racial and cultural essences (although his listeners may pick up a different message). The word "renaissance" hardly refers to the rebirth of a so-called traditional Africa, in other words to a particularly African heritage that needs to be revived. It rather refers to a new Africa that needs to be built upon the various heritages that come together in African reality.

1.2.1.1 African philosophy

The author sees the "I am an African" speech as a revival of African philosophy, which embedded the notion that African culture was not taken into consideration yet. Ukpong (2001:503) states as follows:

European communicators of the Christian message to Africans were very selective in their use of the resources of African culture in their task, for only certain elements of Christian expression were thought to be compatible with local resources. This was as it should be, given the logic of a situation where neither the communicator nor the audience knew much of each other's culture. However, those elements of Christianity that have been selected, had to some measure been successfully integrated, e.g. the concept of the Deity – which the Africans already had in their religion, [namely] the concept of a Supreme Creator God, which after

many years of interaction they have developed a high degree of mutual understanding and appreciation [for]. This has resulted in a desire to express the Christian concept of God in African terms, as a help to a deeper understanding and internalization of the Christian concept of God by Africans.

In agreeing with Ukpong (2001), Michael and Cook (2009:673) states that missionaries from foreign lands came along with colonial powers of Europe with the sincere, but culturally misguided, attempt to save primitive, idolatrous natives from their ignorance of true religion and their lack of civilisation. For many missionaries, Christianity was without a doubt a part of European culture and history. Therefore, saving the native people meant removing them from the nefarious influences of their own cultural and religious practices that were deeply embedded in their sense of ancestral continuity and influence.

This policy of foreign missionaries to replace 'primitive' cultures with 'higher' or 'civilized' cultures meant that Christian mission reflected acculturation, rather than conversion; missionary's love was thus involved in destroying people's cultures, instead of converting them to become the followers of Jesus Christ and allowing them to transform their culture according to the Bible. For that reason, Christianity was viewed as a source of despair, division, discrimination and the undermining of values of African people, rather than the Good Tidings which the New Testament promised (Ukpong 2001:512). Conversion must be seen as a vehicle that gives converts the courage to affirm their own cultural identity and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to lead them into transforming their culture to glorify God, thanking God for the joy of creation, conversion and encouragement.

The latter view resulted in the birth of African Christianity, which is culturally-conditioned. It has not been concerned with clarifying doctrines, but with helping the African faithful to live Christianity, and making the Gospel message and Christian doctrines meaningful to their life situation. However, although African Christianity is culturally conditioned, it does not mean that it cannot influence other cultures and theologies and be influenced by them, thereby being capable of entering into a dialogue with other cultures and theologies, and being understood universally (Ukpong 2001:513).

In agreeing with Ukpong (2001), Bosch (2007:448) says that Western Christians were unconscious of the fact that their theology was culturally conditioned; they simply assumed that it was supra-cultural and universally valid. Since Western culture was implicitly regarded as Christian, it was equally self-evident that this culture had to be exported together with Christian faith. This process was called adaptation and accommodation (in Catholicism) or indigenisation (in Protestantism), and was limited to matters such as liturgical investments, non-sacramental rites, art, literature, architecture and music.

1.2.1.2 Tribalism

The abovementioned division ushered in the 'Afrocentric' versus the 'Eurocentric' attitude. According to Magezi *et al.* (2007:187), Eurocentric thinking is an attitude of clinging to the Western way of doing things and especially to Western standards, while the Afrocentric way is an attitude of getting rid of the Eurocentric way of thinking by replacing it with a clearly African model (Van Der Walt 1997:52). These differences in attitude result in non-cohesion among congregations. The contention surrounds the individualistic tendencies of the West (which those in vernacular-speaking congregations prefer to avoid) and the communal tendencies of traditional Africa (which those in the English-speaking congregations prefer to avoid equally). It is, therefore, not uncommon to notice a healthier relationship between congregations from different denominations with a similar language than between those of the same denomination, but using different languages. This phenomenon has robbed members of the same denomination of brotherly love and meaningful fellowship.

Magezi *et al.* (2009:186) are of the opinion that the African states who had gained independence from colonial rule had inherited fractured social, political and economic systems. As a means of survival, the African economies depended upon and consequently tied up in the rich economies of the West, making the Western influence stronger, thereby giving the West an upper hand in deciding the future and direction of the African states. This posed a huge challenge to many Africans who were still holding tenaciously onto their traditional values. The interplay between these two cultural influences thus led to confusion, if not a crisis, in Africa. The confusion affected even congregations, resulting in little or no meaningful fellowship among members. This division was caused by the homogeneous

nature of congregations, which in a way makes class or tribe the determining factor of affiliation and fellowship. It further resulted in 'tribal churches' that promote racism that is based on tribal differences (Kapolyo 2005:133). This opened the door for xenophobia.

1.2.1.3 Xenophobia

According to Vorster (2004:148-152) and Gathogo (2007:127-128), xenophobia is an emerging social and human-rights issue in the contemporary world of migration. It can also be seen as racism in its broadest meaning, driven by *inter alia* environmental, socio-cultural and political factors; in the case of racism, it results in prejudice, stereotyping, bias and discrimination.

South Africa has become a good example of the manifestation of xenophobia. A study by Morris (1998) reveals how South Africans perceive migrants as criminals, drug leaders and carriers of diseases such as HIV/AIDS. They are further seen as 'parasites', taking away jobs from South Africans in a country with a high rate of unemployment and thereby perceived as parasites that need to be disinfected, resulting in immigrants increasingly becoming targets of violence. This practice is rife in black townships, where the aliens are referred to as 'kwerekwere' (a disparaging term for 'African immigrants') (Vorster 2004:151).

Xenophobic attacks in South Africa in May 2008, as described by Gathogo (2007:127-128), are a case in point. During this period, black South Africans unleashed vicious attacks on roughly 5 000 000 foreign nationals from Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Zimbabwe, of whom the majority were 'economic refugees' (Misimanga 2008:4). Unfortunately, they were people from the same countries where South Africans sought refuge and support during the fight against apartheid, and where our freedom fighters were provided with military bases (Warigi 2008:11). These countries were attacked regularly by the apartheid regime with its superior military might. A few years later, as a gesture of reciprocating, 'unyama' or 'ubulwane' (animal-like behaviour) attacks from South Africans were launched against these 'parasites'. The attacks were inhumane, cruel and detrimental to humanity.

What is true of the manifestation of xenophobia in South Africa is true of the same phenomenon in other parts of Africa (for example, the tribal conflict in Rwanda that resulted in the loss of many lives, the on-going civil war in Uganda between two ethnic groups and the internal strife in Sudan). In some instances, the fear of cultural values, religious ideas and foreign lifestyles of strangers also instigate xenophobia. Therefore, racism and xenophobia are responsible for extreme violence and blatant violation of human rights in many parts of the world (Vorster 2004:152).

From the above deliberations, the author comes to the conclusion that the lack of studying each other, the misunderstanding of each other and the lack of interest in a relationship with each other have resulted in the polarisation between Western and African cultures. Some missionaries did not take the time to study the African way of life thoroughly before making their conclusions about it. A few missionaries, however, learned some African dialects and thought they had mastered African philosophy. Therefore, the relationship was negative: Africans were regarded as children who needed to be nurtured and guided through a process of slow and carefully controlled growth toward a time in the dim future when they would be able to look after themselves. This meant that the relationship was not a horizontal one, but a vertical one of master-servant relationship, with missionaries as shepherds and Africans as sheep, resulting in the distortion of koinonia and a 'divided community'. It resulted in a further disparity between Christianity and African philosophy, and the gap of reconciled communities was widened.

This gap gave birth to a lack of koinonia (fellowship) between the Christian and African philosophy. There was racism that was based on colour, people were identified according to their gender and the communities distrusted each other. Thus the establishment of missional communities through the Covenant to be a blessing (as mentioned in Genesis 12) was ignored. Christianity was overshadowed by the traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism in the African philosophy of "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am".

1.3 Problem statement

In light of what is said above, this study is an attempt to find missologically the reason why, despite of many years of Christianity, mission and ubuntu in Africa, we still have divided communities. The question to be answered is the following: If Christian koinonia can be enriched with African philosophy's ubuntu, and African philosophy's ubuntu can be enriched with Christian koinonia, will it not be a solution to curb racism, ethnicity and genderism, thereby resulting in an establishment of reconciled communities?

Firstly, this study wants to show that koinonia can enhance ubuntu in African philosophy and that, in turn, African philosophy as ubuntu can enhance koinonia. Secondly, the study wants to determine whether the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, managed or contributed to the establishment of reconciled communities in which shalom (peace) can prevail. Thirdly, the study wants to indicate that if Christianity were fully contextualised in the context of Africa and African philosophy were inculturated, reconciled communities could have been established. Fourthly, the study will endorse that a dialogue between koinonia and ubuntu should be an ongoing process as a means of exploring new avenues that can establish reconciled communities.

The main question of this study is the following: Can koinonia, as part of the *missio Dei*, inculturate¹ African philosophy to build humane and God-fearing societies which are reconciled?

1.4 Central research question

The central research problem of this study is to establish contact points between *missio Dei* as koinonia and African philosophy as ubuntu for the development of a missional paradigm that can effectively address the infighting, racism and genderism that bring divergence among communities, thereby establishing reconciled communities.

¹ Bosch (2007:454) describes inculturation as a process whereby the Gospel must remain the Good News while becoming, up to a certain point, a cultural phenomenon. It offers the cultures "the knowledge of divine mystery", while it helps in bringing forth their own living, traditional, original expression of Christian life, celebration and thought. An appropriate metaphor is that of the flowering of a seed that has been implanted into the soil of a particular culture. It is a peaceful process whereby Gospel and culture come into contact.

The questions arising from the above problem are the following:

- Why did Christianity and koinonia not inculturate the African worldview?
- What does Christian koinonia, centred in *missio Dei*, look like?
- What does African philosophy as ubuntu look like?
- How can African philosophy be inculturated in the Christian worldview?
- How will an inculturated African missional model, based on koinonia, create communities that are reconciled?

1.5 Aims and objectives

1.5.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to identify and describe a theological missional model of koinonia, based on *missio Dei*, that can assist in bringing forth the inculturation of African philosophy.

In an attempt to reach the above aim, the following objectives should be attained:

1.5.2 Objectives

- To study and analyse the historical and social context of Western mission work and the African worldview.
- To study and expound koinonia as it is centred in *missio Dei*.
- To expound traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism in an African philosophy.
- To identify the contact points of koinonia and ubuntu.
- To identify pointers for a relevant missional model that can lead to the establishment of reconciled African communities.

1.6 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that koinonia, as manifested in *missio Dei*, will inculturate African philosophy and create reconciled communities that are based on equality for all, thereby curbing racism, genderism and other discriminating factors.

1.7 Method of research

This missiological study will proceed from the historical and social context of traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism. It will further focus on exposing the differences between African philosophy that is based on traditionalism, ubuntu, communalism and koinonia. Thereafter, the study will proceed to explore means that can be used to inculturate African philosophy in a contextualised manner in order to create reconciled missional communities. The following objectives will be achieved through the usage of comparative literature studies and computer-based data searches:

- The study of relevant literature and information on the historical and social context of traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism.
- The analysis of relevant theological literature and discursive engagements of literary materials that are available on koinonia to assist in gaining a contemporary Christian perspective on koinonia in *missio Dei*.
- Analysis, comparison and evaluation of scholarly works on the relational aspects of koinonia to assist in finding a way in which traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism can be inculturated to establish reconciled communities.
- The study and analysis of relevant comparative literature to assist in bringing forth the formulation of an appropriate missional model which can establish reconciled communities.

1.7.1 Study limitations

This study will limit itself to African philosophy as ubuntu and *missio Dei* as koinonia. There are a great number of interrelated issues that this study cannot address and that call for further research. The context of the study is limited to the available comparative literature, in other words there are still relevant researches which are presently in process that might oppose the relevance of this study on *missio Dei* and ubuntu. Despite this fact, the study lays an informed basis for future study, taking into consideration the period in which the study has been done. It will be able to offer assistance on the set of issues that are appropriate to identify how koinonia can assist in inculturating ubuntu to create missional communities.

1.8 Tentative chapters

- (1) Introduction
- (2) *Missio Dei* and Christian koinonia
- (3) African philosophy as ubuntu
- (4) Contact points between koinonia and ubuntu
- (5) Formulation of a missional model

CHAPTER 2

MISSIO DEI AND CHRISTIAN KOINONIA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on expounding koinonia as centred on *missio Dei*. It will proceed from pinpointing that, regardless of race, worldviews and rituals, humans are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), which is the manifestation of a fellowship relationship (koinonia) between God and humankind. From creation, man was made to be in koinonia (fellowship) with God and with his/her settings, namely the environment and fellow human beings, which was *missio Dei* (God's plan) in action for his creation. Being in koinonia, humans are supposed to love God and their neighbours, despite their creed, colour, language, religion and culture.

2.2 Background

Notwithstanding God's plan of redemption and salvation for his creation, some world events shook the world to the core and, in a way, affected and compromised aspects of humankind, such as culture and religion, as prescribed by God:

- Two devastating world wars; the Russian and Chinese revolutions; the horrors that were perpetrated by the rulers of the countries that were committed to National Socialism, fascism, communism and capitalism; the collapse of the great Western colonial empires; and the rapid secularisation, not only of the West, but also of large parts of the rest of the world (Bosch 2007:363), affected the affairs of the world and gave birth to modernity.
- Enlightenment with its modernism, as well as postmodern ideologies, ushered in a foreign understanding of God in which individuals experienced themselves as liberated from the tutelage of God and church. "All were born equal and had equal

rights and this was derived from 'nature'. Thus human beings were perceived as more important than God; however, they were not fundamentally different from animals and plants" (Bosch 2007:267). This led to the birth of individualism, which teaches "everybody for himself, God for us all and the devil for the rest". Rationalism also emerged with a product, called 'realism', which believes that matter as an object of perception has real existence. Furthermore, religion or belief was viewed as superstition, vague, subjective, personal and hence unreliable, whereas knowledge was seen as objective, having more positive associations than belief, certain, universal and something that can be trusted (Fuller 1995:14-15). This made religion or Christianity appear as a myth to be ignored and questioned for its existence, and not a blessing for the nation, thereby contrary to what God has intended for his creation. This led to a new trend, called post-Christendom and religious pluralism.

- Post-Christendom and religious pluralism promoted a theory, called 'container theory', which compacted societies into a container or pigeon hole, no more as whole entity, but as fragmented, which had implications on a religious society. According to Fletcher (2008:397), "the first modernity society was described as 'methodological nationalism', where a society and state were conceived, organised and experienced as coexistence, whereas the territorial society became the 'container' of society." Containing society meant that the space that was encompassed by the boundary of the state also contained the artifacts of culture and religion. This space created the 'survival of the fittest' – culture or religion. It ushered in syncretism that can be read as an act of resistance to colonial power and the strategy for the survival of one's identity. Polarity between culture and religion, especially in Africa, became inevitable and fellowship among societies weakened.
- The polarity which came about with post-colonialism and religious pluralism affected African society. It promoted tribalism and racism that are based on differences in ethnic groupings, religious affiliations and culture. These differences in tribalism and racism resulted in internal strife among tribes and the killings that ensued in Rwanda and Somalia, one tribe maintaining that it is a better tribe than the other. Even the ongoing killings in Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo are based on tribalism and land tenure, which is the result of the redemarcation of former

boundaries that existed before colonisation and globalisation. This genocide compromised koinonia as advocated by God for creation and led to tribes being uprooted, thereby affecting their culture, norms and destabilising peace.

- Due to the internal strifes and instability, the entrance of globalisation was made easier. African leaders and the West took advantage of the vulnerable communities and exploited their resources and means. People from Africa and all over the world acquired the richness of Africa's minerals. Africa's culture, economic context and worldviews were revolutionised, thereby widening the gap between rich and poor through exploitation of the so-called 'poorer nations'; monopolisation by the wealthy nations was a norm. This fact affected Christianity and religion to the extent that they became meaningless to the secular world. To support the malice that was caused by globalisation, Seerveld (2010:11) states as follows: "[...] but globalisation, as I understand it, is an idolisation of global purview and tends to disregard, override or sidestep other pertinent geographic and societal realities like culture and peace."

In support of Seerveld (2010), Kofi Annan (1999:27), former United Nations Secretary-General, describes globalisation in the following way:

Throughout much of the developing world, globalization is seen not as a term describing objective reality, but as an ideology of predatory capitalism. Globalization is presented as a foreign invasion that will destroy local cultures, regional tastes, and national traditions. In reaction, globalization is made the scapegoat of the ills which more often have domestic roots of a political nature.

From the abovementioned, the author has come to the conclusion that these events greatly affected the world – and Africa in particular – through the West's Partition of Africa initiative. They contributed immensely to the collapse of the African cultural values and norms, compromised relationships among nations and thwarted koinonia.

This is the reason why Bosch (2007:364) states that it was unthinkable that the Christian church, theology and mission would remain unscathed. Developments within the church, mission and theology (often precipitated, no doubt by the momentous events and revolutions in other disciplines) were also affected by these events.

They further led to the church losing its position of privilege. In many parts of the world, including Africa, where the church had been established as a powerful factor for more than a millennium, it is today a liability, rather than an asset, to be a Christian. The once-so-close relationship between the 'throne' and the 'altar' (for instance in the entire project of Western colonial expansion) has, in some instances, given way to an ever-increasing tension between the church and the secular authorities (Bosch 2007:364).

Even the African cultural setting and philosophy was not spared from these events. In the traditional 'mission fields', the position of Western mission agencies and missionaries has undergone a fundamental revision. Colonialism ushered in new concepts which were foreign to Africans and led to some disgruntlement, as state missionaries from foreign lands came along with the colonial powers of Europe with the sincere, but culturally misguided, attempt to save primitive, idolatrous natives from their ignorance of true religion and their lack of civilisation. For many missionaries, Christianity was inconceivably a part of European culture and history. Therefore, saving the native people meant removing them from the nefarious influences of their own cultural and religious practices that were embedded in their sense of ancestral worship and influence (Michael & Cook 2009:673). In many instances, this had great sociological consequences, as families and extended families were divided between Africa and Christianity.

As stated by Michael and Cook (2009:674), as well as Mbiti and others, the early missionaries, unbeknown to themselves, lost the opportunity to listen to the voices of the people of Africa. In many tribes, worship simply means 'to read' or 'to listen'. The Gospel was presented by instruction, with no or little appeal to sympathy and imagination. The missionaries brought a European style of education, medicine and technology that was greatly valued for practical purposes, but lacked empathy, consultation or input by the recipients.

Despite the background on how the missionaries' obligations were perceived, it will be proper and appropriate to determine how the *missio Dei* was conceivable in that cultural setting which was distorted and nearing collapse, because, as Nurnberger (2003:498) states,

“God’s word hits human history vertically from above like a bomb: unpredictable, unmanageable, and with cataclysmic effects. The Father sends the Son, who sends the Holy Spirit, who sends us, to tell an unsuspecting world that God is God and thus the master of the human race”.

2.3 *Missio Dei*

2.3.1 Definition of *missio Dei*

According to Bosch (2007:390), the term *missio Dei* (although not the exact term) surfaced through the Barthian influence (1952); *mission* was understood as being derived from the nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of the ecclesiology or soteriology: “The classical doctrine on *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, was expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.” Therefore, as far as missionary thinking was concerned, this linking with the doctrine of the Trinity constituted an important innovation. It further illustrated the movement in the Triune God (*koinonia* in and with God). All the activities, whether from the Son or the Holy Spirit, are centred in the Father (who is God); hence *missio Dei* is God-centred and God the Father’s initiative by sending the Son and the Holy Spirit.

In support of Bosch, Flett (2009:15) describes *missio Dei* as follows:

Missio Dei – a Trinitarian theology of mission – begins first with God's own proper life as Father, Son and Spirit. This is the living God who, in himself from all eternity, lives in the partnership of the above and the below and in the history of the traversing. In that his life in *se* (apart) overcomes the distance between himself and his creation without destroying that distinction, God is a missionary God. This position retains all the necessary caveats: the priority of God's perfection; this act as a deliberate act, but eternally so in the life of God; and the intentionality of his act (that God remains subject in his act). This God is not remote from the human. God remains the subject in his life, as history in partnership, and gives the human a share in his act and so a share in his life.

Despite the misunderstanding between European churches and missiology on *missio Dei*, Engelsviken (2003:482) maintains that “the missionary movement of which we are part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father, in that perfect love which is the very nature of God”. It is this Trinitarian basis of mission that should form the foundation of any understanding of *missio Dei*. This view is supported by 1 John 1:3, where John explains that the reason for proclaiming the truth of what was seen and heard by the believers is that we may have fellowship among us, and this fellowship is with the Father and the Son, renewed daily through the Holy Spirit.

The debate between the Roman Catholic and Pentecostal Church on the unity of Trinity, held by the World Council of Churches (Faith and Order) in Geneva in 1991, resulted in the following suggested formulations of the Trinity (Karkainmen 2000:228):

The Spirit proceeds from the Father of the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests on the Son; the Spirit proceeds from the Father and shines out through the Son. Therefore, Catholics and Pentecostals agree on the necessary Trinitarian basis of *koinonia*. Together they say that *koinonia* between Christians/churches is a reflection of the divine communion. In this Trinitarian context, there is a communion of the Spirit.

In support of Karkainmen (2000), Engelsviken (2003) and Bosch (2007; revised), Wright (2006:62-63) states that the term *missio Dei* (mission of God) has a long history. It seems to go back to a German missiologist, namely Karl Hartenstein. The latter coined the term, in a way summarising the teaching of Karl Barth, “who in a lecture on mission in 1928 had connected mission with the doctrine of the Trinity. Barth and Hartenstein wanted to make it clear that mission is grounded in an intratrinitarian movement of God himself and that it expresses the power of God over history, to which the only appropriate response is obedience”. The phrase originally meant ‘the sending of God’, in the sense of the Father’s sending of the Son and their sending of the Holy Spirit. All human missions, in this

perspective, are seen as a participation in and extension of this divine sending. Hence the God who is revealed in the Scriptures is personal, purposeful and goal oriented.

From the abovementioned definitions of *missio Dei*, the conclusion has been drawn that *missio Dei* is Trinitarian based and pivots around God the Father as the initiator, the Son as the implementer and the Holy Spirit as the empowerer/power, and the church as participant and agent. Below, the author will be expounding on how *missio Dei* must function as a mission of God and what God's expectations are from this Trinitarian viewpoint.

2.4 *Missio Dei* in action

According to Flett (2009:13), mission is not a human act that bridges the gap between God and the world. It is the act of fellowship with God by participating in God's bridging of that gap. This participation is indirect, for it is a participation in a creaturely manner. Recognition of the indirect nature of human participation in God further stresses the missionary act, for our participation is by virtue of our being in Christ; in other words, our human share in the being of God is actualised as we share in the act of God's mission, not as owners, but as agents that are sent by God.

Onwunta and Hendriks (2009:315) also add that mission does not belong to the church, but to God. This has brought a major insight between theocentric missiology and ecclesiocentric missiology. The latter holds a strict Christological position with its literalistic interpretation of the maxim "Outside the church there is no salvation". Because of its close connection with the saving events of the life of Jesus, the church (as Christ) is the exclusive institution of salvation. The individual attains salvation only through explicit membership in the church, since there is no other mediator of the salvation of Christ. Other religions, just as other saviour figures, are false – fascinating but futile human attempts to reach the one and true God who is revealed exclusively in Christ (Schineller 1976:551). During this century, however, this ecclesiocentric understanding of mission has been replaced by a profound theoretical reconceptualization of Christian mission, because we have come to realise that

mission is not merely an activity of the church; it is the result of God's initiative that is rooted in his purpose to restore and heal creation. *Mission* means 'sending' and is the central biblical theme that describes the purpose of God's action in history. God's character and purpose as sending or missionary God redefines our understanding of the Trinity.

De Neui (2007:94), therefore, sees mission as a witness that "goes out into all the earth, with words to the ends of the world." He further adds that *missio Dei* is literally the sending of God. God is the one who sent the Son, then sent the Spirit and is now sending the church to partner with the work that God is continuing to do in every corner of creation. Mission is not something the church owns, but is a role to which she is called by God, for God and to God.

The process of that calling and sending in the *missio Dei* always involves a change in the agent who participates. Sometimes, this change is quite radical. Different examples are the following: Moses and the metaphysical bush that burnt, but did not consume (Exodus 3:10); Jeremiah, who was sent to proclaim God's Word (Jeremiah. 1:7); and Elijah, who was sent to influence the course of international politics (1 Kings 15-18) (Wright 2010:23). A deeper transformation occurs in human agents who are sent by God in the wider mission. This is seen in the life of Abram when God sent him from all that was known in order to bless all people of the world and in the process brought about a work of faith in his life (Genesis.12:1-3) (Wright 2006:194).

At times, the *missio Dei* has also sent those from outside the community of faith to purify it and bring it back to God's direction and wider purpose. It sent, for example, an unclean Gentile, named Cornelius, to direct the missionary Peter. Not only Peter was directed, though; this event ultimately brought about a transformation in the theological understanding of the entire church of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:1-33; De Neui 2007:95). All creation can be employed and sent by the Triune God in *missio Dei* into cultures of the world, thereby crossing the boundaries of culture, religion and ideology, creating fellowship and brotherhood among communities.

However, cognisance should be taken of the fact that *missio Dei*, as Gods' plan, cannot work in isolation, as has already been illustrated above on how God fulfils his mission on earth. That is why Van der Watt (2010:116) defines *mission* from a kingdom perspective as follows: "Kingdom is God's involvement with the whole creation, working towards comprehensive peace (*shalom*).” The church's mission is flowing forth from God and is partaking in the *missio Dei* in the realisation of shalom. Therefore, all the mission ministries of the church are facets of this *missio Dei* and are constantly driving the church to cross boundaries of *inter alia* geography, religion, culture, ideology, social class, language and race to bring forth shalom through fellowship (*koinonia*).

Crossing of boundaries led to the formulation of the definition of *mission*. The church's mission (*missiones ecclesiae*) flows from the realisation that mission is first and foremost God's mission (*missio Dei*) and that the church's calling to a holistic witness (*marturia*) should include the following dimensions: proclaiming of the Word (*kerugma*); acts/services of love (*diakonia*); the forming of a new community of love and unity (*koinonia*); the zeal for a just society (*dikaioisune*); teaching of the community (*didache*); and worship (*leitourgia*) (Hendriks 2004:34). This shows the relationship between the *missio Dei* and the church. Hence the church is called upon to participate in God's work through different ministries (functions/obligations). Its participation should include people with different culture, language, creed, sex and nationality. For the sake of this study, the focus will be on culture as an inherent characteristic of humankind for *missio Dei*, which promotes *koinonia*.

2.5 *Missio Dei* in culture

As stated above, crossing the boundaries is inclusive of culture and affirmed by De Neui (2007:95), who states that for the human element of creation, culture is the arena of the *missio Dei* and that it is within this cultural arena of mission that theology is given birth, context, meaning and life practice. Culture is, therefore, a human product that cannot be separated from humans. God is not ashamed to enter incarnationally into culture, fully and completely. The Latin root *cultura* originally indicated the ordered tilling of the soil. Today, the English word *culture* primarily refers to the orderedness of human existence. The

variations of orderedness that are produced by social groupings express something of the creativity of God, each in its own way. This is complemented by Childs (2010:4), who maintains that orderedness in a social setting is the same as that which is alluded to by Luther's doctrine of God's twofold reign and his teaching on vocation. According to Luther, the principle orders that God has providentially established are ministry, marriage and government. Within these orders are many forms of leadership and service, including parenthood, the economic order, and a host of government positions and functions.

Therefore, culture is not an isolated or independent force that compels people to act in certain socially-accepted fashions. It is people that compel one another to act, speak and influence each other's thought patterns. Cultures can neither bind people together nor alienate them from each other without human agents. This means that other aspects or sides of culture exist.

Two sides of culture are highlighted by De Neui (2007:96-97):

On one side, the myriad of diverse human cultures represents the vastness of the creative Triune God, desiring continually to express itself for God's praise and glory in our world and in the heavenly realms. One of the conspicuous components is *imago Dei* that is found in individuals, as well as cultural communities and their collective products. This can only be discovered through participation in the multitude of different perspectives, brought to it by the multitude of languages and cultures in the world. The other side of culture is that, just as human culture reflects the *imago Dei*, they also contain the imprint of the fallenness of humanity. Culture and worldview values behind them display "both the wisdom of God and the flaws of sin". These flaws are generated and expressed individually, corporately and globally. They can also be evidenced on external, visible, social, physical, material and even spiritual levels.

The above brings this author to the conclusion that the true, created purpose of humanity is situated in the original temptation of self-deification. Therefore, it was not because of the good in human culture (praising and glorification of God) or the redeemable remnant of *imago Dei* that is retained somewhere in human culture, that God desired to restore humanity. The starting point of the *missio Dei* is solely the initiation of God who, in spite of the sinful,

fallen condition of all the world's cultures, continued to love the entire created order and precisely at that point of rejection decided to do something about it and honour the covenantal blessing of *koinonia*, as stated in Genesis 15:7: "I will be your God and you will be my people." This leads to the discussion of *koinonia*, as embedded in *missio Dei*.

2.6 The Biblical historical developments of *koinonia* in *missio Dei*

2.6.1 Background

The Greek noun, *koinonia*, is generally translated as 'fellowship' (Greek-English Lexicon 2005:352). It describes the state of 'association' or 'joint participation'. *Koinonia* belongs to a family of words that are used in the New Testament to describe 'joint participation'. Other words in this family are the verb *koinoneo*, translated as 'to fellowship'; the noun *koinonos*, translated as 'one who fellowships'; the adjective *koinonikos*, translated as 'the willingness to fellowship'; and the adjective *koinos*, translated as 'common'.

If one is in *koinoneo* (fellowship), that person is in a personal relationship with God. The one who is in fellowship with God is thus in fellowship with all others who are truly in fellowship with God (1 John 1:3). 1 Corinthians 1:9 refers to this as "fellowship (*koinonia*) with his Son" and 2 Corinthians 13:14 refers to "the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit". Those in Christ are said to "participate (*koinoneo*) in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The early Christian community saw this as a relationship with the Holy Spirit. In this context, *koinonia* highlights a higher purpose or mission that benefits the greater good of the members as a whole. The term *enthusiasm* is connected to this meaning of *koinonia*, for it signifies "to be imbued with the Spirit of God in us" (Act 18:25).

In complementing the above definition, August (2005:26) states that the Greek word *koinonia* describes a close fellowship and sharing of life, frequently including the sharing of resources. The corresponding verb either means 'to participate' or 'to enable other to participate'. In profane language, the adjective *koinos* pertains to something that is held in common, in

contrast to that which belongs to the individual. Greek thinkers often used words from the *koinonia* word family in their discussions on whether and how far communal property should be the basis of the political, social and economic order, and in how far scope should be given to private property. The concept *koinonia* is found especially in the Pauline letters from whom the early church has also inherited the special meaning that is given to the word *koinonia* in the context of the Christian faith.

In support of August, Fitzgerald (2007), as well as Hirsch and Ford (2011:185), refers to the Pauline letter to the Philippians in which *koinonia* is described as an acknowledgement of gifts (Philippians 1:5). They further add that among the various terms in the *friendship* linkage group, the most important is *reconciliation*, for this is the theological basis for Paul's understanding of friendship, meaning 'the restoration of friendship'. When friendship is restored, *koinonia* relationships are evident.

The reconciliation stance which is part and particle of *koinonia* is explained by Flett (2009:14) as follows:

Because God is a missionary God, life in fellowship with him takes the objective form of active participation in reconciled and reconciling communities. The life of the community, as such, is not external to the message, but it exists in the act of reconciliation. Reconciliation is real as it takes place and, as it takes place, it reveals and declares itself to be true. That is, a community formed in the act of reconciliation exists in the movement of reconciliation toward those who live as enemies of God. Reconciliation generally and as such does not merely take place for itself in a special sphere closed off by the resistance and contradiction which it encounters. On the contrary, it takes place as it establishes Christian knowledge in the world and in and among the people who are reconciled in its occurrence.

Therefore, reconciliation is Trinitarian in value, because God lives in a reconciled community which has *koinonia*, incepted since creation, embedded in it.

2.6.2 Koinonia and creation

From the opening account of creation, the Trinitarian God portrays working towards being in a koinonial relationship with his created order, completing it with satisfaction and resting, content with the results (Genesis 1). From the great promise of God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, we know God to be totally, covenantally and eternally committed to the blessing of the nations through the agency of the people of Abraham (Wright 2006:63). He further states that, in the wake of Genesis 3-11, this is indeed Good News for humanity – such that Paul can describe his text as “the Gospel in advance” (Galatians 3:8). The source of his Gospel, or Good News, is that the same God who, within his original plan, sent not only his Son, but also the apostle Paul and his church.

Furthermore, every element of the missionary dimension stems from the original plan of God. For this reason, Paul can argue that he was not appointed “by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead” (Galatians 1:1). Thus the interconnectedness and interrelatedness between the Father and the Son as koinonia in the context of missional dimension shows *missio Dei*, being the greater story of Jesus Christ and God’s purpose with the world. The sending of Paul, therefore, is fundamentally interrelated to the plan of God, the sending of the Son and the Universal Godly Narrative (Kok 2010: 4-5).

The Bible presents itself to us fundamentally as narrative: a historical narrative at one level, but a grand metanarrative at another. It

- begins with the God of purpose and creation (creation);
- moves on to the conflict and problems that were generated by human rebellion against that purpose (fall);
- spends most of its narrative journey on the story of God’s redemptive purpose being worked out on the stage of human history (redemption); and
- finishes beyond the horizon of its own history with the eschatological hope of the new creation (future hope).

“Thus reading the whole Bible in the light of this great overarching perspective of the mission of God, then, is to read with the grain of the whole collection of texts that constitute our canon of Scripture” (Wright 2006:64). In Wright’s view, this is the key assumption of a missional hermeneutic of the Bible. It is nothing more than to accept that the biblical worldviews locates us in the midst of a narrative of the universe behind which stands the mission of the living God, which shows that mission is theocentric.

From this theocentric starting point – God with a mission – one can see humanity with a mission on the planet that had been purposely prepared for their arrival, namely the mandate to fill the earth, subdue it and rule over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:28). The care and keeping of creation is our human mission which was God’s instruction and purpose for mankind. Against the background of human sin and rebellion in Genesis 3-11, we then encounter Israel with their mission, beginning with the call of Abraham in Genesis 12. Israel came into existence as a people with a mission that was entrusted to them by God for the sake of God’s wider purpose of blessing the nations. Israel’s election was not the rejection of other nations, but it was explicitly for the sake of all nations. The blessing to other nations was, therefore, koinonial, with God in a koinonial relationship with the whole world.

2.6.3 Koinonia and the Old Testament

From the above, it shows that koinonia was initiated by God, as stated in the creation narratives of the Old Testament. However, cognisance should be taken of the fact that God did not need to create the universe; because God is love and his love is towards something or someone else, He created the world and people as an expression of his love. Since He created us, we are more valuable before his eyes than animals (Ps 8:5-6); that is why He placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, in order for him to have a personal relationship with them (Genesis 2:15). To God, koinonia was thus profound and primary in creation. That is why Genesis 3:8 mentions that God used to visit the garden (not them visiting God), as He desired to have fellowship with Adam and Eve. However, because they sinned, they were afraid and ashamed of God, and that ushered in the era of the fall of man (Genesis 3).

Nevertheless, even after the fall, God, because of his love and desirous aim for relationship with his creation, entered into many covenantal relationships with his creation, for example with Noah after the flood and ultimately with his chosen nation Israel. This fellowship and oneness was koinonial as *missio Dei* and was Trinitarian based. To maintain this koinonial relationship, God entered into a covenantal relationship with humankind through his chosen nation Israel.

With Israel, the Bible embarks on the longest part of its journey and the great themes of election, redemption, covenant, worship, ethics and eschatology all await missiological reflection. In the midst of this nation, saturated with Scripture, sustained by memory and hope, waiting for God, Jesus entered; He did not just arrive, but was sent as a servant. The mission of the Servant was both to restore Israel to YHWH (Wright 2006:71-72) and to be the agent of God's salvation, reaching to the ends of the earth (Isaiah 46:9). Jesus was on earth to do his Father's will; God's mission determined his mission. In the obedience of Jesus, even to death, the mission of God reached its climax in his resurrection. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19) and He finally revealed to us that we are the church with a mission (Col 1:24-25) (Wright 2006:66).

For God's mission to be known and executed, it was necessary that there should be an agent to carry out that responsibility; Israel as a nation was chosen to undertake that function. Thus the living God made himself known to Israel. God was known in Israel by his grace that they experienced through the Exodus, which has been described in the Hebrew Scriptures as the great defining demonstration of YHWH's power, love, faithfulness and liberating intervention on behalf of his people. It was, therefore, a major act of self-revelation by God and also a massive learning experience for Israel (Wright 2006:75).

Notwithstanding the fact that Israel was a chosen nation, they were not holy; therefore, God punished them when they sinned. However, the punishment did not take away his fellowship relationship with them, but enhanced God's redemptive salvational plan. That is why God used them in exile as executioners of his mission of koinonia, hence Wright (2006:99) refers to them as being a blessing for their captors, praying for them so that God could bless the

captors, thereby bringing them into koinonia with him. To complement this narrative, Jesus advises us in Matthew 5:44 to pray and love our enemies, because by doing that, we will be showing that Jesus is Lord of our life. We will be expressing fellowship by fighting evil with good, and showing love and peace to all as an expression of koinonia. That is why the Old Testament is characterised by covenantal arrangements between God and Israel, manifested as blessings to the nation.

2.6.3.1 Koinonia and covenants

Heyns (1978:6-7) mentions that the covenantal agreement, as described by Kruger (2007:564), highlights God's revelation as a fellowship-seeking revelation. God never reveals himself simply for the purpose of factual knowledge, but in order to be known by man. Essentially, it was to draw us into a relationship with him; even more, into a union with him in whom we can delight, in the richness of his love, grace and goodness (Berkhof 2005:126). This is also a perspective of Article 2 of the Belgic Confession which states that God reveals himself more fully in Scripture for the salvation of his own, meaning for those who belong to him, who live in fellowship with him and who therefore have been given life in him.

Furthermore, the covenant is God's initiative in fellowship-seeking revelation to mankind, and as such it is a continuation and reaffirmation of his intentions with his creation. Man was created for fellowship with God; as such, this is an establishment of fellowship (Kruger 2007:566). The covenant was based on commands of obedience and the promise of blessing for obedience was not automatically inclusive of all creatures, but exclusively for human beings. This is due to the fact that only man can have koinonia with God, due to *imago Dei*. Grudem (2010:517) explains this relationship as an expression of fatherly love for the man and woman whom he created. It was fundamentally rooted in God's unconditional love for and koinonia with his creation; the relationship did not end with the Old Testament and covenants, but proceeded into the New Testament.

2.6.4 Koinonia and the New Testament

Koinonia, as part of *missio Dei*, continued throughout the Old Testament to the New Testament, because the Triune God is Creator and Ruler of the universe and of everything in it (Revelation 4:11). He is the Lord of the time in which history is enacted and the Lord of all powers which operate in the making of history. As Creator and Ruler of the universe, He is also Lord of the covenant of grace by which, through Christ the Lamb of God, He gathers to himself all people from all nations (Revelation 5:9). In this way, He lets his kingdom come.

In complementing the above, Kruger (2007:565) maintains that God's love for the world and the sending of his only begotten Son demonstrate God's vulnerability in seeking out lost mankind. This is most graphically illustrated in the Person of Jesus Christ, of whom Article 10 of the Belgic Confession reflects that He is the exact image of the Father, the true eternal God, the Almighty whom we invoke, worship and serve. God himself is so serious that He was willing to make himself nothing and take the nature of a servant, "being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7). Jesus demonstrated his defenceless vulnerability especially in the ridicule and rejection. Ultimately, in his willingness to die a cursed death on the cross, He was mocked by the people of Jerusalem and the Romans. The incarnation of the Son of God demonstrates to us God's caring for and saving solidarity with us. It becomes, therefore, the highest revelation of his love for us, as illustrated in Article 26 of the Belgic Confession, and perhaps one of the greatest cornerstones of mission. Besides incarnation, Jesus, as a sign of love and koinonia, atoned for us through the death on the cross.

2.6.5 Koinonia and atonement

To overcome our separation from God, we needed someone to provide reconciliation and thereby bring us back into fellowship with God (Grudem 2010:580). Paul says that God "reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). In dying on the cross, Jesus showed fellowship and love; according to Marsden (2007:222), atonement was a sign of love in Abelardian fashion – the act of sacrifice enters into the very fibre of love and

makes the love deeper and stronger. Therefore, transcendence and immanence are held together and that divine transcendence is most supremely revealed in the Saviour, who "reigns from the tree," that is, the cross.

God eternal is what we see in Christ; but temporally, the Incarnation, the taking of Godship into manhood, was a real enrichment of the human life. God loved before, but love (at least as we know it) became fully real only in this activity of sacrifice.

The above brings the author to the conclusion that the cross brought people of different races together, and made them spiritual brothers and sisters who share in a koinonial relationship of God as their Father and extend love and fellowship to all. That is why the Holy Spirit was sent as an Advocate, so that the mission of the God of koinonia should continue (John 14:25).

2.6.6 Koinonia and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit will build Christ's church on earth and empower it and its ministries to pass on the knowledge of Good News that was acquired from the Master (Jesus Christ). In this church, Christians will experience love and share it with the world. They will also be in a fellowship relationship with one another, because the Spirit will lead them into all truth (John 14:17).

The Holy Spirit, as both Mediator and Comforter or Advocate (John 14:15), will be on our side and will not leave us; He will live with us and in us; and He will remind us of Jesus' words. Therefore, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is to have Jesus himself, which means being in koinonia, and that brings glory to Jesus Christ. Because we will be empowered by the Spirit, people will hear Christ's words and understand the Spirit's power through us. Thus lasting deep peace (shalom) will prevail, unlike the worldly peace which is characterised by conflicts (John 14:25-27). His death demonstrated that God's anger with and judgment on the human race was particularly serious and righteous. However, the fact that Jesus became the Mediator between God and humans, and became the reconciler of sin, demonstrated the wondrous divine love and sovereign free grace of God for his people (Haak 2009:46).

Firstly, humanity's relationship with God restores all broken relationships through reconciliation. When relationship is restored, God sets the pattern of true love through the sacrifice of his Son, who died so that we could be saved and brought into koinonia with God. This is the basis for all love relationships (John 3:16), but it is not an escape of eternal punishment. The communion and unity with God is without fear and is manifested in the worship and adoration of God, in the midst of his people, assembled together at the Lord's Supper in koinonia.

Secondly, this divine reconciliation affects relationships among humans. The new believer will live in koinonia with other believers, which will bring peace and unity to Christ's church on earth. It is their joyful obligation to care for one another as they journey toward the full manifestation of the kingdom of God at the end of time. Mutual relationships among Christians have their own features and specific strengths, and conversion provides one with a new attitude toward fellow humans. The believers love both God and neighbour, because their lives have been transformed. Even though transformation on this earth is temporary (due to our sinful nature), it is the foretaste of a redeemed world where humans will love, adore and glorify God, and enjoy him in koinonia forever (Haak 2009:47).

Thirdly, besides loving and adoring, Christians should share when they are in koinonia – implying that they should uphold one another's responsibilities and the church, as a bond of koinonia, will unite them (Vandervelde 2005:122). The bonds of koinonia imply that believers and non-believers, as equals, will protect each other's civil rights such as freedom of speech, press and assembly. Furthermore, it implies that they will respect the integrity and history of each other. Through equality and respect, tensions will be reduced when Christians communicate with one another and seek to witness together, rather than to compete with one another.

The author agrees with Vandervelde and Haak; when we support each other and pray for one another as we accept gratefully whatever unity has been given to us, God will bring forth even greater unity. One cannot create koinonia, it is a gift from God that has been offered to

us through Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. God gives one the grace to love another person; no one can claim that, because man is sinful by nature.

Therefore, we grow in *koinonia* when we support one another and acknowledge one another's freedom. This was supplemented by Webber (1960:52), who asserted that the church comprises people meeting for worship and considering their faith. In this instance, this type of *koinonia* implies fellowship of men and women of all sorts and conditions who are united by one fact, namely that Jesus Christ is their Lord. It is our vertical relationship with Christ which makes our horizontal relationship with every fellow Christian possible and inescapable. When the nation accepts Christ as Lord, one united family who can pray for each other is established.

2.6.7 Koinonia and the Trinity

Due to the Trinitarian nature of *missio Dei*, as highlighted by Engelsviken (2003) and Bosch (2007 revised), the doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for Christianity. This doctrine is concerned with who God is, his nature, how He works and how He is to be approached in worship. The eternal Trinity implies that there are three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who have a harmonial relationship, illustrating a *koinonial* fellowship which must be evident in the church as an agent of *koinonia*.

As such, the church is Trinitarian based. To demonstrate this relationship, Grudem (2010:232) uses the analogy in John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." To bring forth a clearer understanding of the inclusiveness of all three Persons of the Trinity, Grudem (2010:237) refers to the Trinitarian expression in Matthew 28:19 ("baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"), which shows that all Persons of the Trinity are equal and in a *koinonial* relationship.

Heim (2005:193) states that each of the three Persons within the Trinitarian koinonial relationship encounters the others in freedom, in their own unique character. The relations are asymmetrical, because each has its own identity and is no copy of another. In human beings, we see a faint likeness to this in the dimension of direct personal encounter in which we share ideas, intentions and emotions. We meet as distinctive persons, honouring and enacting our identities in exchange. We do this face to face, or through a medium such as writing or art.

The author, therefore, maintains that the divine Persons do not only share one divine life process: they do not only encounter each other's uniqueness, but also enter into communion with each other, indwelling each other as different persons. The Incarnation is a window into this Trinitarian communion and the path that opens our way to participate in it. We know some shadow of this in our human relations, when empathy and intimacy with someone gives rise to a vicarious capacity to share his or her inner life. Their characteristic responses and feelings begin to arise in us also, as a kind of second nature in us. These arise in us, not instead of our own reactions, but alongside them, complementing and, in some cases, transforming them. Relations of deep love or friendship are marked by this dynamic stance, but it is manifested above all in our incorporation into Christ by faith through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In support of this opinion, the author draws from Daugherty (2007:165), who maintains that theological foundations are important, but if theology stops at the first point of the doctrine of the Trinity, it has stopped short of God's point. That point is the goal of the mission of God himself. The purpose of the incarnation was not to reveal that 'God is relational', that 'God becomes' or that 'God is temporal in himself'. As valid as such extrapolations may be, God does not just want humans to know that he is relational, he wants to have relationships with them. Consequently, the theological insight that God has a mission is not just a datum to be pondered; it is a call, first to enter into koinonia with God and then to join God's mission to bring others into relationship with him.

Hence, in the New Testament, God's will is known to the nations through Jesus Christ: knowing Jesus, the nations will know the living God. Jesus fulfils the mission of the God of

Israel whose declared mission was to make himself known to the nations through Israel and now wills to be known to the nations through the Messiah, the one who embodies Israel in his own person and fulfils the mission of Israel to the nations. That is why Jesus died on the cross, so that all nations should be saved, thereby extending the mission of God to all.

Consequently, the cross and resurrection of Jesus brings us to the central point in the redemptive plan's line in history. The cross is central to every dimension of the mission of God's people: from personal evangelism among individual friends to ecological care of creation and everything in between. Just as the Exodus redemption led to the creation of the covenant people of the Old Testament Israel, so the Easter redemption (the cross) led to the eschatological gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the birth of the church, meaning that God has a mission for the church in the world (Wright 2010:24) until his second coming and establishing of a new creation.

2.6.8 Koinonia and the new creation

According to Wright (2010:43-44), the eschatological act is the return of Christ, which will not only bring to its finale that section of the Bible story line that we have called *redemption* in history, but it will also inaugurate the ultimate fulfilment of the whole point of the story, namely the redemption and renewal of God's whole creation. The Bible includes in this climactic part of its story line, of course, the reality of judgement. The day of judgement is something that the Bible warns about, from Amos's thunderous deprecation of Israel's shallow optimism about "the day of the Lord" in the Old Testament, to the warnings of Jesus, Peter and Paul about the judgement seat of God and the terrifying visions of Revelation in the New Testament.

Wright (2010) adds that the reality of judgement is at one level part of the Gospel, for it is Good News that evil will not have the last word, but will ultimately be destroyed by God; at another level, it is the bad news about the wrath of God that makes the Gospel such eternal Good News for our fallen world. However, the Bible does not end with the day of judgement:

beyond the purging fire of judgement and the destruction of all that is evil and opposed to God's purpose, there are the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness and peace will dwell, because God himself will dwell there in holy koinonia with his redeemed people from every nation.

From the above, the author comes to the conclusion that, despite the iniquities of their forefathers, God never abandoned his mission for his children. His plan of salvation and redemption was paramount in promoting koinonia within his creation, thereby creating missional communities who live in shalom with each other. This is the reason why God initiated church ministries (*missio ecclesiae*) that will extend inclusive missionary functions to all the nations and not only Israel.

While the ultimate koinonia will be dealt with later, deeds will now be discussed. The cornerstones of mission are expressed scripturally, just as koinonia had proceeded from the Old to the New Testament as *missio Dei*. For the sake of this study, the focus will be on koinonial scriptural perspective by focusing on the following points of reference:

2.6.9 Koinonia as the washing of feet (humility and service) (John 13:1-20)

There are three texts in the New Testament that refer to the washing of feet: Luke 7:36-50 (a sinful woman anointing the feet of Jesus); John 13:1-17 (Jesus washing the feet of the disciples); and 1 Timothy 5:10 (widows washing the feet of the saints). What is paramount in all these periscopes is the demonstration of love and koinonia.

According to the belief and practice of the Church of the Brethren (2006), feet-washing is the showing of love and koinonia which is expressed in agape (unconditional love) and the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion). This entire service is usually called *love feast*. These love feasts are always held in the evening (in conformity to the time of the last supper of Jesus). It further states that feet-washing is also accompanied with the *holy kiss*. As soon as one has

finished washing and wiping the feet of another, he takes him by the hand and greets him with the holy kiss, usually with an appropriate benediction such as “God bless you” or “May the Lord bless us.” This means that there is an exchange of love and fellowship blessings among them.

Due to the above, the author comes to the conclusion that feet-washing, besides showing love and *koinonia*, also symbolises humility and service as Jesus Christ expressed it to his disciples by doing a menial task which was meant for a slave, according to Jewish custom. Jesus Christ thus became a ‘slave’ to show humility and service. To wash the feet of another symbolises these virtues in the same way that the Eucharist symbolises other Christian virtues.

These views are complemented by Friedvell (2008:31), who refers to the washing of feet as a sign of obligation that one expresses: “I will also die for you.” That is why he states the following: “I would argue for more frequent reception of this, understanding that Jesus’ expression, ‘This is my body’, can bring together a group of worshipers, many of whom long for this reassurance, this strengthening for the weak, this ingesting of the physical elements uniting believers, a worldwide people marked by those who sacrifice for the entire body.”

Friedvell was supplemented by Schneiders (1990:86), who described feet-washing as a service which is generally understood quite univocally as something which one person does for someone else, thereby intending the latter’s good. In service, the server lays aside, temporarily or even permanently, his/her own project, goal, good or at least convenience for the sake of fostering the good of the other. The finality of the served is allowed, at least for the moment, to take priority over the finality of the server. In its most extreme form, therefore, it would consist in the server’s laying down his or her life for the sake of the served. Jesus Christ is the example and feet-washing is the act of sharing with each other, because Jesus said to Peter: “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” (John 13:8.)

2.6.10 Koinonia and Holy Communion/Eucharist/Sacrament (John 13:21-30)

In the Christian Jewish tradition, the washing of feet was done before partaking in the Eucharist as a sign that those who partake are in fellowship with one another. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion with one another in the one body of Christ. This was the full meaning of Eucharistic koinonia in the early church. Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote the following: "The Eucharist is the sacrament of the unity of the church, which results from the fact that many are one in Christ."

That is the reason for Okonkwo (2010:95) to maintain that Eucharistic koinonia involves a spiritual communion; it transcends and includes communion in the product of the earth. As such, koinonia, properly understood, "indicates not only a unity of hearts engendered by faith in the same Lord, but also the active manifestation of this unity on concrete exercise of sharing material goods." Hence it suggests an "association, common relation among people, community participation, contribution, collection and generosity", as well as forgiveness of one another in a reconciliatory manner.

When reconciliation and love are practiced among believers, they are hence brought into one big family in which each member is expected to live his or her life in reference to the other, in unity of heart and spirit (Acts 1:14; 2:46). The Eucharist is therefore not just God oriented, but also human oriented. It is, therefore, required that "the Christian who takes part in the Eucharist learns to become a *promotor of communion, peace and solidarity* in every situation" (Steely 1986:92); embedded in this communion is loving each other and being in God.

2.6.11 Koinonia, loving each other and being in God (John 13:34-35 and John 15:1-17)

In these two pericopes, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment: "Love one other. As I have loved you, so you must love one other." This was not a new commandment, because Leviticus 19:18 states: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but

love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.” Therefore, a clear instruction has existed since Old Testament times, meaning that by carrying Jesus’ command, we find ourselves following all of God’s other laws as well. However, to love others as much as Christ loved them was revolutionary. We are to love others, based on Jesus’ sacrificial love for us (“as I have loved you”). Such love will not only bring unbelievers to Christ, it will also keep believers strong and united in the world that is hostile to God.

An ideal Christian society is, therefore, one in which a similar relation exists between all men, without limit or distinction. According to Geisler (2010:39), the *agape* type of love (unconditional Christian sacrificial love) is manifested thereby. The Christian feast is a token of fellowship. *Love* is the word in the New Testament that generally denotes this ideally: “Love your neighbour as yourself” is the whole law of conduct between man and man (Mathew 22:39; Matthew 22:40), as well as neighbour, inclusive of every man within one's reach (Luke10:29), even enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:35). Without the love of man, the love for God is impossible, but “whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16, 1 John 4:20). This practice is referred to as *brotherly love*, because all people are brothers/sisters in Christ.

Brotherhood/sisterhood emanates from fellowship or attachment to Jesus; Dillow (1990:50) describes this relationship and refers to an analogy of branches abiding in a vine. That depicts a relationship that matures and grows by being in Christ, meaning that Christians are sustained in Christ, because remaining in close relationship with him results in *koinonia*, rather than an organic union. A branch "in me" is not a branch that is organically connected to him as a literal branch is organically connected to a vine. Instead, it is a branch that is deriving its sustenance from Christ, living in fellowship with him (as a literal branch derives sustenance from a literal vine) and thus bearing fruit. This is demonstrated by the fact that "in me" means "in fellowship with me" (John 15).

Accordingly, the interconnectedness with Christ causes us to be in fellowship with our God who so much loves us; to remain in him, a Christian must keep Christ's commandments. Only if believers love one another does the love of God remain in them (1 John 4:12). For the love

of God to remain in them, it must have been in them to begin with. As elsewhere in John's writings, *remain* never signifies the initial event of saving faith in Christ, but the enduring relationship of walking in fellowship with him (1 John 3). The word *remain* implies staying in a position that has already been obtained, not entering for the first time. When in fellowship with Christ, there is no servant/master relationship – all are equal as brothers and sisters.

Equality as a token of love and fellowship to all (as described by Christ) is supported by Fitzgerald (2007:286); he articulates that love has no boundary, no master and servant, but equality to all. For John, friendship is ultimately grounded in love. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you" (John 15:9). The disciples did not choose Jesus to be their friend, for the choice was his and his alone. He did not honour the disciples with friendship because of their demonstrated fidelity; it was an act of grace that was bestowed on them as his fallible followers. His revelation to them created their friendship with him and thus with one another. That revelation simultaneously liberated them from slavery and elevated them to the status of being Jesus' friends – because they were freed, they could live in fellowship with one another.

Noteworthy in this discourse on the true vine is the reiteration of the commandment to love one another. At the commencement of the farewell address, Jesus enjoined the disciples to practise brotherly love as a source of consolation under bereavement; here He enjoins it once again as a condition of fruitfulness. Though He does not say it in so many words, He evidently wants the disciples to understand that abiding in each other by loving each other is just as necessary for their success as their common abiding in him by faith. Division, party strife and jealousy will be simply fatal for their influence and the cause they represent. They must be koinonial friends, so that they will even be willing to die for each other (Dillow 1990:51); because of their fellowship, they will know him and be known by him (John 14).

2.6.12 Koinonia as knowing and be known by God (John 14:1-12)

When we know God and are known by him, we are in a unified relationship. This means that we will also know that Jesus is the way to the Father and by uniting our lives with his, we

will be united with God. If the world chooses to accept his word, the way to the Father is wide enough for all. The way to the Father implies that Jesus is the reality of all God's promises; God is, therefore, immanent and transcendent in our lives through koinonia. He revealed himself to us through Christ. That is why Jesus says: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well." (John 14:6-7.) When we know both the Father and the Son, we are in a koinonial relationship with them. The Holy Spirit will then empower us to carry the Good News of God's kingdom into the whole world, bringing blessings to all. Prayer will keep believers safe from evil, set them apart and make them pure and holy, uniting them through his truth.

2.6.13 Koinonia and prayer (John 17)

The prayer that was uttered by Jesus at the close of his farewell address to his disciples and which is of unparalleled sublimity regarding its contents and circumstances during which it was prayed, was for the instruction of the eleven men present. It was also a prayer that urged union among the disciples and instructed them to love one another; therefore, it was a prayer that was meant to bring them closer to God in one relation. That is why Dunnivant (1991:164) states that it is a call to the unity of Christians that is visible to the WORLD. The unity of Christians is meant as a sign to the world that God loves the world. Christian unity would mean that "the world may not only HEAR that Jesus is the Christ [...] but they may SEE" that Christ has the power "to bring about the kind of community that the world needs." Hence Christians who are in koinonia glorify God.

This the reason why Black (1988:154) sees the theme of John 17 as the prayer that established unity and that is the basis upon which the disciples can maintain a convincing testimony before the world of the revelation of God's character, as manifested in the Son. It is the indispensable testimony of the divine mission of Jesus and the essential basis of intimate knowledge and personal communion between God and man. The topic of unity is clearly a theme of great importance and one that lay close to Jesus' heart as he prepared to leave his disciples.

The above were derived from Bruce (1871, chapter 26) who states that in this critical time of searching for the identity of the Christian church, disciples of Christ might be greatly enriched by becoming more consciously rooted in the image of “people of the Prayer”, which is an identity that disciples may joyfully share with the whole world of believers. It is not parochial or inward looking, but rooted in God, related to the apostles and the whole historic community of God's people, and it points to that great vocation of unity as God's gift and God's sign to the whole world.

The author thus maintains that this prayer embraces two particulars: The first one is that the disciples may be kept in the name of the Father, which Jesus has manifested to them, so that they may continue to believe what He taught them of God and become his instruments in diffusing the knowledge of the true God and true religion throughout the earth. The second one is that they may be one, in other words that they may continue to love each other as well as being one in the faith of God, separate from the world, but not divided among themselves. These two things, truth and love, Jesus asks for his own: truth as the badge of distinction between his church and the world, and love as the bond which unites believers of the truth into a holy brotherhood of witness-bearers of the truth. This unity was consummated on the cross as Jesus died for man to bring about *koinonia* among nations. However, it is paramount that when one comes into a *koinonial* relationship with God, one must have a signage that affirms his/her membership through baptism.

2.6.14 Koinonia and baptism

Baptism, according to Kerr (1989:157), is the sign of the initiation by which we are received into the society of the church, in order that, engrafted in Christ, we may be reckoned to be in *koinonia* with God. Therefore, we become one with Christ through baptism; then we can enjoy the fruits of atonement through the Sonship of Christ (Rom 6). According to Grude (2009:72), this means that baptism is an ordination to apostolic vocation. This vocation is an essential dimension of Christian salvation, the witness to what God has done in justifying and sanctifying his people. The vocation continues in the world as all members, bearing flames of the Spirit, are sent into the mission field as light, leaven and salt, to be Christ's apostolic community at work.

Calvin (2009:861) affirms this by maintaining that, through faith, baptism assures believers that they are not only engrafted into the death and life of Jesus Christ, but also united to Christ himself to be partakers of all his blessings, for He consecrated and sanctified baptism by his own body so that He might have it in common with believers as the firmest bond of union and fellowship which He designed to form with them. Thus Paul proves to the believers that they are the sons of God from the fact that they have clothed themselves with Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27).

Healy (2004:280) supports Calvin when he affirms that human beings are not real people until they have joined the communion of the church through baptism. Outside the church, they can only be "individuals". There they are tragically limited by their "hypostasis of biological existence", which means that they exist by necessity rather than in freedom, separate from others, unable to overcome the kind of exclusivity in which "the family has priority in love over stranger". Entering into the church liberates them from such "individualism and egocentricity" by transforming them into authentic persons, beings-in-relation.

To bring new members into a relationship with the Trinitarian God, baptism of new members is conducted in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as mandated in Matthew 28:19b of the Great Commission, to bring them in koinonia with the Triune God. The Triune God utterance, as mentioned in Matthew 28:19b, is supported by Bouteneff (2000:74), who maintains that baptism which is performed with water and with the invocation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (thus named) is understood as an entry into life in Christ.

The author's contention is that when one is baptised, he/she is welcomed into the family of the kingdom of God. Circumcision has been replaced by baptism; the former served as a sign or token of being in God's domain, while the latter serves as the cleansing of sin and the rebirth of a new person in Christ. Therefore, baptism serves as a fellowship union with God and worshipping of him as embedded in koinonia.

2.6.15 Koinonia and worship

When one is in a relationship with the Triune God through baptism, one is expected to worship God in a koinonial manner (Nel 1981); it is in the worship service that the meeting of the reconciled with their Father reaches a peak. The congregation comes together in the name of Christ and in the presence of the Lord. Obviously, the believers also experience the presence of the Lord individually, but in the worship service, those who are present experience the presence of the Lord together. It is this togetherness that makes this service unique in the sense that it is a corporate experience of God's presence. In a worship service, intercessory prayers are used to show love and care for each other.

Therefore, the author maintains that it is through intercessory prayers that fellowship is extended to all, irrespective of their creed, culture, language or gender, because those prayers embrace everybody. Accordingly, to be a Christian is a family affair. Believers belong to God through koinonial relationship which is embedded in baptism, prayers and liturgy. The essence of the worship service is koinonia. When people come to Jesus as their Saviour, they experience koinonia and have a fellowship relationship with him. That is why liturgical traditions are observed in a worship service.

Liturgy that is practised in a worship service promotes koinonia when the members of the congregation sing **together**, submit to the law **together**, confess their sins **together**, hear the absolution **together**, confess their faith **together**, worship, praise, pray and thank God **together**, give themselves to God and **one another** in the offering, are called **together** in the call to worship and, lastly, are sent out in the world in benediction **together**. These togetherness moments are powerful and enhance our koinonia with the living God.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the second step of the research objectives, focusing on the features of Christian koinonia as part of *missio Dei* and its scriptural development. It has also

analysed the relevant theological literature and discursive engagements of literary materials that are available on koinonia to assist the study of a contemporary Christian perspective on koinonia in *missio Dei*.

Partaking in sacraments assures the author that all earthly and heavenly blessings, especially the invitation to the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, at which places have been reserved for all believers in fellowship with Christ, are imperative. Therefore, all believers will be made perfect and complete in eternity and will be in the very presence of God. They will no longer need the spiritual gifts, so these will come to an end. Believers will have a full understanding and appreciation of one another as unique expressions of God's infinite creativity and will use their differences as a reason to praise God. Let believers then treat each other as brother and sisters, based on that perspective, despite the differences in *inter alia* their culture, race, language and colour.

Furthermore, the kind of church that Jesus is building, is a community in which true koinonia (fellowship) takes place in such a way that people are healed emotionally, spiritually and physically. In the reality of honest and open relationships that are based on the common sharing of the Christ-life, people know that they belong and are accepted despite their faults, ethnicity, background or social status. In this process, a powerful testimony of the Incarnation is created; in other words, Jesus is fleshed out and becomes a reality to the entire world.

CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONALISM, UBUNTU AND COMMUNALISM

3.1 Introduction

In chapter one, the author has expounded on the historical background of the reason why the inculturation of African philosophy did not materialise. In chapter two, God's plan (*mission Dei*) for his creation in a koinonial mission has been outlined. In this chapter, the focus will be on expounding traditionalism, ubuntu, communalism and their attributes. To attain this, objective usage of comparative scholarly literature will be utilised.

3.2 Traditionalism

3.2.1 Background

According to Nürnberger (2003:500) and Turaki (1999), the core assumption of traditionalism was that the clan survived and flourished through the flow of a life-force along the male lineage, from the ancestors through the living members of the clan to the not-yet-born. This flow had to be enhanced and protected from the encroachments of detrimental, life-destroying forces through appropriate rituals that were conducted by authorised representatives of the community. Detrimental forces were set in motion by the clandestine actions of sorcerers who acted in their own interest, against the interest of the society.

This core assumption was bound up by a hierarchical structure of extended families, clans and tribes. In this system, each person had his/her place, status and role. Nobody was excluded or autonomous. Transgressions of the spheres of competence were not tolerated and personal initiatives were viewed with suspicion. Everybody was subject to the authority of some others in the hierarchy. Even the leaders had their superiors in the common ancestry.

3.2.2 Understanding of traditionalism

Nürnberg (2007:9) describes traditionalism as a 'primal' sort of religion which is found across the globe, whether in history or today. The term *primal religion* refers to a kind of religion that has evolved in prehistoric times and has maintained its basic characteristics in defiance of everything new, such as offerings brought by colonisers and missionaries of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, modernity and Marxism. It is normally characterised by a view of reality that is constituted by dynamistic (alternately animistic) powers, dependency on the ancestors and a rather inaccessible Supreme Being (Nürnberg 2007:16). It seems to be the most basic kind of religion and has left its traces in all other religions: the fear of uncanny forces, dependence on parental authority, and awe of the inaccessible and incomprehensible dimensions of reality. Traditionalism does not distinguish between religion, worldview and culture; they are all part of one package.

3.3 Attributes of traditionalism

3.3.1 Traditionalism and the Supreme Being

The concept of *Supreme Being* is of critical importance in traditionalism, because there existed a vague notion that ancestors were closer to the Supreme Being, hence they had greater power and authority (Turaki 1999:120; Nürnberg 2003:500). The authors add that existentially, the Supreme Being, though mythologically personified, was rarely experienced as a person. He did not speak, reveal his will, punish evil doers, accept prayers or demand sacrifice. There was no living interaction between the Supreme Being and the human community (Jarvis 2009:23). He represented the ever present, incomprehensible conglomeration of dynamistic forces that impacted on one's life, day in and day out, and to whose positive and negative impact one could only succumb.

The above is supported by Tutu (1972:19), Setiloane (2000), and Michael and Cook (2009), who maintain that most Africans have believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, variously called *Molimo*, *Mdali*, *Qamata* and *Mwelinzani*, depending on the African language

that was used. He is all powerful and the creator of all there is; he is utterly other than his creation, in other words he is transcendent; and he is not to be approached lightly by man, for he will fill man with numinous awe.

Because there is no interaction between the Supreme Being and human community, he is not accessible in the communicative sense of the word at all. This is not because he is evil, but because he is too great. In the majority of cases, communication is not deemed possible, not even desirable, because his 'weight' is too mysterious and massive to be amendable for human understanding and manipulation (Nürnberg 2007:3).

To substantiate this, Nürnberg (2007) mentions that in most African Bantu religions, the Supreme Being has no shrines, no priesthood, no code of law, does not speak, does not hear, makes no demands, accepts no sacrifices, does not respond to appeals, may 'not speak our language', 'does not understand our problems' and can thus hardly be understood as a person in the communicative sense of the word, although there are a few significant exceptions. His presence and weight can be felt, specifically in any unexpected, unaccountable and unimaginable occurrence, for example in drought, disease, mishap and death. This far-way Supreme Being has an impact on how Africans understand time and history.

3.3.2 Traditionalism and time

According to Jongeneel (2009:46) and Mbiti (1971), traditional Africans view time as more oriented towards the past than the future. The final purpose of their life is connected with "the roots of their existence, such as the origin of the world, the creation of man, the formation of their customs and traditions, and the coming into being of their whole structure of society". In supporting Jongeneel, Mbiti refers to dealing with the Yoruba-speaking people in West Africa, who refer to the celestial/cosmic cycle and time (connected with the sun, moon and stars) and the terrestrial/ecological cycle and time (connected with the seasons). The endless rhythms of natural phenomena such as day and night, and the waning and waxing moon, repeating themselves continuously, dominate the life of the human community. That is why Africans actually believe in a limited future, "stretching to about six months and in any case

not beyond two years from NOW". This time limitation has affected the social sphere of traditionalism, because time is used by the privileges that are enjoyed through seniority and hierarchies.

3.3.3 Traditionalism and social hierarchies

In traditional African society, social hierarchies are common (Taylor 2001:840). This is supported by Nolte-Schamm (2006:378), who maintains that a person's social status is determined by his/her class, rank, age and sex. These categories are socially constructed. They can be exclusive and, if applied rigorously, ruthless, for example persons belonging to a certain (low) class may never be afforded the same kind of respect and dignity by others as persons belonging to a higher class – something which may cause jealousy, resentment and even hate. If a person of seniority abuses his/her power, persons of younger age are expected to accept this without resistance. This is equally the same when the so-called 'royalty' abuses 'non-royalty' and the latter must obey without questioning. The norm is also applicable to women; they are seen as objects, not human beings, because of their female sex which is deemed to be inferior. They are, therefore, not normally part of the ancestors.

3.3.4 Traditionalism and women

Due to the patriarchal nature of the traditional society (as mentioned above), African women are sometimes denied ordination on account of gender consideration. At other times, they are denied promotions (Gathogo 2008:49). To complement that, Musimbi Kanyoro (2001:159), president and CEO of the Global Fund for Women, observes the conditions of African women by saying that;

African women are custodians of cultural practices. For generations, African women have guarded prescriptions that are strictly governed by fear of breaking taboos. Many aspects that diminish women continue to be practised to various degrees, often making women objects of cultural preservation. Harmful traditional practices are passed on as 'cultural values' and are, therefore, not to be discussed, challenged or changed. In the guise of culture, harmful practices and traditions are perpetuated. Practices such as female genital mutilation, early

betrothals and marriages, and stigmatisation of single women and widows, [polygamy, domestic violence] hinder the liberation of women.

To supplement the abuse of women as illustrated above, Nürnberger (2003:515) maintains that the patriarchal system has rendered women voiceless in regard to sexual matters. They are considered to be child bearers, acquired by the clan in exchange for an appropriate number of livestock. They have no right to choose their partners, refuse sexual intercourse or insist on condoms. In many cultures, women cannot inherit from their husband. Widows are blamed for the death of their husbands and marginalised by their families. In other cultures, women dry and roughen their vaginas with herbs to enhance the pleasure of their male partners, whether this makes intercourse painful for them or not.

To add to their sexual problems, African women are victims of domestic and institutional violence. They furthermore are not allowed to participate in important decision-making processes that affect them and are therefore misrepresented sometimes. Women are also marginalised by the core assumption of traditionalism that the clan survives and flourishes through the flow of a life-force along the male lineage, from the ancestors through the living members of the clan to the not-yet-born (Nürnberger 2003:500). Due to this, women cannot be classified as ancestors in most cases. African feminists decry the inherent sexism that is found in certain aspects of traditional culture and many strongly reject it as oppressive and dehumanising (Nolte-Schamm 2006:379).

3.3.5 Death and the 'living dead'

Traditionally, death is considered to be contagious and dangerous; the survivors must be protected and strengthened against the vicious power of death. A corpse is ritually unclean and its handling demands elaborate purification rituals. The continued presence of the corpse is perilous, hence the extended family are exposed to 'uncleanliness' until all the passage rites have been successfully completed (Nürnberger 2007:24).

It is against this background, according to Nurnberger (2007) and Michael and Cook (2009:679), that ancestor veneration must be understood. Ancestor veneration is not a spiritual device to secure eternal life or play down the horror and finality of death, as death cannot be considered a promotion to a more glorious form of existence. The afterlife is not a desirable goal, except perhaps for very old people who had become tired of life and perceive themselves as frail and useless. Nobody looks forward to becoming an ancestor, because ancestors depend on the recognition of their offspring for their continued authority and belonging. If they are not remembered, that is, if they are no longer respected as superiors by their descendants, they are lost.

That is why, according to Jarvis (2009:19), ancestor veneration means that African people live with an acute awareness of the spirit world and believe that most events have some relationship to the influence of the 'people without bodies'. Since the ancestors are believed to have influence over everyday events of life, bad and good fortune are attributed to the favour or displeasure of the ancestors.

Ancestralism, therefore, creates a fatalistic outlook on life. Fear of these unknown supernatural powers drives people to seek supernatural answers, rather than practical and reasoned solutions. Belief that spiritual beings are the source of everything (good or bad) that happens in life, means that all diseases are caused by these spiritual beings, including HIV/AIDS. "We are not satisfied with scientific medical treatment, because we 'KNOW' there is someone behind the disease who is causing it. It cannot be satisfactorily treated with medicine alone" (Munza 2005). This brings us to the question: Who holds the authority to decide what is right or wrong?

Even if the deceased are remembered, it is not vitality that continues beyond death, but the relationship through which the powers of life are passed on. Relationships in a hierarchy are vertical, based on differences in authority. The sphere of influence of the deceased depends on the status that they had when they were alive. Deceased children do not become ancestors normally, though they may be taken up into the ancestral world. The thought that anybody was lost forever is hard to contemplate (Nurnberger 2007:26).

This authority is even seen in times of dire straits when the Supreme Being is approached to stop any 'mishap' that has befallen the tribe. Tutu (1999) describes this as follows:

The African's notion of God was one which stressed his holy transcendence. When they were in dire straits, when all their usual attempts, for instance, had failed to break a drought, then usually they approached this transcendent Supreme Being directly, they addressed their prayers to him without any intermediary; but more usually, they approached him through the intercession of their ancestors – the living-dead. Those who should have known better, called it the cult of ancestors, ancestor-worship.

This is supported by a notion, mentioned by Setiloane (2000), that the human being does not have a body, but is a body. Similarly, an ancestor is precisely the human being that once lived, not the spiritual part of his/her previous life. The body of the deceased is buried, rots and plays no further role. Yet, where ancestors 'appear', for example in dreams, they appear in their full bodily form, exactly as they have been known to exist. They are not 'spirits', but 'presences' – the continuing presence of the past persons. Denial of this notion can be viewed as a taboo and disrespect to the ancestors. This relationship has coloured the idea of sin and illness.



3.3.6 HIV/AIDS: Secrecy and denial

Due to the recognition of virtues such as ancestry, reliability, loyalty, wisdom or coolness of mind by Africans, sin is not a direct offence against God or a transgression of some moral law or virtue, but a breakdown of the complex structure of human relationships within the community, including the ancestors.

This is the reason why traditionalism imposes heavy taboos on the discussion of sexual matters. A thick veil of silence, secrecy and denial prevents a disease such as HIV from being recognised and tackled head-on by the society. Those who reveal their HIV status are stigmatised, ostracised and rejected by their communities. Many people at risk do not dare to subject themselves to tests, because the consequences of being found HIV positive are just too horrendous to contemplate. Because people do not die of AIDS, but of another disease

which takes advantage of the breakdown of the immune system, it can easily be claimed that the cause of death was, for example, tuberculosis, influenza or malaria (Nürnbergger 2003:512). That is why any remedial measures are attested through rituals.

Death does not occur naturally, because the general perception is that somebody has done something sinister to bring it about. If death is not caused by the displeasure of the ancestors, it is caused by sorcery. Diviners indicate which steps are necessary to appease the ancestors and also point out the culprits who have bewitched patients. The diviners conduct rituals and dispense amulets to fortify patients against attack or drive out evil forces. Some herbalists also claim to be able to cure the disease. Needless to say, all these steps are deceptive and prevent, rather than enhance, the search for a solution (Nürnbergger 2003:513).

Nürnbergger (2003) cites the most horrific perception that intercourse with a virgin can make a man immune against HIV/AIDS or cure him from the disease. This untested traditionalistic myth promotes the raping of toddlers and infants, which is rampant in South Africa. It further showcases that traditionalism wants a quick-fix solution that is not based on thorough research, meaning that to tradition, time is a waste.

3.4 Conclusion

The abovementioned are some of the attributes of traditionalism which are still being practised in an African society. The importance of the relationships and hierarchy of people is part of the African humanism that forms part of ubuntu and communalism. However, mention should be made of the fact that there is resistance towards other attributes that do not conform to the present worldview, for example the raping of infants, abuse of women and the way in which people perceive the Supreme Being. This resistance has culminated in deeper pondering on African humanism and it is the author's contention that this has led to the birth of ubuntu and communalism.

3.5 Ubuntu and communalism

3.5.1 Background

According to Gathogo (2008:44), ubuntu is an aspect of African hospitality; it enriches African philosophy by the clear and concise way in which it expresses the thinking of the ideal African person (muntu).

In supplementing Gathogo, Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2005:215) maintain that, although there is a diversity of African cultures, there are commonalities to be found among them in areas such as value systems, beliefs and practices. These areas largely reflect the African worldview. The most abiding principle of this worldview is known as the notion of *ubuntu/botho* (humanism or humaneness). Ubuntu is an old philosophy and the way of life that has for many centuries sustained the African communities in South Africa in particular and in Africa as a whole.

The word *ubuntu* is found in almost all African languages in South Africa: *ubuntu* in IsiNguni; *botho* in Sesotho; *vumunhi* in Xitsonga; and *uvhuthu* in TshiVenda. In African humanism, it involves alms-giving, sympathy, caring, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness. Its spirit emphasises respect for human dignity, marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation (Mabovula 2001:41). For the sake of this study, the word *ubuntu/botho* will be used interchangeably; this leads to the different definitions of *ubuntu/botho*.

3.5.2 Different definitions of ubuntu and communalism

According to LenkaBula (2008:378), *ubuntu* is *botho* in a Sotho language and describes personhood and humaneness. It has an ontological, socio-political, economic, ecological and religious dynamic. The reason for this is that it explains the relationship of humanity to themselves (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005:217,218), as well as the embeddedness of human life to the ecological life, thus highlighting that the self can never be fully without the ecological

systems within which they exist. Furthermore, *botho* is an expression of people's dual identity, that is, in relation to themselves as well as in relation to creation other than human.

As an expansion, *ubuntu* also includes other people. LenkaBula (2008) and Barret (2008:9) describe *ubuntu* as a richly nuanced word for the key African concept of the fullness of human being by virtue of a person's life in community. It implies a sense of a caring commitment to and responsibility for all members of one's clan or society, together with a strong obligation to uphold the harmony of the group. It can also refer, though, to a much wider range of solidarity, namely the nation as a whole.

Nolte-Schamm (2006:370-371) describes *ubuntu* as follows:

Ubuntu is the common denominator of all brands of African anthropology (as well as African religion and philosophy) and can be shared among all people. As a universal philosophical concept, *ubuntu* embraces every human being, all races and nations, uniting them into a universal 'familiarity', where individuals, families, communities and nations can discover the vital fact that they are an integral part of each other, meaning it is communalistic in character.

Magezi *et al.* (2009:181) note that, in Africa, the extended family constitutes the family. The family members are relationally interconnected and they seek the good of the other (Magezi 2005:107). The context of hospitality is the home and the extended family, and this communality is foundational. For Africans, not belonging to a community means that you are an outsider or stranger, therefore fit for rejection and humiliation (Turaki 1999:300-301). These relationships are fundamental for community building and apart from them there could be no community.

The concept of *family*, understood as an extended family in Africa, entails willingness to give, help, assist, love and carry one's burden without being motivated by profit or reward (Magezi *et al.* 2009:181). Gathogo (2006:39) supports the statement and points out that communality is foundational to hospitality. The community emphasises interpersonal

relationships and cooperation strongly and, following from this network, hospitality permeates every aspect of African life (Magezi *et al.* 2007:184).

This hospitality attempts to accommodate those who do not seem to have relatives and to make them part of the community. People make attempts to befriend such persons and give them African or clan names in order to ensure that they are part of the community. For instance, Jean Baptiste, a refugee from Rwanda, lives in the Eastern Cape, South Africa and has been given a Xhosa name, Thamsanqa, by members of his adopted community. This renaming has made him acceptable as part of the clan and being identified as one of them (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005:222).

Another relevant example is that of Daneel, author of *African Earthkeepers Volume 1* (1998), who underwent a change of name to be accepted as one of the Zimbabweans and get cooperation from the Zimbabwe government as well as the tribe in order to change or save the environment. Hence he was nicknamed *Muchakata* (wild cork tree) (Daneel 1998:82). He states the following (1998:206):

I myself, from the outset, adopted the name muchakata (wild cork tree), not to invite the ancestors veneration for which the tree is known, but to show respect for traditional custom and to cater, as the muchakata does, for the needs of both animals and humans. Protection in this instance implies shade and rest for the fighters of the green revolution: my attempts to help provide some financial security and ecologically relevant policies to sustaining the fighting cadres, just as the ancestors approached under the muchakata during rain rituals are expected to meditate rain and thus agro-economic sustenance in a rural subsistence economy.

This renaming made those individuals 'comfortable', thereby considering themselves as an integral part of the whole community; Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2005) mention that "a person is socialized to think of himself/herself as inextricably bound to others." One who does not belong or has not been made part of the community is considered to be a danger. This belonging does not only make one complete, but it gives one a sense of identity and security. Seeing oneself as part of the community leaves little room for narrow individualism; a person will be in a position to practise ubuntu as desired by the community.

It is a 'latent force' within human beings, which connects them to one another. Therefore, ubuntu is essentially about interconnection and relationship between a person and his/her descendants, family, clan, antecedents and God, as well as with his/her inheritance, property and its produce (Mulago 1969:138,143).

However, Msengana (2006:68) argues that, because of Ubuntu's inclusive character, it would be something of a contradiction to attempt to deconstruct, divide and analyse ubuntu as a concept; it is difficult to describe it in an analytic manner without losing some of the emphasis on the whole. The depth of ubuntu as a people's philosophy with strong leaning towards African society is further revealed by Cowley (1994:44) when he says that ubuntu is more than just an attitude of individual acts. It is a humanistic orientation towards one's fellow men. As the societies are so closed, the author is of the opinion this means that ubuntu is confined to one's own clan and tribe. Because ubuntu and communalism are the trademarks of African philosophy, their attributes need to be looked at.

3.5.3 Attributes of ubuntu and communalism

3.5.3.1 Relatedness

Ubuntu is something that originates from within oneself or, better still, from within a societal setting. Traditional societies realise this notion, because they were knitted together socially, which has encouraged a collective behavioural pattern (Msengana 2006:89). Tutu (1996:9) points out that ubuntu emphasises the aspects of human relations; in other words the essence of being a human person, knowing that this essence is present when ubuntu is there, and that ubuntu speaks of gentleness, hospitality and inconveniencing oneself on behalf of others. It recognises that humanity is bound up with others. It means not having grudges, but being willing to accept others as they are and being thankful for them. In this respect, ubuntu plays an important role.

In Africa, the older person is respected. However, people should recognise that Africans have more respect for the wisdom of an individual than for his chronological age as such. For Africans, there is a strong correlation between age and wisdom. As African culture is dominated by oral tradition, the elders are perceived as those who have the knowledge and have accumulated a lot of experience. Age is the observable referent. Respect for elders implies a reciprocal relationship. As the younger respects the elder, the latter must, in return, take care of the former, provide him with advice and help him realise his full potential. This is the relationship that is based on mutual interdependence (Msengana 2006:90).

However, anything that undermines, hurts, threatens and destroys human beings is not accommodated in ubuntu, but is frowned upon, since it affects the very foundation of society, namely the human being. A person is not a thing or a number, but something more valuable than these. Whether a person is known or not, it is expected that he/she should be accorded respect (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005:219).

According to LenkaBula (2008:381), there are a number of attributes or features that people associate with the notion of *botho*. These include botho as the essence of being (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and solidarity. The collective consciousness of the peoples of Africa is often expressed through theoretical and praxiological commitments and or life in community, often referred to or described as communalism. Communalism as an ethics of life guides political relations at personal, communal and structural levels, as well as the distribution of power, access to power, and the uses and sharing of resources of the earth, including land. Within the context of the care and nurture of the earth, and African ethics of life, botho is understood as an expression of justice, wisdom, intergenerational concern and commitment, as well as compassion in daily relations.

In support of the above, Christians (2004:245) maintains that ubuntu presumes and emphasises the human being's moral character. Morality is entailed by our communal personhood. Interpersonal interdependence is constitutive of human life and thus the development of my and others' being is obligatory, as illustrated in the discussion on

collectivism and interrelatedness above. Because human life is inescapably and permanently in relation with others, social relations cannot be reduced to neutral functions or roles.

Turaki (1999) states that “man is only in a relationship as he participates in family and community life”. One of the most important kinship relationships of man is marriage. He is of the following opinion (1999:107):

Marriage is more than a physical relationship. It has its own consequences. Not to marry is to cease living now and in the hereafter. Marriage establishes essentials in life and death. Begetting children guarantees eternal life. Not only do children provide for the reincarnation of the ancestors, they also sustain the ancestors through prescribed rituals such as sacrifices and offering.

Turaki (1999) adds that, “because an African man believes himself to be an extension of the spirit world, the corporate family and the tribe, these must all share responsibility and blame for what he does. He is acted upon by powers he believes are beyond his control”. Therefore, the spirit and mystical powers and forces “which can be used for either good or bad” inhabit the world of nature. In his relationship to the natural world, behind natural phenomena, “animals, plants, rivers, rocks, mountains and heavenly bodies may all carry messages” from the spirit world, which he has to decipher. Therefore, if man determines the meaning as he deems fit, man can decide what Africanism determines to his setting or circumstances.

The social character of humanity, as outlined above, expresses that man was not meant to be individualistic, and “man is not an island”. A person is constitutively relational to his environment, not just an egoistic, separate, autonomous individual. This is an insight which is integral to an African understanding of identity, ontology and epistemology, although this ontological, epistemological and religious understandings are not limited to African culture only (LenkaBula 2008:382).

Whilst acknowledging that a person lives in a relationship and is, therefore, a sociality, a person’s individuality, his/her distinct personality, has to be embraced, affirmed and not

constrained. Respect for difference in others is vital for both. As such, ubuntu respects individuality, whilst at the same time acknowledging that human beings are embedded in relations with others and with creation. This particular perspective is radically different from the dominant individualism which is practised by traditional Western conceptions of a human being which posits individual autonomy over and above the relatedness of people (Van der Walt 2001:63-64).

The above constitutive elements of what it means to be human – and an individual in relation to botho – embrace both the rational and emotive aspects, including what religious phenomenology describes as the soul. An individual is one who balances both his/her rational and emotional aspects and accepts his/her decisions as self-sufficient, yet is conscious of and bound by the awareness of his/her relatedness to other humans and creation, and is considerate toward their plight and that of creation (LenkaBula 2008:384). She further asserts that, whilst the independence of an individual is encouraged by botho/ubuntu, social and/or ecological consciousness is also affirmed and not scoffed at, as happens in capitalism. This is to acknowledge that one's ontology is tied up to that of the earth and humanity. One does not only use self-interest as the criterion for a moral agency and decision-making process in one's life, but one has to balance one's self-interest with the common good of the earth and the web of life in general.

Consequently, the author comes to the conclusion that botho is underpinned by the spirit of communalism. The interest of the individual is supposed to be in synergy with that of the community and the earth. Ubuntu/botho is a relevant resource against injustices in order to halt the excess of the abuse of power. Communalism insists that the good of all determines the good of each other or, put differently, the welfare of each other is dependent on the welfare of all. This means that the collective life of communities is enhanced by social solidarity and humanism that are embraced by botho and communalism.

3.5.3.2 Collectivism

According to Msengana (2006:91), African culture is collectivistic in nature (Dia 1991:10; Hofstede 1980:46). The group has more importance than the individual and group success is more valued than individual success. Group activities have always characterised traditional African societies. Traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, harvesting and celebrations were performed through various groups. The average African feels more comfortable when he/she is in a group than when he/she is alone (Ahiazu 1989:6). The pre-eminence of the group requires consensus in decision making and in forging relationships as a collective.

In supplementing the above, Msengana, Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2005:223) maintain that consensus is based on people as a family and as such they are expected to be in solidarity with one another, especially during the hour of need. It is during times such as distress and crisis that the need for ubuntu becomes acute. A person in need should be able to count on the support of those around him/her. It is at times like these that one has to contribute to the good of others and society, which is primarily communalism in action.

In communalism, travellers or strangers were served with food unreservedly. Their presence was seen as more of a blessing than a burden. This was a corollary that brought further joy to children, since they knew that the best meals would be served. Perhaps this facet explains why there is a saying among the Botswana people that states, "Moeng goroga re je ka wena", directly translated as "Come, visitor, so that we can feast through you". This proverb is a call to be ever generous to the stranger. It is also a revelation about attitudes that one needs to possess in using the resources one has acquired. Giving food to strangers was more than just satisfying their physical hunger, but was a "barometer of social relations and a powerful mechanism for both creating sociability and, alternatively, for destroying it". It was a challenge to the host to open his/her boundaries, and be receptive and generous to the stranger (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005:230).

This notion of the abovementioned hospitality is based on Africans' obligation to sustain one another as a form of their existence, which is a moral obligation (Christians 2004: 244).

Idowu (2008:181) asserts that this ubuntu communitarian worldview involves the community collectively. This type of collectivist paradigm integrates human beings into the social organism, with the latter being the integrating norm.

The core of socialism from an African worldview is that African societies are founded on kinship relations, which begin in the households and expand to lineage and clan proportions (Wiredu 2007:333). What is paramount in the African traditional societies is the sense of bonding, from early childhood, with large groups of relatives at home and outside it. This evolving sense of bonding is a learning process in which the individual comes to see himself/herself more and more as the centre of obligations and rights. At that level of lineage, one is already engaged with quite a substantial population.

From the above, the author deduces that in ubuntu, a person's freedom depends on personal relationships with others for its exercise and fulfilment. Freedom is not exclusively an individual right, but "freedom of expression means a community is able to freely articulate its questions and concerns" (Blankenberg 1999). Mutuality and reciprocity are the features of genuine community; freedom in the full sense requires, therefore, that these conditions are realised in a society as a whole. In ubuntu, humans depend completely on one another for their development. This communicable hospitality breeds integral conformable spirituality.

3.5.3.3 Spirituality

The spirit in African religion is one's total being or soul. It represents the inner self of the total being. The spirit is who people are. It is the people's values and culture in terms of community; it is the climate and values of that particular community. African spirit is used as a metaphor to describe certain prevailing values in particular communities and situations (Mbigi & Maree 1995:19-20).

Due to the above, Msengana (2006:94) maintains that the ancestral spirit will constantly come back to look after the living relatives as an invisible energy centre. The ancestral spirit

may enter and occupy people, places, animals and trees. Ancestors are always alive, without bodies, and still play a major part in people's social life. People have to venerate them, because they can act for their good or evil on behalf of those who are still living in bodies. This belief in the spirit and ancestorism is central to the African way of life. The social and religious systems are strongly interrelated, so it is difficult to discuss one without the other.

As earlier mentioned, botho ontology is embedded in creation and the 'Supreme Being' (LenkaBula 2008:381); this is demonstrated on many instances in the religious rituals of many Africans who affirm their connectedness to the earth, other people, a Supreme Being and ancestors. These rituals demonstrate symbolically the understanding of many communities of their ontology as ties, specifically to plants, land animals or marine creatures. Relevant examples are the clans in Botswana and Lesotho who normally associate their being to *inter alia* lions, crocodiles, buffaloes and elephants. They narrate and chant to totems which describe this connectedness to assert their centeredness to that of creation (LenkaBula 2008:386).

Besides being associated with creation, communalism embraces relationship with creatures on earth and their existence; therefore, botho is against human conduct that results in ecological degradation. If the earth or creation is us, and part of us, its destruction is our own destruction. In other words, if we kill or destroy the natural environment, we will all perish. This implies that botho has to become a consciousness that encourages and inspires people to take care of themselves, one another and creation, and to be faithful to God, who is understood as the Creator (LenkaBula 2008:384).

In expressing its spirituality, ubuntu is best realised and manifested in deeds of kindness, compassion, caring, sharing, solidarity and sacrifice. These acts, according to Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2005:227), produce positive results for both individuals and the community. They make it possible for an individual to count on and expect meaningful support from fellow human beings. People are enabled to share resources with which they are blessed. These values maintain and preserve community cohesion, as they contribute positively to those in need. Compassion is expressed by taking care of the disadvantaged, namely the sick, the

bereaved, the poor and strangers. This promotes the spirit of selflessness and gives sense, not only to one's own life, but also to the lives of others. Hence humanism is established.

3.6 Communalism and African humanism

According to Healey (1981:143), another significant dimension of communal relationships as spiritual value is the development of African humanism, which gives a new application and dynamism to the human values of the ancient village world of Africa, particularly the ideas of cooperative living and sharing life together. Africans believe in sharing and acknowledgement of others as human beings and part of creation who deserve to be treated humanely.

In support of the above, Idowu (2008:174) asserts that Africa seems to have entrenched a humanist ideology in its cultural life which elevates the generic essence of human existence. Humanism is a philosophy with an existential character. As a philosophy, it may be regarded ideological in nature. Therefore, the implications are that humanism, from an existential point of view, is a reflection of that which holds man in society.

The author agrees with Idowu's viewpoint that humanism mutually excludes some extreme measures that are often adopted in interpreting, and in understanding man and his place in the universe. A purely humanist society cannot but be understood in the holistic sense. This is what is meant when the worldview inherent in such a culture is described as all-encompassing.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism have shown how influential they are in African philosophy. With a missiological context in mind, religion should take cognisance of their practice, as they are the cornerstones of African culture. In order to inculcate

African philosophy, traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism should be seen as the main features that should be given the necessary attention.

Furthermore, the characteristics of traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism show that, even if Africans were ignorant of Christianity, they still practiced their own 'spirituality' in their own cultural settings (*Sitz im Leben*) which was applicable to their own context and understanding. For example, they believed in a Supreme Being beyond their reality who is called *Modimo* in Sotho and *Thixo* in Xhosa.

It is, therefore, imperative that those elements that are relevant should be seen as 'contact points', and be recognised and exploited. The objective of the study to inculturate traditionalism, ubuntu and communalism can then be attained and missional communities can be established. This means that there is a need for a thorough contextualisation before koinonia can be a possibility and the focus should be on that which brings cohesion and convergence. Only then can the possibility of a fruitful relationship between koinonia and African philosophy become a reality.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTACT POINTS BETWEEN AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND KOINONIA

4.1 Background

In chapter two, Christian koinonia has been discussed from a *missio Dei* perspective. In chapter three, the critical analysis of ubuntu and communalism as attributes of African philosophy, and how they are understood from an African worldview, has been discussed. From the findings of both chapter two and three, chapter four will be focusing on the contact points that can be found between koinonia, ubuntu and communalism, which can be useful in the convergence process of identifying coherence between Christianity and African philosophy. Coherence will seek to establish whether these contact points will enhance koinonia that is based on Christianity, and ubuntu that is based on African philosophy and vice versa.

It will further expound the practical implications of ubuntu and communalism, based on the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) as propagated by Bishop Desmond Tutu (Battle 1997), as well as contextualisation and inculturation. In order to achieve this objective, the chapter will focus on the contact points between koinonia, ubuntu and communalism through the usage of comparative literature from the relevant scholarly references.

4.2 African theology that is based on African philosophy

According to Gathogo (2007:131), African theology is an African Christian theology that is relevant to the African context and practised by Africans. Furthermore, it is an attempt at Africanising or indigenising Christianity in Africa, thereby giving it authenticity in the vast continent of Africa, where it is growing rapidly. Mbiti (1969), though, asks the following question: "Christianity has made a real claim on Africa [...]. The question is: Has Africa

made a real claim on Christianity?" He continues by saying that "Christianity has Christianised Africa, but Africa has not Africanised Christianity".

In agreeing with Gathogo (2007), Ilesanmi (1995:49) defines African theology as "the expression of Africans' response to God in their context and experience, based on the Scriptures, Christian tradition and African heritage". As such, it is "the Christian faith as understood, communicated and lived by Africans and applied to issues which concern them profoundly". From the above statements, the author can deduce that there are relational contact points between Christianity and African worldviews, even if they are practised in their respective domains.

4.3 Relational contact points

4.3.1 View on spirituality/beliefs

4.3.1.2 View on God

According to Meiring (2008:802) and Mbiti (1969), African religion teaches that God exists. This God, who created all things, is eternal, all-knowing, ubiquitous and beyond description. This is supported by Credo Mutwa (1998:561), who maintains the following:

The Most Ultimate God, who is the God of the Gods, is Everything in Everything. Each tree, each blade of grass and each stone that you see out there, and each one of the things that live, be men or beasts, are all part of God, just as each one of the hairs on your head and each flea in your hair and each drop is part of you. The sun is part of God; the moon is part of God and each one of the stars is but an infinitesimal part of Him who Is, and yet is not, Him who Was, and yet was not, and Him, and yet shall never be; because there never was a time when God was not and there is a time when God can never be.

From Mutwa's statement, Meiring (2008) comes to the conclusion that God is to Africans both immanent and transcendent. In support of Mutwa, Mbiti (1969:32) mentions that Africans also experience God as immanent:

He is so far (transcendent) that all men cannot reach Him; yet, He is so 'near' (immanent) that He comes close to men. While God transcends, all concepts of time and no one is beyond Him. He is so immanent that humans can make contact with Him through prayers, sacrifices, and invocations. He is also near in the sense that He fills all creation, but then more in a panentheistic manner (God can be seen in the world while at the same time exceeding it).

In agreeing with Meiring (2008), Van der Walt (2001:70) maintains that most Africans believe in a Supreme Being who, as an aloof God, can only be approached in exceptional cases of great crisis, unlike in the case of Christianity, wherein God is the Highest Authority, dwell in Holiness and should be obeyed at all times. He cannot be approached through sacrifices and innovation as is the practice in African religion and belief, but through prayer and worship. If this contact point about God can be expounded on, both worldviews (Christian and African) can enhance the view of God.

However, mention should be made of the fact that, from the Christian point of view, God is present and active within his creation and within the human race, even to those who are members of it and do not believe in or obey him. His influence is everywhere and He is at work in and through natural processes and not restricted to miracles (Erickson 2007:87). Perceiving God as not immanent or transcendent all the time and approaching him only in exceptional cases like a great crisis, for example in the African worldview, is tantamount to sin, because it negates God's authority and Holiness and is incomplete fulfilment of God's standards of righteousness (Erickson 2007:189).

4.3.1.3 View on sin and salvation

From the ubuntu and communalism worldviews, sin is seen as an offence to the community, not to God (Maimela 1985:65; Mbiti 2005:1). These offences are for example immoral behaviour, breaking tribal agreements, overlooking rituals and the breaking of taboos.

African religion tends to locate the source of evil firmly in the human world, in disruptive ambitions and the jealousies of people. Therefore, the concept of sin is conditional, because it is community based, not God based. Being conditional, sin does not exist in an absolute sense, but always within the community and creation, which is determined by *inter alia* the context, actors, time and place. To qualify this, Meiring (2008:805), drawing from Kgatla (1995:126), views sin as similar to that of ancient Israel:

In ancient Israel, sin in life could not be separated from the notion of covenant relationship. This means that the relationship between Yahweh and the individual, and the rest of the community, should never be disturbed by actions which were forbidden by law. Any behaviour which threatened the natural carrying on in life in the community was considered a sinful deed.

In African worldview, there is no sin against God, whilst Meiring (2008) says that sin is against God as well as the breaking of the covenant relationship. Sin in Israel was the breaking of a relationship, but also the breaking of the relationship with God. Hence the author concurs with Meiring (2008), because the covenant was an everlasting relationship with Israel and, through Israel, with all the nations that came after Israel. It was an inclusive action that was initiated by God, who embraced all. Israel as a chosen nation was to carry out the mandate of the covenant, which included even the Africans. When God as the initiator (first party) of the covenant enters into a covenantal relationship with men, He sovereignly institutes a life-and-death bond. Therefore, a covenant is a bond in blood (or a bond of life and death) that is administered sovereignly (Robertson 1980:4). The covenant with Israel was thus to be “a light to the nations” that would bring the redemptive blessings of God to all nations of the world as promised in the title deeds of the covenant with Abraham (Wright 2006:31). This meant that Africans were included as part of the covenant.

Secondly, African philosophy as communalism considers the presence of community members as reconciliation and salvation. The community is believed to heal the individual of estrangement from God and all efforts to recreate or restore the community boil down to reconciliation of the members of society with God. Relationships between humans and ‘spirits’ are, therefore, interdependent. To qualify this, Tutu (1999:35) uses the Adam and Eve story as a fundamental truth about humans, namely that we are made to live in a delicate

network of interdependence with one another, with God and with the rest of creation. Humans are made for complementing each other to become fully human.

In contrast to the above, Van der Walt (2001:71) says that, to Africans, salvation is not about belonging to God, but to an extended family, clan and tribe, and living in peace with the spirit world. Living in relationship with the powerful, omnipresent spirit is inseparable from the Africans' daily lives. To them, this is imperative; because of the unpredictability of the world and man's lack of power, spirits have to be appeased and manipulated through pacification.

However, from a Christian perspective, man is born in sin and is, therefore, sinful in nature; this was ushered in by the "fall" (Gen 3). Sin dented the *imago Dei* as implanted in man from creation, and caused the loss of a place in paradise, as God intended. Sin produced an immediate transformation in the relationship that Adam and Eve had with God and creation, because they had violated the trust and command of God, not of the community, as is the case in African Christianity (see Tutu 1999 above). It definitely changed their relationship with the community also, as they became shy around each other and brothers killed each other. It was not God who had changed or moved, but Adam and Eve (Erikson 2007:194).

Consequently, Christianity has different perceptions on sin; it perceives sin as falling into three categories, namely pride, sloth and falsehood (Jenson 2006:134). All three "are characterized first and foremost by broken relationships in which people live for themselves rather than for God and others". It means that, in one's approach, "one might recognize different forms of sin and yet still speak meaningfully of an over-arching structure in all human sinning". Jenson uses the Barth metaphor which describes sin as pride. Man tries to conceal his pride, but it becomes visible in his self-deification (the incident of the golden calf in Exodus 32), his self-exaltation (the kingship of Saul), his desire to judge himself rather than to be judged by God and his desire to take care of himself, rather than to be cared for by God. In all these cases, pride is a countermovement against God.

Sin as falsehood is also our countermovement against Christ's prophetic office. We do not accept the truth of Christ, but want to present our own truth. The friends of Job did not say anything wrong; they presented good doctrine. They were, however, false, because they wanted to speak for God and they spoke in 'unhistorical' and contextless terms. While Job was in a despairing struggle to grasp the knowledge of God, they presented timeless truths. Erickson (2007:291) says: "They seek to evade an encounter with the living God by constructing closed systems which, for all their orthodoxy, give place to neither God nor humanity in their freedom." They do not enter into a relationship with either God or Job, or with what was happening between God and Job, which can be seen as salvational when practiced.

According to Jenson (2006), salvation means that we exist only because we exist in relation to Jesus Christ. "This is a relational ontology which defines humanity primarily in terms of its relationships rather than appealing to substance, qualities, capacities or states." The 'real man' is Jesus and us in him, the actual man is the man of sin; we cannot exist independently and then enter into a relationship with Christ, we only have real existence because of Christ (Jenson 2006:134). This is contrary to what African Christianity perceives salvation to be, namely as living in a communal relationship with members of the community and that a person is only human amongst other humans. Christians believe that we only become human as intended by our Creator because of the redemption of Jesus Christ.

The author maintains that as Christians live in communal relationship with God in Jesus Christ and with fellow community members, they are saved through God's action of pronouncing sinners righteous in his sight. It is through this justification process that they are being forgiven and declared to have fulfilled all that God's law requires from them. Justification can only be achieved through faith in Jesus Christ, because it is something completely undeserved. It is not an achievement; it is an obtainment, not an attainment. Reconciliation with God through Christ also obliges Christians to reconcile with their fellow man (Matthew 18:21-35).

While our faith leads to justification, justification must and will produce works that are appropriate to the nature of the new creature that has come into being. When one is justified, all the eternal consequences of sin are cancelled. However, the temporal consequences of sin, both those which fall on the individual and those which fall on the human race collectively, are not necessarily removed. Hence we still experience physical death and other elements of the curse of Genesis 3 (Erikson 2007:321).

From the above discussion, a contact point on the view on sin and salvation is established. However, there are differences on the subject between the worldviews of Christianity and Africa. Christianity sees sin firstly as an offence against God and then against its neighbour, whereas Africans view sinning as an offence against members of the community only. In Africa, salvation is earned through belonging to a clan and tribe, whereas in Christianity, salvation is obtained through justification by faith in Jesus Christ. This justification is undeservedly, an unmerited favour from God. Through justification we are brought into adoption, which means that we who were lost are restored in the relationship with God and our neighbour. This relationship is redeemed by becoming part of the church, which is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18).

4.3.1.4 View on faith in community

According to Falconer (2007:49-50), citing Tutu (1996:96), the major elements of faith in an African community stem from the insight that “a person is a person through others.” Drawing from this notion, “God has created us for interdependence, as God has created us in his image – the image of divine fellowship of the holy and blessed Trinity” (Falconer 2007:50). We learn to be human through our association with other human beings. Identity and relationship go hand in hand. The environment of this interdependence in Africa is the absolute dependence of everyone on ancestors and community; in other words, we have the potentiality of becoming human because we are a community and only in a community justice is done to individuals.

This environment of interdependence depends upon an ethos of vulnerability and celebration of life. Celebration of life in distress and happiness in the power of the spirit can be experienced and achieved in an African way and according to African tradition and custom (Michael & Cook 2009:685-688). Therefore, the so-called African 'indigenous' or 'independent' churches which through their attractiveness are effective in Africanism cannot be ignored. First and most important is that they express their biblical and liturgical experiences in their own mother tongue. Secondly, these relatively smaller communities respond to practical and concrete needs such as healing, divining, prophesying and visioning that correspond to a spiritual hunger rather than to political, economic or racial factors. The gifts of the Spirit are emphasised and expressed in the primary African modes of oral and visual communication such as proverbs, myths, stories, songs, drums, dancing, clapping, art, sculptures and role playing. Finally, these communities embody a closer interconnectedness on a small scale, enough to evoke traditional experiences of family, clan and tribe.

On the other hand, Christians believe that the church is the body of Christ and that it lives by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to function and serve God. In the church, Christians experience *koinonia* and interconnectedness only in relationship with God and neighbour as such *koinonia* prevails. Therefore, through communalistic character which is experienced in *ubuntu*, which is also relational and can be *koinonial* if enhanced by Christianity, faith can be seen as a contact point to be expounded. However, the difference that emerges is ancestorism which is part of the African culture and *ubuntu*.

4.3.1.5 View on ancestorism

Turaki (1999) maintains that the belief in the ancestors is the most fundamental religious creed and tenet of African philosophy. The religious institution that surrounds this religious belief is what others call "the cult of the ancestors" and the form of worship "ancestor's worship" or "veneration". However, "controversy exists about whether or not recognition of ancestors with sacrifices and offerings is reverence or actual worship". The religious ceremony that surrounds the ancestors is strictly a private family affair, where only close

family members are invited to partake in that particular ceremony or what is termed *badimo*. It is not open to the public.

To the author, this privacy is contradictory to communalism that is rooted in the particularistic concept of the ancestor-father lineage (Turaki 1999:177). To complement Turaki, Michael and Cook (2009:679) maintain that ancestors are deeply embedded in the history and experience of a particular tribe or clan as founders and progenitors. As they are close to God, ancestors hold the first place as the mediators of life between the invisible world of the spirit and the visible world of humans. Ancestors are further reborn in future generations. They depend on the living to be 'fed' through rituals of remembrance, but the decisive key for the living is the availability of assistance from the invisible world, especially in matters of subsistence and survival, for example the practical concern of having enough land to provide for sufficient food.

According to Michael and Cook (2009:683), African religion is anthropocentric, since God is transcendent and normally acts through intermediaries, but God is at the same time immanent, that is, "a real and living force, close to the people". He evokes the example by Kibicho (370:88; 382): "The same God invoked by the ancestors is the same God of the people of Israel and so is Jesus as well – it is not the question of replacing the God of the Africans but rather of enthroning the Trinitarian God; not as the rival of the God of the ancestors, but as identical with him." Thus Africans reject the notion of an evolutionary understanding of God from 'primitive' to 'fully known'. The creative power of God has always been known and revealed in the African traditions, as well as in Islam and Christianity.

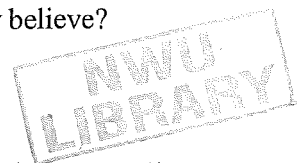
The author does not agree with Kibicho, because Christianity contends that God's attributes of greatness is the fact that God is Trinitarian: Father, Son and Spirit. He is not composed of any matter and does not possess a physical nature. Furthermore, God is alive – this is affirmed by the Scriptures in different ways (Exodus 3:14). God is real; He is not fabricated or constructed, or an imitation as are other claimants to deity and He fulfils whatever he has promised, as mentioned in the Scriptures. His merciful acts of tender-heartedness, love and

compassion are directed to his people, the very people who reject his love. Therefore, God cannot be equated to an ancestor who is venerated for appeasement, who is aloof and not concerned about his creation.

God's revelation to his people was through his Son Jesus Christ, who in turn sent the Spirit as an advocate. This God is the Trinitarian God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be affirmed. Each is qualitatively the same: the Son is divine in the same way and to the same extent as the Father and this is true of the Holy Spirit also. All three are divine and one or more of them did not come into being at some point in time. The Triune God is and will be what he always has been (Erikson 2007:113). The implication of this is that God can exist on his own and has no relatives or family, whereas the ancestors have relatives and family. We are God's children through his personal adoption in grace and He is the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8).

The faith notion of Africans is supported by Healey (1981:25), who maintains: "My experience has convinced me that there are no non-believers in East Africa. The African people have a deep religious sense and awareness of the presence of God in their lives. Even though their religious beliefs may not fit into Western categories or institutional religions, the people certainly are not pagans." The question remains: In which God do they believe?

Hence the Good News of Jesus carries two "surprises" for the African worldview, according to Taylor (2001). The first is "the recognition that the solidarity of human life is related directly to God" who is no longer distant, but intimately involved. The second is "the discovery of Adam" as the common ancestor of all mankind who creates a human solidarity that transcends tribal and kingship ties. Taylor (2001) affirms that "the heart of the Gospel for Africa" is Christ as the second Adam. Jesus freely and completely identified himself with our human condition in all its stages and so, from within our human experience, called for a radical change of heart and mind, not to a different world, but to Africa in the specific context and reality of family, clan, tribe and larger community (Michael & Cook 2009:684).



From the above context, the author draws from De Neui (2007:95), who maintains that God is immanent and transcendent, and that He is not ashamed to enter incarnationally into culture, fully and completely, as He did by sending his only begotten Son to this world. God maintains a *koinonia* relationship with humankind, despite their cultural affiliations. This brings a sense of belonging or relationship.

4.3.2 View on rituals

4.3.2.1 Rituals of belonging

Africans regard Jesus as fully and freely human, yet He comes from another culture and so is initially experienced as a stranger, a guest to whom Africans should first extend hospitality (Michael & Cook 2009:680). As such, He must first be perceived from within his own culture to manifest concerns corresponding to the ancestral heritage of initiation rites such as circumcision at his birth, baptism at the start of his mission and burial at his death. In an African worldview, circumcision is acceptable and practised, because it signifies entrance into manhood or adulthood and membership to seniority and respect. Therefore, if one is not circumcised or initiated through 'going to the mountain', one cannot be acceptable as a man or a member of a tribe.

In contrast to the above, Westhelle (2004:280) argues that we are not real people until we join the communion of the church through baptism. Outside the church, we can only be "individuals." There we are tragically limited by our "hypostasis of biological existence," which means that we exist by necessity rather than in freedom, separate from others, unable to overcome the kind of exclusivity in which "the family has priority in love over a stranger".

Westhelle (2004:280) adds that entering into the church liberates us from such "individualism and egocentricity" by transforming us into authentic persons, beings in relation. This transformation is salvation, for "salvation is identified with the realization of personhood in man". When we acquire personhood or "ecclesial being," we live in the image of persons who

are in a relationship with the Triune God. The form of salvation is thus conceived in a rather “this worldly” or, more strictly, a “this churchly” manner, for the transformation to true personhood seems to be achievable here and now by joining the church as a reconciled community.

Through baptism we are first welcomed into fellowship with God. Baptism is the outward sign of entrance into the “covenant community”. Therefore, baptism is the New Testament counteract of circumcision. It follows that baptism should be administered to all believers. To deny this benefit is to deprive them (believers) of the privilege of the blessing of *koinonia* (Colossians 2:11-12; Grudem 2010:976).

4.3.3 View on humanity

4.3.3.1 Human relatedness and collectivism

Communalism and familiness in Africa are sometimes viewed as very selective and exclusive. This notion is supported by Taringa (2007:186) and Nolte-Schamm (2006:379), who describe how this has negative connotations in communalism, as depicted in an African worldview, where people are divided into ‘we’ and ‘they’ (or ‘us’ and ‘them’); ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’; and ‘saved’ and ‘not saved’. These same distinctions are, unfortunately, also present in the church. Such distinctions make cooperation among different religions or cultures difficult. The practice even goes so far as to suggest the zeal to eliminate other religions/cultures and propagate one’s own as the only true one. Gathogo (2008:47) maintains that the criterion in determining ‘who is our person’ and ‘who is not one of us’ is indeed a tricky one. He draws from the Nehemiah’s narrative that the latter was driven by the need to protect his ‘own people’ when executing the rebuilding project in Jerusalem of barricading the wall. Likewise, African leaders have in several cases found themselves trying to ‘protect their people’ – their tribes, clans and countries from marginalisation or oppression. This attitude has, in most cases, promoted the ideology of ‘them and us’.

The abovementioned is supported by Ukpong (2001:503), who states that this African selectivity is based on communalism, group, solidarity and hospitality. From this statement, the author perceives love that is based on ideology and not the Word of God or a biblical foundation of koinonia. Hence the base is controlled by emotions of the day; therefore, it cannot stand the test of time. This can be seen in many tribalistic battles/wars which are rampant in Africa, where brother is fighting brother. The results thereof are the misplacement of people, promotion of poverty and destruction of family lives. Can that be attuned to brotherly love or to mere hatred of one another?

The Word of God teaches that love knows no boundaries – love conquers all (1 Corinthians 13). God's love is directed towards the cosmos (John 3:16), not inward towards the church or the self. It is utterly unselfish; Jesus taught us to love our enemy (Luke 6:27). This love goes against our natural inclinations. It is impossible to have this type of love, unless God helps us set aside our own natural desires so that we can love and not expect anything in return. Therefore, the more we become like Christ, the more love we will show to others in an indiscriminating way. Because God has given us spiritual gifts to love and live in harmony with our neighbours, our love should not be selective and exclusive, but an embracing one that treats everyone equal, as all people are the same before God because of the *imago Dei*.

To foster love and equality, Eucharist can serve as a symbol of communion among believers. Okonkwo (2010: 103) states the following:

I am inclined to think that the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, when properly conceived and translated into praxis, can serve as a model for the restoration of genuine communalistic living in the African society. This, however, can also be applicable to other regions of the world.

Holy Communion is a koinonia event. If African philosophy could only understand that sharing in a sacrament means entering into a koinonia relationship with the Triune God as one body in Christ, it would also enhance our koinonia or ubuntu in the community. It is not because 'I am and then we are', but **'we are one, because of Christ who has restored the image of God in us'** (the author's own credo).

Eucharist as sacrament, therefore, promotes koinonia with God and each other, sharing and relating to each other and knowing no discrimination. Vertically, it suggests koinonia with the Father through Christ and horizontally, it refers to koinonia among members, binding them to the world. This fellowship is an unmerited favour from God, empowered by the Spirit through the grace of God. The relationship with God is not based on ancestral relationship, but on the saving act of Christ.

The author maintains that even if communalism is clouded by selectivity and exclusiveness, it can serve as a contact point, because there is a communalistic element that is evident in it. Therefore, when it is expounded and based on the “love yourself as you love your neighbour” ideology, it can bring forth missional communities and further eliminate discrimination on the basis of gender, colour, language and creed.

4.3.3.2 Feminism

Gathogo (2008:49) states that, whilst communalism has an admirable way of emphasising communal solidarity, it has failed in addressing the concerns of women. He further asserts that the axiom, “a person is a person through other persons”, appears to serve better when it is applied to African men amongst themselves. This is, of course, due to the patriarchal nature of the traditional society, a phenomenon that is changing with time. It is demonstrated by the fact that by 2007, Africa has only had one elected woman president (Liberia). However, Malawi has elected a woman, President Tembo, in 2012 and Nkosazana Zuma has also been appointed as head of the African Union in 2012.

In complementing the above, Mercy Oduyoye (2001:94) argues that women have been carrying the knowledge that men were oppressing them for years, but that the conditions were not suitable for them to raise their voices. She says: “Over time, African women had to learn to know their oppressors, but had held their peace, because ‘when your hand is in someone’s mouth, you do not hit that person on the head.’” The author contends that this shows that communalism needs revitalisation (or reconstruction) so that it is reconciliatory to everyone in Africa.

In the Genesis narratives, God created man equal, without hierarchy, as mankind, with only a distinction between sexes, but no discrimination. The image of God is universal in humankind and is found in all categories of people. Both sexes possess the image of God. The verses in Genesis 1:27 and 5:1-2 make it clear that the image was borne by both male and female. Similarly, all races are included in God's family and hence are objects of his love. People of all ages and economic or marital status are included. Therefore, nothing should be done which will encroach upon another's legitimate exercise of dominion (Erickson 2007:177). This means that discriminating on sex or other aspects is unacceptable before God. There should be acceptance, regardless of gender, religion, creed, area or background, for that is koinonia and the glorification of God.

Due to the fact that African communalism has slowly opened to include females, Christianity can enhance it to a koinonia that is fully equal before God and thus create real reconciled communities.

4.4 Conclusion

The discussion above has shown that there are contact points between koinonia and ubuntu which, when expounded, can bring about convergence between the two, even if there are other non-contact points. Notably, the contact points can serve as praxes in which reconciled communities can be established. Therefore, as a way of practical implication of the above, it will be discussed whether the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has reconciled the deeply divided community in South Africa, where the gap between the rich and the poor is deepening at an alarming rate and where the 'we' (whites) and 'they' (blacks) syndrome that is based on colour is rife. Before a reconciled community can be established, healing is imperative. In light of this, the author will focus on whether the TRC has helped to heal the community, and forge koinonia and ubuntu through restorative or retributive justice.

4.5 Practical implications

4.5.1 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The formation of the TRC was established after the democratic elections in 1994. The African National Congress (ANC) tried to answer the question of how South Africans would deal with the legacies of the apartheid era (Battle 2000:174-175). To answer this question, the ANC opted for a Truth Commission, but their adversary, the National Party (NP), advocated a Reconciliation Commission. The ANC, Nelson Mandela's party, was concerned about the victims of the apartheid period, whilst the NP, F.W. de Klerk's party, sought amnesty for the perpetrators. This resulted in the promulgation of the National Unity and Reconciliation Act of July 26, 1995, which established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

One of the Commission's prime objectives appears in paragraph (d) of chapter 2 of the Act, which reads as follows: "[...] compiling a report providing as comprehensive an account as possible of the activities and findings of the Commission contemplated in paragraphs (a), (b) and (c), and which contains recommendations of measures to prevent the future violations of human rights." The author's understanding of "measures to prevent future violations of human rights" is that the Commission was supposed to bring in a strategy that would build and enhance a reconciled community in which shalom would prevail.

The TRC was headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who entered the volatile situation that was characterised by a deeply divided society which produced, at the time of transition, a great deal of hostility, mistrust and instability. Therefore, a lasting and peaceful settlement could not have been achieved if one side embarked on a series of prosecutions against the other. It was thus important to develop a way of coming to terms with the past, which would neither conceal the occurrence of the human rights abuses nor threaten to destroy South Africa's new democracy (Battle 2000:176).

In support of Battle (2000), Thesnaar (2008:54) and Shriver (2007) resonate how apartheid has damaged the social fabrics of Africans: "The tragedy of apartheid has damaged everyone, though not all in equal degree." Sadly, the transition of 1994 and the Truth and Reconciliation process (1996-1998) have not succeeded in assisting many South Africans to deal with the aftermath of apartheid or to face the reality of the new South Africa. Consequently, South African communities are still faced with the two sides of the spectrum, namely the offenders and the victims. According to the author's opinion, the TRC thus opened wounds it could not heal and fostered further polarity between victims and offenders, instead of advocating *koinonia*. This means that the TRC as a vehicle of reconciliation failed to bring forth the desired *koinonia* between the offenders and the victims.

The notion of failure on the side of the TRC is supported by Maluleke (2001:196), who maintains that the TRC's version of the truth was established through narrow lenses, crafted to reflect the experience of a tiny minority. Maluleke (1995) adds that the TRC's mandate and its workings were such that it ran the very real risk of "dealing lightly with the wounds of the people". Therefore, because of a lack of available and real proof that in the long term, the granting of impunity to offenders would be more beneficial to society than criminal prosecutions, wounds were not really healed. The formation of reconciled communities was compromised accordingly.

4.5.2 Restorative and retributive justice in ubuntu and koinonia

According to Thesnaar (2008:59), in order to heal a community through the process of restorative justice, it has to concentrate on healing the wounds that were caused by the offence. The aim of achieving the healing of all parties needs to be part of the process constantly in order to be able to negotiate reparation. This is acknowledged by Kerber (2003) when he states that, as members of society at large, we are all victims and offenders. As a result, we share collective responsibility for overcoming the violent conflict in our societies and for restoring relationships. It follows that where the broader community participates through relationships in the journey towards healing and wholeness, it will give more impetus in achieving healing for all parties involved. This implies that the survivor, the offender and the community need to travel on the road of reconciliation in order to achieve healing,

wholeness and freedom, and regain meaning in their lives. This means that restorative justice is community based, like ubuntu and communalism, and that the community plays a major role. Freedom is not exclusively an individual right, but “freedom of expression means the community is able to freely articulate its questions and concerns” (Christians 2004:243). Real freedom, therefore, can only be obtained if we are forgiven and therefore we need to live in koinonia with God to become what he has created us to be.

Unlike restorative justice, retributive justice is concerned about offenders being prosecuted and brought to court, tried and sentenced. Offenders who are found guilty of an atrocity must pay for what they did. The reason for retribution is that crime is seen as an offence against the state, not against the community as is the case in ubuntu. The fact that the state prosecutes the offender on behalf of its citizens creates the impression that the survivor can only find peace and move on when the offender has been prosecuted, tried and sentenced, not through acceptance and love that are expressed by the community. In many cases, retributive forms of justice, for example a term in jail, life imprisonment or the death penalty, do not necessarily bring closure for either the survivor or the offender. Human beings want to believe that such retribution for the wrongs that have been done to people helps them to move on, but that is usually not the case. Therefore, retributive justice just creates more barriers that people need to work through and this can result in more denial and perpetuation of either the survivor or offender role (Thesnaar 2008:56).

Consequently, the TRC brought about closure to offences done by the offenders through healing (James 5:16). Tutu (1999) was of the opinion that through facing profound emotions, healing could begin. In healing, acceptance is realised and forgiveness is imperative; reconciliation is then established through a loving relationship that is called koinonia. By acceptance and letting it go, forgiveness is brought about and reconciliation is inevitable (Philemon 2:25). This is due to the fact that reconciliation means the re-establishment of a relationship. Christ has reconciled us to God and to our neighbours. Many barriers like social status, sex and personality differences have been broken down by Jesus Christ. This means that Christ can transform our hopeless relationships into deep and loving relationships. That is why, through the TRC, women and men were again faced with pain and anguish by recalling their memories. As these persons faced their suffering and named it in public, they

left the witness stand with their heads held high; they were recognised in their pain and this marked the beginning of a renewed dignity. Recognition is deeply satisfactory, because once these victims were voiceless, but now their voices could be heard on radio and television, and the names of the torturers who were beyond reproach only a few years ago, could be mentioned (Battle 2000:181). This correction of history is restorative for all who had been humiliated (Ephesians 2:14-17).

The author's contention is that when forgiveness is exercised, it becomes easier to reconcile and come to terms with the past. When accepting and extending a hand of forgiveness, *koinonia* takes effect, based on loving one another and praying for those who wronged you (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:35). Bringing compensation as a form of restoring friendship will not help; first, the inner person should be healed and forgiveness should be genuine, then the platform will be conducive for *koinonia* and *ubuntu*.

Cognisance should be taken of the fact that restorative justice is culturally binding, because all nations have restorative justice rituals in place in their own culture and therefore each culture can take responsibility for the healing process (Braithwaite 1996). He further adds that taking responsibility is of the utmost importance, because restorative justice has to do with the healing of survivors, offenders and the community as a whole. This healing process can also be undertaken between cultures and even between religions to give more impetus to healing. To the author, this means that even in African culture there exists a mechanism that can be used to bring about restorative justice. If one views communalism as cultural and community based, implications thereof is that Braithwaite is correct when referring to restorative rituals which are *ubuntu* oriented.

In order to heal the whole community through the process of restorative justice, it has to concentrate on healing the wounds that were caused by the offence. The aim of achieving the healing of all parties needs to be part of the process constantly in order to be able to negotiate reparation. This is acknowledged by Kerber (2003) when he states that, as members of society at large, we are all victims and offenders. As a result, we share collective responsibility for overcoming the violent conflict in our societies and for restoring

relationships. It follows that where the broader community plays its active part in the journey towards healing and wholeness, it will give more impetus in achieving healing for all parties involved. This implies that the survivor, the offender and the community need to travel on the road of reconciliation in order to achieve healing and wholeness, and regain meaning in their lives. Koinonia will then become imperative.

Koinonia is prominent in bringing forth healing, wholeness and reconciliation in restorative justice. Reconciliation, healing, wholeness and true restorative justice are possible when it grows from its theological roots in God's inexplicable mercy (Thesnaar 2008:64), as founded in the *missio Dei*. To support this view, Naudé and Wright (2006) refer to the strong tradition in the Old Testament where God restores the relationship with Israel on his own initiative and despite his and Israel's knowledge that He could claim restoration for past injustices, but refrains from doing so. In the New Testament, a story of Zacchaeus, the hated tax collector, ends on a happy note of reconciliation and restoration when Jesus says: "[...] because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:9-10.) Restorative justice clearly involves the healing of relationships and the restoration of the community; therefore, Zacchaeus offered to repay all and offer retribution for his deeds.

Because no wrongdoing or restoration happens in a vacuum, contextualisation is necessary. Ubuntu and koinonia is always in a specific context; hence we now look into the contextualisation of both.

4.6 Contextualisation of ubuntu and koinonia

According to Hewitt (2012:14), contextualisation is a process in which the psychological and social foundations of communities are expressed through communication. In this communication, people come together around a given piece of information and exchange ideas, attitudes, values and feelings. Theologically, it means that contextualisation is a pastoral method that studies the particular koinonial context in which events unfold and bring forth meaning. There are three types of contextualisation, namely translational, dialectical

and liberational. All these types seek to integrate the Gospel message with a local culture in such a way that the message becomes a part of the cultural system itself, which is applicable to ubuntu and koinonia.

When African philosophy and its attributes are known and understood correctly, contextualisation becomes attainable. In this instance, it is paramount that a relation between praxis and theory must be taken into consideration. Hence, according to Bosch (2007:430), in all traditions, people do not only look at where they are at the present moment, but also at where they come from. They look for a real, reliable and universal guide to the truth and justice of God to apply as criterion in the evaluation of the context. This means that it is the Gospel which is the *norma normans*, the 'norming norm'. Our reading of the context is also a norm, but in a derived sense; it is the *norma normata*, the 'normed norm'. Of course, the Gospel can only be read from and make sense in our present context, and yet, to posit it as criterion means that it may, and often does, critique the context and our reading of it.

In agreeing with Bosch (2007), Ezigbo (2008:70) maintains that the depictions of Jesus in the Bible are not intended to be exhaustive and thus do not lock the road for discovering new images of him. The Christological implication is that African theologians can re-express Jesus Christ by using their cultural cognitive tools, namely vernacular, idiom and aphorism. Hence, while the biblical portrayals of Jesus provide us with the standard measure of what is and is not qualified as the 'Christian depictions of Jesus', they do not limit us from encountering newer meanings and terminologies to express him. These images may sometimes even be associated with the titles that are already given to the African gods. What we need to do is to give them different meanings when we apply them to Jesus.

In support of the above, Moreau states that contextualisation should be comprehensive as an interdisciplinary in its approach to culture (2006:326-327). He further adds that while contextualisation is anchored in the Bible, it brings to bear a number of disciplines, each of which has a distinct contribution to make. For example, history enables us to see how faithful Christian communities (and perhaps unfaithful ones as well) have dealt with similar or parallel issues that we face today (bearing in mind that we are not the first ones to face

similar problems). Theology helps us to think in biblical ways about a variety of issues that we are faced with today. This type of contextualisation is a two-way process in which all sides contribute. It should be done by those within the receptor cultures, rather than for them. Missionaries have much to learn from members in their target society about how to contextualise in their own cultures. Therefore, contextualisation becomes a form of mission in reverse, where one can learn from other cultures how to be more of a Christian in one's own context.

This learning, according to Hesselgrave and Rommen (1989:202), can be intensified when the interpreter accepts the claim of the text, meaning that he/she will be able to appropriate its meaning to his/her own sociocultural environment. Hence the continuity of meaning of the text is unbroken and Scripture takes on significance in a specific situation. Contextualisation then becomes the direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation.

From the above, the author contends that without understanding and knowing the context, it will be difficult to gain insight of what is said or explained to you. Communication breakdown leads to misunderstanding, and promote anarchy and mistrust. When contextualisation is understood well, though, the recipient of the message will be in a position to relate the message to him/herself. This leads to trusting the originator of the message and that promotes a relationship, so that *koinonia* is realised.

4.7 Inculturation of ubuntu and koinonia

Inculturation occurs when manifested changes in the ubuntu way of life have taken place as a result of the impact of Christian faith. This means that the process of inculturation takes effect after contextualisation, as the initial step has been attained through introducing and communicating the Gospel into the meaningful system of culture by showing how the acts of God, throughout the Bible, are the signs of love and care for the creation. This will show that *koinonia* is an action in any given situation. Rooted in the concept of *inculturation* is the

understanding that the Gospel transforms a culture, but is also transformed by culture in the way that the Gospel is formulated and interpreted anew (Hewitt 2012:17).

When contextualisation is in place – a situation in which all stake holders (Christians and non-believers) are in a position to accept each other through communal context – inculturation can materialise. Gathogo (2007:126) describes the first stage as the development of the African theologies of adaptation, indigenisation or inculturation. At this stage, the missionary theologies are challenged by the firm desire to develop an African Christianity as experienced by the Africans themselves. An appropriate strategy of *koinonia* under the guidance of the Spirit is needed for the inculturation of concepts into the African life and the Christian life, meaning in *ubuntu* and in *koinonia*, and vice versa, as they enhance each other.

Therefore, in order to inculturate African philosophy, one needs inculturation methodology as described by Ilesanmi (1995:60): “The theological hermeneutic of inculturation approximates H. Richard Niebuhr’s transformationist paradigm of Christ-Culture relationship, in which the world of man is located within the world of God, even though the human world is fallen and corrupt.” Thus, in both its ‘strong’ and ‘soft’ forms, the theology of inculturation is purposed to alleviate the anthropological malady of pauperisation that lies at the root of the identity crisis in Africa. It goes beyond a simple cultural calculus of selecting acceptable and rejecting unacceptable African elements; it rather accents a full and unabashed incarnation of the Gospel in the African condition of being.

Secondly, to make inculturation effective (Bosch 2007:454), it must not just take Jesus to the people and cultures, but must also allow Christian faith the chance to start a history of its own in each nation and allow them to experience Christ. Inculturation should be a two-way process, namely simultaneous inculturation of Christianity and Christianisation of culture. The gospel must remain Good News while becoming, up to a certain point, a cultural phenomenon, taking into account the meaning systems that are already present in the context. On the one hand, it offers culture “the knowledge of the divine mysteries”, while on the other hand, it helps them “to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought”.

Cognisance should be taken of the fact that inculturation is also embracing, since culture is an all-embracing reality, as mentioned in chapter two. Where there is isolation, the encounter between gospel and culture does not take place at a meaningful level. Only where the encounter is inclusive will this experience be a force that is animating and renewing the culture from within (Bosch 2007:455).

In support of Bosch, Odozor (2008:606) maintains that every person that has been created in the image and likeness of God is infused with the spark of divine light; therefore, every culture, as the creation of human beings, is also infused with God's grace. While the church seeks to bring Christ to a particular culture because it contains the seeds of truth, inculturation also helps in clarifying to the church certain aspects of the truth of what is human and humane. Hence inculturation as dialogue with any given culture can never imply a total assault on a nation's way of life with a view to replace it, but should try to enhance it. Therefore, any bringing of the gospel without *koinonia* with the people will result in a transfer of the sender's culture.

Thirdly, Odozor (2008:606) adds that inculturation as an attempt to dialogue with a given culture and tradition must be carried out with that culture in its living and breathing form. This current cultural practice can harbour significant distortions of a nation's way of life and may need reform and renewal. Yet it is the same culture (as known and lived by the particular nation) that harbours or generates the values that today's people hold important and by which they construe reality. Therefore, it is with this culture as carrier and index of life today that Christians must be in dialogue and also heal the community. The past might participate in this discussion to inform, illumine or guide the present.

This dialogue, according to Ukpong (2001:513), involves rethinking and re-expressing the Christian message in terms of the African cultural milieu. The task entails the confrontation of the Western and African cultures so that faith may enlighten both cultures and in the process result in the interpenetration and integration of both. The basic data of revelation, as contained in Scripture and tradition, are critically reflected upon in order to give them

African cultural expression. From this is born a new theological reflection that is both African and Christian.

The author agrees with Bosch (2007), Odozor (2008), Hewitt (2012) and Ukpong (2001), because dialogue in *koinonia* and *ubuntu* is paramount in the inculturation process; it must, though, be augmented by knowledge of the culture which you want to inculturate. Cultural criticism has to be an important ingredient in inculturation. Otherwise, the theologian runs the risk of succumbing to culturalism, an uncritical appreciation that can go so far as to insist that the Gospel must be judged by the culture, rather than the other way around. Paul observes in Romans 8:19-22 that since culture is a human creation and is therefore marked by sin, it too needs to be healed, ennobled, and perfected by the Gospel. Cultural criticism must, however, proceed from a deep knowledge of the culture. Dialogue breeds *koinonia* and enhances communication and understanding in inculturation. Thus dialogue is imperative between *koinonia* and African philosophy and in this way, inculturation can be attained. Through dialogue one can discover the revelation of God in African philosophy and vice versa.

4.8 Conclusion

The chapter has identified the contact points of African philosophy and *koinonia*, namely God, salvation, interdependence (fellowship), expression of belonging through ancestorism or Christ, and hospitality, thereby finding ways in which they can be inculturated to result in *ubuntu* and *koinonia* enriching and helping each other.

It has further been shown that knowledge of one's cultural background is important, because it informs one of the way forward. Hence Mashau (2009:114) maintains that it will help the church to construct sound intercultural strategies and methodologies; develop a model of dealing with the question of 'unity in diversity' within the one body of Christ; and become involved in interreligious engagement in a secular pluralistic society such as the democratic South Africa, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

The *ubuntu* concept in an African context can be used to establish koinonia, but as it stands in the movement to revive traditional African religion, it is biblically not acceptable. It seeks not only to promote communality among the living, but also with the ancestors who are regarded in African religiosity as the 'living dead' (Mashau 2009:119). In complementing Mashau, Bavinck (1949:51revised) maintains that inculturation can be a success through proper practice of contextualisation, in which God becomes a God of culture who comes into a culture to renew and re-establish the distorted and deteriorated nation.

The process of contextualisation and inculturation is meant to shape and redirect the good while reforming the bad in order to put all of it in service of the living God, without compromising the essence of the gospel of Christ and without making photocopies of the Western church and its theology. Missionaries must make serious attempts to transplant the truth of the gospel in the foreign soil that they seek to serve (Bavinck 1949:186).

The above is supported by Thesnaar (2008:70) and Karecki (2009), who maintain that the value of rituals in the Christian context is in terms of God who invites them to participate in that life of love and meaning. These liturgies should not just be based on prescribed liturgies from a liturgy manual, but should rather be creative and contextual, based on the Bible. Where people are afforded space to be able to participate actively within a liturgy that they have helped to create, it has much more meaning for them and helps them to experience God in a very specific way.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAY FORWARD

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters brought insight in and knowledge of the fact that when the Western missionaries wanted to replace African philosophy with Western philosophy/culture, they did it without *koinonia*. Attributes of both *koinonia* and *ubuntu* were also highlighted, as well as the fact that if both are well understood, points of convergence are eminent. These points can serve as a datum for the reciprocal enhancement of both Christianity and African philosophy, resulting in a relational fellowship to the glorification of God. This will lead to an establishment of reconciliatory communities in which negative aspects such as racialism, tribalism and feminism do not prevail and where *shalom* is prevalent.

This chapter will focus on formulating the features of reconciliatory communities and the practical implications thereof. God uses the church as an agent in *missio Dei* to establish reconciled communities in which *koinonia* and *ubuntu* meet each other to transform and heal society. Therefore, a way must be found for the missional church to do this. In order to achieve this objective, studying and analysing of relevant comparative literature will be done.

5.2 Background

It is paramount that special mention should be made of the fact that African philosophy is centred in communalism and *ubuntu*, which is founded on extending a hand of friendship to your neighbours and visitors. This notion will assist the study to achieve its objective of building reconciled faith communities, because the contacts points (as illustrated in chapter four) are embedded in them. Furthermore, if the Western missionaries understood the African worldview and perception of humanity, they could have practised *koinonia* with the Africans. It would then have been easier for the missionaries to pave the way for the incarnational God, who is not ashamed to enter fully and completely into African culture.

This entrance could have enhanced ubuntu and communalism, and everlasting relationships of peace could be in place, instead of the short-lived peace treaties that are experienced presently. The church as reconciled community participates in shalom, so that there can be a koinonia that brings Good News of the Year of the Lord to the poor. The author contends that through sin and hatred, the image of God has been tainted and that wars are looking at humans from a different perspective – not as part of creation, but as objects with no feeling. Furthermore, in war the enemy become ‘they’, are dehumanised and seen as dangerous objects that do not belong to ‘our’ tribe. Hence the church is called to be missional as an agent that advocates peace and fellowship to transform the society to live in the shalom of God and to create reconciled societies.

5.3 Missional church

A missional church is a church that is shaped by participating in God’s mission of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17), which is to set things right in a broken, sinful world; to redeem it; and to restore it to what God has always intended for the world. Missional churches see themselves not so much as sending, but as being sent.

Therefore, “being a missional church is all about a sense of identity shared pervasively in a congregation that knows it is caught up into God’s intent for the world” (Barret 2004:36). The missional church is an instrument, agent and sign of the in-breaking reign of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, a reign that lies at the heart of the Gospel (Müller 2008:56); it represents an agent for the mission of God’s encounter with history and culture (Africanism included). Being an agent of the reign of God implies that the church lives in koinonia with God and the cosmos. Therefore, it is enveloped in a power struggle with the powers and principalities of the surrounding contexts (Ephesians 6:12).

This type of church is called to be reconciliatory, not controlled by idolatrous power, not conformed to the common sense of the surrounding culture, but shaping its life and ministry around the life and message of Jesus Christ through inculturation (Müller 2008:57). To achieve inculturation, the church as *missio ecclesiae* is sent to represent God and God’s

mission “in and over against the world, pointing to God in its mission”, to witness to the fullness of the promise of God’s reign and to participate in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil (Meiring 2008:792; Bosch 2007:391). However, for the sake of this study, focus will be on *leitourgia* (worship); *kerugma* (proclamation); *diakonia* (service) and *koinonia* (fellowship) in relation to ubuntu.

5.4 Functions of the *missio ecclesiae* in bringing inculturation

5.4.1 Leitourgia (worship) and the view on God and ancestorism

In the New Testament, the Greek word *leitourgia* is found; it means ‘a service to the benefit of the people’ (Deddens 1993:15). The word *liturgy*, which is also used in connection with the worship service, is derived from the Greek word. In the first place, this word stands for the position and work of Christ as Office-bearer, in and through which He has brought the Old Testament cultus to its culmination by offering the true sacrifice and by completing his high priestly work in the true sanctuary (Hebrews 8:2-6; 10:11-13); in ubuntu, though, veneration and adoration are directed towards the ancestors, because they are the ones who pacify lives and are worth to be worshipped. Consequently, *koinonia* and *leitourgia* is not evident, because their god is approached in times of turmoil and mishaps, not as the Father who wants to have a koinonial relationship with his creation.

The place of liturgy is an act of worship (Letsosa 2005:1); the worship service in the church, as a sent agent, is of paramount importance, because this is where contact with the living God is experienced and to which all people are invited to join in this koinonial presence with the living God. It transcends ubuntu and communalism with direct *koinonia* with the living God and sharing in his shalom through the atonement of Jesus Christ. It is through liturgy that we bring thanksgiving, praise, worship and prayer to God as the Creator, acknowledging his mercy which we do not deserve, due to our sinful nature. It brings us closer to God, conversing with him through psalms, hymns and prayer, and thereby communicating with God, whereby the two parties of the covenant (man and God) come together. God is the First Party: The initiative goes out from him. He calls his people (second party) to meet with him,

but the two parties meet each other in the reciprocity of love. Therefore, the activity is one of response which is brought about by God, who takes the initiative as the First Party.

If people praise God and acknowledge him, they know that He is the Creator and the only one to venerate at all times, thereby obeying the first commandment (Exodus 20:3-4). This means that liturgy should and must remain directed towards God, because through liturgy, we remember the God that acts; in all forms and expressions, liturgy must signify and enact this central focus on God. The focus can be lost easily when different forms of worship are devised only to attract people, satisfying their tastes and preferences. The quality of worship is not determined by what people get out of it, but what they put into it (what they give to God in it): adoration, praise, confession, faith, love and loyalty, thereby being formed by it as a reconciled community (Müller 2008:61). “Within history, worship is mission and mission is worship. Within history, the church glorifies God by making him known to the world.” (Chester & Timmis 2007:84.)

However, because the African view of God is that He is far, yet near and that He is an ancestor, for inculturation to take place, ancestral worship, belief in the spirit world and occultism can no longer be dispelled as African myths. People are offering veneration on a daily basis to appease the ancestors and God to prevent calamity, and some are possessed by evil spirits in the process. The reality of this power can be experienced when people are denied the right to be baptised and incorporated in the body of Christ by their families (Mashau 2009:124). In this case, a missional church must proclaim the power of the cross. This power and the victory that Christ has attained by his resurrection should empower them to engage without fear in spiritual warfare. Bavinck (1960:55) says the following: “Salvation means that the guilt that rested on man and made him God’s enemy and a slave of the demonic powers has been taken away by the wholly mysterious event of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ.” Humankind receives this salvation from God as a gift that makes all things new through Jesus Christ, but also helps in dealing effectively with the evil powers that are encountered. Africans who are not only secularised, but also influenced by the resurgence of the ATR (African Traditional Religion), must hear the message of salvation that brings total deliverance, even from demonic powers, witchcraft and ancestral powers. This is due to the fact that salvation in ubuntu is seen in relation to the community. However,

what is important is that Africans should be invited to share in the *koinonia* with God and with all the believers.

According to August (2005), the Nicene Creed of the fourth century offers the following fundamental insight into the Christian faith: The God in whom Christians believe, is not simply part of creation and of human history, but is in control and ensures that reconciled communities will eventually reach the aim for which they have been created. At the same time, God is involved and present in creation and in history; as mentioned in the Belhar Confession, He is particularly present in the suffering of the discarded sections of human kind and creation. The concept of *koinonia* has a special function in this confession of the Christian faith. The unity of the three Persons of the Godhead is based on the closest fellowship and communication between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, with the result that each of the three shares the life and involvement of the other. The Holy Spirit carries this treasure of unity and love into creation and entrusts it to the church as the *koinonia*, which is to transform human relationships and the relationship between humans and creation.

The abovementioned is supported by Müller (2008:619), who maintains that worship² celebrates the gracious presence of God in the midst of the gathered community of faith. It happens on special occasions, in specific locations and on specific times. Worship, therefore, has a public character. In this sense, it is also the central act which celebrates with joy and thanksgiving God's presence and promises for the world in the public realm.

It celebrates the coming of God's reign in its public proclamation through words and deeds, as well as in its liturgical practices and disciplines that are inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the Old and New Testaments, worship is the glue that holds God's people together and energises them for God's high calling in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

² Worship is a priestly service of believers (Van der Walt 1982:5, cited by Letsosa 2005:1).

5.4.2 Koinonia (fellowship) and the view on relatedness, collectivism and feminism

According to Karecki (2009:34), the movement from a koinonial/contemplative encounter with the Trinity to a missiological encounter is a natural progression, since the Trinity is a sending community: the Father sends the Son, and the Father and the Son sends the Holy Spirit. The Spirit then sends the church to participate in the *missio Dei*. Through Christ's ascension, a place has been given to the church as the body of Christ in the presence of God and we enter that space of love and belonging through baptism. In each encounter with God, the reconciled communities open the way for the reign of God. The experience of God's embrace fills us with wonder at the mystery that stands before us in each human encounter. However, in ubuntu, collectivism and relatedness is communally based; if one is an outsider, the cloak of collectivism does not embrace you unless you are somehow regarded as one of them. The principle of "you are because we are" is practised. That is why, sequel to Mbeki's "I am an African" speech, there was an element of exclusiveness which did not include people born outside Africa (as mentioned in chapter one); the 'we' was prime and obvious. Christians need to express that, despite our colour, creed and mother tongue, we are one in koinonia as children of God.

This means that if we have allowed our encounter with God to transform us, we will more easily meet the others in love and openness without any desire to control or manipulate them; it will create reconciled communities who are koinonial and spiritually rooted. Communion is the process of "de-centring the ego where self no longer obstructs us and where we can enter into other people's concerns with genuine interest and concern" (Karecki 2009:34). In communion with each other, we create a space for others that God creates for us in the Trinity. This space is shaped and expended by God in the measure that we desire to be participants in God's life.

According to De Neui (2007:102), *communitas* is a bond of oneness beyond ordinary community, an actual communion that does not destroy individuality, but brings the full gifts of each participant alive. It is a levelling process in which "he who is high must experience what it is like to be low," yet accomplished in a setting that is accepting, life giving and unifying.

Therefore, communion flourishes where there is mutuality and solidarity. In a setting like this, one approaches the other with mutuality and vulnerability. In communion, we are willing to wait as the mystery of the other continues to unfold (Karecki 2009:5). This kind of communion can be deepened with critical theological reflection and that is what the missional church should practice: to embrace each other as a reconciled family that belongs to Christ as the Head of the church. That level of fellowship or communion will allay fears of inferiority or superior complexes and Christians will see each other as God's children, without discrimination of any type such as colour, race or gender.

Koinonia should serve as an imperative to Christians, imploring them to be true to their faith and to bear witness by sharing the life-in-fellowship in this country to enhance reconciliation. Participation in the life of the crucified and risen Lord should change their relationship towards one another and open the way for others to join in. Thus, allowing believers to participate in the life of God and the victory of the risen Lord who overcame the forces of death appears to be the main thrust of koinonia. This koinonia is inclusive of all, even the marginalised and the poor, because of the solidarity in sharing sufferings by the realised reconciled communities. With reference to Paul's proclamation of the Gospel, koinonia is also the participation of Christians in the life of the crucified and risen Lord through the Spirit, and the counter force against all forces of exclusion and division that disrupt humankind and creation. Therefore, Christians understand the longing for unity and the way in which ubuntu realises it and invites them to partake in this life-giving koinonia (Colossians 3:11). They should, therefore, give one another mutual support in suffering and should also share joy and suffering.

In the book of the Corinthians, for example, the fact that God has gone out of his way to overcome his children's forsakenness by entering their situation through the incarnation of Jesus Christ was the reason that was given by Paul to motivate the Christians in Corinth to go out of their way to participate in helping the situation of the Christians in Jerusalem by sending them a collection as a symbol of their unity. Such koinonia would enrich the lives of those who would contribute. "Those who were far off having come near" meant involving the marginalised in acting as an instrument of spiritual growth that transforms human relationships. The dividing wall had been torn down and all are one in Christ (Ephesians 2).

Ubuntu can be enhanced if it accepts the Biblical principle that we are 'one in Christ'. This notion, which is clouded in the African worldview, should be cleared. Clearing is imminent as we experience the appointment of women in higher posts in government and church, which was not the custom. Through the implementation of these changes, koinonia will be experienced and a society that respects the rights and dignity of all will be seen.

From the outset, the intervention of God in Jesus Christ has confronted structures and practices which excluded people from access to God's kingdom. God's love and forgiveness were to be extended to all humankind. In his new political, economic and cultural context within the Roman Empire, the apostle Paul highlighted the cosmic dimension of the church and of the koinonia that holds it together. The church of Jesus Christ transcends all structures of exclusion. The Roman Empire relied on control of the resistance of subjugated nations by military power, making use of the divisions between peoples and co-opting collaborators. These were methods of control that were incompatible with the Gospel. It resulted in recurring persecutions of Christians in different parts of the empire (August 2005). They countered this with their koinonia with Christ and each other, and therefore witnessed to the power of the Cross.

This understanding of koinonia is essential for all Christians, united in their faith in their atoning, reconciling and redemptive Lord, Jesus Christ, and in their conviction that his followers are to be agents of reconciliation and promoters of love, justice and peace. The gospel confirms that Christians as the church are called by God to be agents of reconciliation amongst groups and people who are caught up in a history of conflict and enmity. Unfortunately, the church has to confess its inability and slothfulness to act as reconciler in conflicts between groups and people. When the church confesses its sins in partaking in conflict and excluding people, its witness becomes much stronger, because it is then the example of God's redemptive grace. This brings us to the message of the church through the proclamation of the Good News.

5.4.3 Kerugma (proclamation) and the view on sin, salvation and a faith community

The Greek verb *kerusso* means 'to preach or proclaim'. The New Testament uses this verb frequently, especially in the four Gospels. Speaking of *kerugmatic* means emphasising that churches or missionary organisations place a high premium on preaching, the verbal communication of the Gospel.

Proclamation of the Gospel is a decisive characteristic of Christianity and an important method to get involved in Christian mission. Initially, when the Gospel was proclaimed to people, Jesus preached to small and large groups. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to a great crowd. Paul proclaimed the Gospel in synagogues, private houses and open spaces. He even conducted a dialogue with Greek philosophers on the Areopagus in Athens. Throughout the history of the Christian church, preaching was central and was seen as indispensable. Indeed, the church is a religion of the Word. Without the *kerugma*, there can be no Gospel or Good News (Wright 2010:179), which means that without the Gospel, there can be no Christian church.

Wright (2010:179) maintains that the mission of God is to bring Good News to a world in which bad news is a depressing endemic. The work of the Gospel (Philippians 2:22) refers primarily to the task of making the Good News known by using all possible means of communication at whatever cost. There is an intrinsically verbal dimension to the Gospel. It is a story that needs to be told in order that its truth and significance may be understood (Wright 2010:194). Through evangelism, in which the living God is made known, there is life and *koinonia*.

Evangelism is one of the vehicles to proclaim the Gospel; however, it should be done in a creative and responsible fashion. Letsosa (2008:112) contends that God blessed people with the gift of creativity, meaning that we have to be creative in whatever we do, especially in the context of communication. We also have to be contextual; our speech only becomes meaningful within a specific context. Context colours the words and gestures that we use. Jesus himself was the master of this; when He recruited his disciples, who were fishermen,

He challenged them to become fishers of men. To the woman at the well, He spoke about water. To Zaccheus, he spoke about business. In communicating with Pilate, he used political jargon. Christians must speak a language that the audience is familiar with and understand (Gallimore 2001:109-110), so that they may identify with the Gospel and understand it (Cunville 2001:114). One should always remember that people are more often open to someone who speaks in the same language and comes from the same cultural background.

The missional church should bring the Word of God to the Africans as a message that is directed to them. It should speak 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 (Mashau 2009:124). Bavinck (1960:129) noted rightly:

Preaching must thus be an encounter, an encounter not with a part of a person, not only with his reason, or 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 which is clouded by sin.

Kerugma will bring Good News about the redemption from sin. To Africans, sin is community related, because sin is against the community, not against God. African salvation is the presence of community, because community can heal individual estrangement through belonging to an extended family. Africans' faith is also based on belonging to the community: "I am because we are." Therefore, Mwaura (2007:205) maintains that the missional church should preach the Good News about the transformation of cultures. When people have the Good News and turn to God in Jesus Christ, they express their response creatively in a new way of community, structure, rituals, celebrations, reflection and spirituality. Until the Gospel effects this transformation through reconciled communities that are inculturated in the African context, taking families and tribes as understood in ubuntu seriously, we shall continue lamenting about an 'uncompleted mission', a 'superficial Gospel' and 'schizophrenic spirituality'. Dedicated scholarly theologising and evangelisation are the mission challenges for the church in Africa, for there is great need for sound theological formation.

To counter sin, the church should preach about the kingdom of God, which is a present reality. People should be made aware of the fact that the first coming of Christ will finally be realised in the second coming. The kingdom Gospel does not promote the spirit of withdrawal from the world or from relations, but rather salvation that has an impact on one's involvement in every sphere of society, especially in a form of relationship as realised in ubuntu. A new society should be created and social life should be renewed through new relations. The change in the heart of man must lead to a change in the community (Mashau 2009:125).

When change takes place, it also affects the circumstances, which lose their force, because change through salvation does not only affect the soul, but the entire being. This message should be communicated unambiguously to African Christians who are influenced by traditionalism, secularism and pluralism (Mashau 2009:124). Christians are called to lead an exemplary life in order to demonstrate that they are in Christ and Christ is in them through faith. African Christians must become regular Christians, not just on Sundays or when they are putting on their church garb. The dichotomy between a secular and sacred life must be discarded.

Sin can only be redeemed through God who chose to do so in Genesis 12, not by whisking an individual off to heaven, but by calling the community of blessing into existence (Wright 2010:73). Starting with one person and his barren wife, He transformed them miraculously into a large family within several generations, then into a nation called Israel and eventually through Christ into a multinational community of believers from every nation. All through this story, God has been moulding a people for himself. This means that the missional thrust of Genesis 12:1-3 is also ecclesiological.

The origin of the church goes back, not just to Pentecost, but to Abraham. The command of Jesus and the leading of the Holy Spirit combined to send the church out on a mission to the ends of the earth, as those who have received the blessing of Abraham should be the means of passing it on. Hence the idea of 'missional church' is far from a new idea, although it may have taken on a particular cultural form in recent years in reaction to an institutionalised

church that has lost touch with its own *raison d'être* (purpose and reason for existence). The church should thus be a 'service' to communities to bring them balm when they are hurt and solace when they are in need of it, and love and fellowship amongst nations.

5.4.4 Diakonia (service) and the view on communalism

From an ubuntu perspective, communalism is collectivism and relatedness. This implies that everyone is expected to serve others by offering love, assistance and support when the need arises. It further promotes social hierarchies that are community based (Gathogo 2008:42; Christians 2004:243). In Christianity, the purpose of the church is to be sent into the world, like Jesus, to serve. This is the natural expression of our love for our neighbours: we love, we go and we serve, and in doing this, we have (or should have) no ulterior motive. The Gospel lacks visibility if we merely preach it and lacks credibility if we who preach it are only interested in souls and have no concern for the welfare of people's bodies, situations and communities. The reason for our acceptance of social responsibility, though, is not primarily in order to give the Gospel the visibility or credibility it would otherwise lack, but rather out of simple, uncomplicated compassion. Love has no need to justify itself; it merely expresses itself in service whenever it sees the need.

According to August (2005), the purpose of justification is the transformation of humans into subjects who do justice and who liberate the truth that is being held captive by the structures of injustice. God's final aim is not merely to save humans from his wrath, but to enable them by faith to fulfil his will, as revealed in the Torah, by living up to his revealed truth.

5.5 The author's own point of view

Due to the above, the author agrees with August (2005), as supported by Heim (2005:199), who maintains that God always manifests a loving and merciful purpose that seeks to bring creation into participation in the divine life. God seeks communion and never fails to fulfil the relationship, to the greatest capacity possible, in harmony and respect for the freedom of the creature. Every response to the divine initiative has its reward. When creatures receive

and value any dimension of relationship with God, He both fulfils that aim to the greatest extent its terms allow and offers to expand it through communion in other dimensions. At the same time that this constancy in God's purpose is emphasised, the importance of the particularity of religious traditions, religious witness, and spiritual decision and conversion are highlighted as well. Religious differences have decisive value, a value that the universal witness of each of the various traditions rightly affirms.

According to this perspective, religions play a truly providential role. God's activity in the world is not confined to a narrow history of salvation. His grace enfolds the world and touches it in many dimensions. The religions reflect the fact that every positive human response to any dimension of God's manifestation and revelation meets only God's "yes" of grace in return. However, we should remember that the Cross is also "no" to the world; humans may also respond negatively and every response to the divine initiative has its consequences. Every relationship with God that proceeds on the basis of some dimension of God's self-giving to us meets a fulfilment for which it aims and hopes, and opens toward the full *koinonia* of the divine life. The Christian universal witness is that to each of these cases, the knowledge and love of Christ bring yet another dimension, one that knits all these together in communion and so constitutes salvation. This witness must be the preaching of the living Word. God creates by speaking and in Ezekiel 37, the Word gives life to dry bones. Preaching this living Word is to call people into *koinonia* with the living God.

Lastly, when the communities are empowered by the attributes of the *missio Dei* which are controlled and coordinated by the church as the agent, sent by God (as He is the initiator) to perform his plan, they will become faith-driven and reconciled communities who are committed to serve God and embrace faith in Jesus Christ, and effective servants and witnesses of God's calling. The interactive consultations (two-way communication) between church, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the reconciled communities will promote cooperation and understanding of mission, *koinonia* will be the winner and peace (*shalom*) will prevail.

Pursuant to the above, August (2005) makes the following call to the church: “Can the churches and their members make a contribution towards a change that would help our country and our society to live up to its name, the ‘new South Africa’?” The author suggests that a hermeneutical excursion of the Pauline usage of *koinonia* might help the church to take its fundamental ministry of reconciliation seriously in our contemporary South African context.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has indicated a way forward that will assist the missional church, missionaries and all communities, despite their colour, race and creed, to treat each other as brothers and sisters, and be one family in Christ. It has further showed that *ubuntu* can be enhanced by *koinonia*, as long as cognisance are taken of cultural aspects such as *Sitz im Lebem* (‘setting in life’) and they proceed from informed minds that are able to contextualise by preaching the Gospel in the ‘language’ with which the recipients agree and that they understand.

It was also highlighted in the chapter that through contextualising communication, the message will be explicit and well accepted by the hearers. When the one hand knows what the other hand is doing, *koinonia* can be effective; this means that when Christians know what *ubuntu* and communalism mean to the culture of Africans, as embedded in the African philosophy, misunderstanding and untrustworthiness will be eradicated and the platform will be set for inculturation.

The world needs to know about Christ; this is achievable if the understanding of and respect for each culture can be primary to all. In a way, this will bring about *koinonial* communities that are *missio Dei* centred. Love, as embedded in *koinonia*, will mean that Christians will embrace each other, despite man-made differences in culture.

The future of the church in Africa, therefore, depends on sound commitment and honest theological reflection, not mere on numbers (Mwaura 2007:205). The ongoing criticism of the prosperity Gospel in charismatic churches as being impoverished, disempowering and unbiblical will do little to stem the tide of those who subscribe to it. In the absence of alternative teaching that appeals to people's intellect and spirituality, thousands of Christians will continue to patronise charismatic churches. Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is, as Bediako(1998) says, about "discipling the nations, the conversion of things that make people into nations, the shared process of thinking, the shared and common attitudes, world views, languages, and cultural habits of thoughts, behaviour and practice".

This is supported by Barrett (2008:15), who states that "the Church must come out of its stagnation. We must move out again in the open air of intellectual discussion with the world and risk saying controversial things if we are to get down to serious problems of life".

Barret is supported by Ezigbo (2008:64), who maintains that the reality of the matter is that Christology is a human construct – a human attempt to imagine and appropriate God and his manifestation in the Christ Event. As a project, theology of God or of Christ is done in human language and, more importantly, is done for humans. Hence it makes sense that the collection of human experiences, cultural values and languages must impact the fabrics and structure of our theologies. An adequate contextual Christology should, therefore, inspire and reflect a dialectical or mutual conversation between Jesus Christ and the histories and experiences of the recipients of the Christology. It is only when Scriptures and histories and experiences of the people of Africa interact mutually that fresh, relevant and befitting contextual Christologies can emerge.

To achieve more interaction, the study endorses the continuation of this type of dialogue, expounded by the study, so that fresh avenues can be discovered that can enhance the formation or establishment of reconciled communities on an ongoing basis.

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