

**THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE EXTENSION OF THE
KINGDOM OF GOD**

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Roderick Botsis for his tireless devotion to building a church worthy of God's Kingdom, to Ingrid Botsis, for always serving her Lord in the church even when the church has been less than perfect and to Button, I pray that you will grow up in a church that guides you to become a person who worships God in spirit and in truth.

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Introduction

Millions of people gather together each week to express their love and devotion for God. The majority gather together with others that they know, in a community that they largely agree with either in practise or theology if not both. They gather in what are commonly known as churches. They gather together because this is what they have been told to do, because this is what they want to do, because this is what has always been done. In each place they declare membership of the Body of Christ, obedience to the commands of Jesus and participation in the kingdom of God. They desire to see God's kingdom throughout the known universe. They look to the past with traditions and testimonies, and look to the future with visions and plans. Herein lies the problem. They have similar desires, similar goals but are not united. They speak of unity, they speak of commonality in purpose and work, but in many situations they are not united, not working together. Indeed, many of these gatherings do not even do the work of the church of God. While expressing membership of God's kingdom, they do not do the work of the kingdom of God. While expressing obedience to the Lordship of Jesus, they do not obey the commands of Jesus, nor do they fulfil the call of Jesus¹.

Not only is there a problem of the work of these gatherings, but there is the problem of marrying two concepts that have become divided in the present. What relationship do the church and the kingdom of God have, if any, and what is the role of each partner in that relationship. If these churches are not doing the work of God, what is the work of the church? What do we offer those millions who gather together, faithfully trusting those in leadership to guide them to a deeper devotion with God? What is Jesus calling us to do as the Church, and therefore, what are we calling them to do? This is the

¹ Throughout this paper we will be referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the masculine form. This is neither to promote masculine superiority nor to promote feminine inferiority because neither exists or is true. Rather, it is to maintain clarity with the references and quotations used throughout. It would create too much confusion to reference other works and constantly interface between male and female. In the same way references and quotations that use the masculine or feminine in other respects will be maintained.

problem before us. It is a problem that has not been answered by the church for some time. It is a focus that is receiving increasing attention as the push of post-modern relativism moves forward. It is the right focus for the church to have as our calling is to follow Jesus and we must always be checking that this is what we are doing. Therefore, we are going to search for and define the role of the local church in extending the kingdom of God. Firstly, we need to understand the kingdom of God. We will be examining the reality of the kingdom of God, specifically looking at the nature of the king of the Kingdom and how that nature affects the kingdom. Secondly, we will examine the reality of the church, specifically looking at the relationship between the universal church and local church, and then bringing the two concepts of the kingdom of God and the church together. Finally we are going to examine the reality of the work of the church, specifically how the church extends the kingdom of God through the works of evangelism, discipleship and reconciliation.

The kingdom of God and the church are broad concepts that impact a wide audience. This audience is too wide a scope for one thesis. Therefore, we are going to refrain from addressing the effects of this discussion within every context and place. Instead we are going to limit ourselves to its effects and impact on the church in South Africa. Furthermore, we are going to limit ourselves to the discussion of the church in the present and immediate future. It is not our scope to discuss the role of the church for all times and all contexts. Finally, this thesis will, at times, be limited by my own personal experiences of the church and the kingdom of God. The reason for this limitation is because of the current pressure of post-modernism on current thought. Personal experience often carries more weight and while this should not replace logical and cohesive arguing it should have its place. While we may draw on knowledge and experiences outside of this time and context, in other words drawing on transferable principles, we will attempt to interpret and apply these principles and this thesis to the specific context of the present South African environment of the church.

My academic upbringing is a diorama of perspectives and viewpoints. I grew up in a Presbyterian church, served for a year in Youth for Christ on a music-and-drama team, studied in an evangelical bible college and later on through UNISA, and worked in the Methodist church in South Africa and now work in an independent conservative evangelical church in America. Thus my standpoint or perspective is varied. I find myself drawn to the soundness of evangelicalism, but challenged by the passion of liberation theology. I do not agree with the logic of liberalism, but at the same time I am appalled with the arrogance of conservatism or fundamentalism. I, therefore, see myself as examining this thesis from the standpoint of liberation evangelical theology or evangelical liberation theology. This is a personal description and does not stand under the scrutiny of strict liberation theology or evangelical theology. I am by no means middle of the road, though, as I strongly believe in the authority and canon of Scripture and the acceptance of basic fundamental truths. However, the list of these truths, and the specific viewpoint of these truths may well differ from traditional evangelicalism, especially conservative evangelicalism.

Therefore, as we have diagnosed the problem, and determined the scope of this writing, as well as detailing the approach and perspective we now turn to the development of the thesis: the role of the local church in extending the kingdom of God. We begin our discussion by looking at the concept of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is a phrase that has much written about it, is greatly debated and often misunderstood. I am not even sure if it can be understood, because it is God's kingdom, and he defines it in so many ways using so many stories and parables to capture different pictures of this unique concept. The very fact that it is defined using parables and stories tells us that it is a concept well beyond our experience and understanding. Yet strangely, I feel that it is a concept so simple in design so as to confound us in its complexity.

"Basileia tou Theou" is the phrase from where we translate this concept the Kingdom of God. Jesus uses it most often in Mark, Luke and John. Matthew uses the term Kingdom of Heaven, which is considered to be the equivalent for his writing to his Jewish audience. Our understanding of the role of the local church must be guided and informed by our understanding of the kingdom of God. It is the reason why we begin here. Our goal in this chapter is to discover a definition for the Kingdom of God.

"Basileia tou Theou" is the term translated as "the kingdom of God". The term itself is used to describe the rule or reign of God. The term *Basileia tou Theou* is usually translated in reference to the reality or expectation of God ruling. It seldom, if ever, is translated as an actual place or specific locality. Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida describe *Basileia tou Theou* as used in Mark 6:23 as "area or district ruled by a king -'kingdom'" (Louw et al 1988:16). Elsewhere, however, it is described as "...to rule, to be a king, to reign, rule, reign." (1988:479). Louw and Nida specifically state that "it is generally a serious mistake to translate the phrase 'Basileia tou Theou' (the kingdom of God) as referring to a particular area in which God rules. The meaning of this phrase in the New Testament involves not a particular place or special period of time but the fact of ruling." (1988:480). *Basileia tou Theou* "...points essentially to the rule of God rather than to any place or time" (1988:123). The kingdom of God is not a reference to a state, nation, social awareness or action group, a church or group of churches. It is a reference to God's reign, his rule over his creation, the act and fact of his ruling.

Colin Brown supports this belief. "The original meaning of the term 'basileia' ...is best translated office of king, kingly rule" (Brown 1976:373). While he does go on to say that it can refer to the area of which a king rules, the term specifically relates to the sway of authority or amount of power of the king as determined by the area that he rules. "Besides this meaning there is a second meaning which emphasizes the geographical aspect of 'basileia'; for the status of a king is shown by the area over which he reigns." (1976:373). The

Kingdom of God is a term that "...implies the essential idea that God rules as King." (1976:377).

Louw, Nida and Brown agree that the term *Basileia tou Theou* is a reference to power, authority, ruling, or the act of reigning. We must hold this concept firmly before us as we examine the concept of the Kingdom of God deeper. While we have an understanding of a brief translation of the *Basileia tou Theou*, we must determine the nature of this kingdom for ourselves, as the very nature of the kingdom of God will impact greatly on the nature of the church and its work in the world.

Section 1: The Kingdom of God

Chapter 1: Selecting the Wool: The King of the Kingdom

An understanding of God best describes the nature of His kingdom. The nature of God will directly affect the nature of his kingdom, especially when the kingdom of God is understood more correctly as the reign of God. Anyone who has experienced a team sport will know that two, maybe three people are incredibly influential for that team – the coach, the manager and the captain. All three will influence the nature of that team. They will even influence the character and actions of the team mates. Furthermore, the morale of a team will impact the team's performance and nature. It will also affect the character and actions of the team. When the coach, manager and captain are in agreement over the vision the team thrives and moves forward. When the morale of the team is high the team is successful, even when it loses a game, as the team grows and strengthens itself through victories and losses. While the coach, manager and captain fulfil different functions and so impact the team, the morale in one sense is the team itself. The coach, manager and captain may be in agreement, but if the morale is bad, the team is not a team, even if it wins. In the same way the morale may be high, but if the vision is unclear, if the coach, manager and captain are in disagreement, the team is not a team; it is just a highly motivated group. One of the best examples of a team and the impact of the nature of the leader(s) on that team can be seen in the South African World Cup Rugby team of 1994. In a rare show of skill, motivation and team spirit the team was led by a united coaching and management staff, a charismatic and motivated captain and they achieved the goal of the tournament: world champions. Furthermore, their morale and the support of the team by President Mandela influenced and was a uniting force for the nation of South Africa. The role of the coach, manager and captain as well as the morale of the team influenced the nation.

Similarly, as one looks back in history we can see how a king's character, nature and style of ruling directly influences the reign of that king and the subjects of the kingdom. The drive of Alexander the Great to further the Macedonian Empire, the passion of Julius Caesar to grow the Roman Empire, the lunacy of Nero in furthering the fall of the Roman Empire all influenced the nature (manner, beliefs, personality and more) of the Macedonians and Romans respectively. Nowadays, the presidents and prime ministers of countries directly affect the countries they rule as well as the manner in which they are viewed. America's current foreign policy, and more specifically the stance and nature of its President, have direct bearing on the nature of Americans (either embarrassment or pride), and affect the view of the rest of the world (either support or antagonism).

In the same way, but exponentially greater in influence, the king of the kingdom of God influences the morale, nature, character and actions of the subjects of that kingdom, and the viewpoint of those outside that kingdom. The best picture we could have of God's nature is to be seen in the doctrine of the Trinity – a picture of community that far surpasses any concept we could imagine or determine. The Trinity, more than a doctrine created to confuse us, is a wonderful picture given by God to us to explain who he is and how he works, and the manner and detail of how we are to operate as his followers. As Erickson puts it,

"The doctrine of the Trinity is crucial for Christianity. It is concerned with who God is, what he is like, how he works, and how he is to be approached." (Erickson 1985:322)

The Trinity is a description of the highest life form we know (Neighbour 2000:115). This life-form, which we call God, is so complex that the best description we are given is in the nature of a three person relationship, which involves 6 different types of relationships: Father to Son, Father to Spirit, Spirit to Son, Spirit to Father, Son to Father, Son to Spirit.

There are 6 different types of relationships because each one is different in understanding, but we will discover they are exact in essence, not just similar, but exact. It is this reason that allows us to firmly believe in one God, but three persons. Our purpose is not to define and explain each person of the Trinity, although that would greatly aid our understanding of the Trinity, rather our goal here is to examine the interaction of each person of the Trinity with each other person and try to extrapolate a better view of the nature of the Trinity.

Our discussion of the Trinity will focus on the book of Matthew primarily with a few supportive passages from Genesis and John. We focus on Matthew for a number of reasons². Firstly, it is a gospel written primarily to a Jewish audience to prove the fulfilment of Judaism in Christianity. A number of factors lead us to this conclusion. The writer is believed to be Jewish. He has a commanding knowledge of the Old Testament, places strong emphasis on showing the relationship between the prophets and Jesus' life, has a sure understanding of the meaning and rites of customs without explanation (compare Matthew 15:1-9 with Mark 7:1-4), and is one of only two books to give attention to Jesus' genealogy, but the only one going back only so far as Abraham (Matthew 1:1-2). These factors tell us that the writer was Jewish, and his target audience understood the nuances, rites, traditions and customs of which he spoke. His purpose was not to explain these customs to the audience, but rather to explain how Jesus fulfilled the hopes and aspirations of Judaism. The constant use of the formula, "to fulfil what was said through the prophet..." (See Matthew 2:15, 17; 4:14; 5:17 and on) is a large part of the gospel. The gospel of Matthew quotes more Old Testament passages than any of the other gospels. As Morris says, "The writer seems concerned throughout to show that Christianity is the true continuation of the Old testament – the true Judaism" (Morris 1992:2) He goes on to affirm, "Clearly the writer has a special interest in what the Old Testament Scripture says and

² The combination of Leon Morris, Craig L. Blomberg, Craig Keener and Donald Hanger's commentaries on Matthew give us this comprehensive view and the reasons that follow.

the way it applies to Jesus" (1992:3). The focus on the fulfilment of Old Testament Prophecy in Christianity also lends authenticity to the claim that Christianity was not just a sect of Judaism but was the emerging new reign of God. The constant affirmation of Israel with the Gentiles led the audience to believe in the universality of the gospel away from the particular focus on salvation for Israel only (Blomberg 1992:25-26). This emphasis on Jesus and Old Testament Scripture taught the early church that Jesus as the one who fulfils Old Testament Scripture, is the only one who "...has the authority to dictate how his followers must obey those Scriptures in the new age he has inaugurated" (1992:30).

This naturally leads us to the second reason for focusing on Matthew: the key theme of the reign of God, as explained in the passages referring to "kingdom of heaven", "kingdom of God" and "my kingdom", "my father's kingdom" and "the kingdom of the Son of Man". Matthew alone uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven". The "kingdom of heaven" in Jewish thought primarily related to the future reign of God where he would reign without challenge, without opposition, without equal. However, it also contained a present aspect that God is reigning now through those who are obedient (Keener 1997:41). Hagner says of the theme of the kingdom, "Everything in the gospel relates in some way to this controlling theme" (Hagner 1993: ix) I agree. The kingdom of heaven is central to the gospel as Matthew tries to build on the thesis that the kingdom of heaven, the anticipated breaking through of God's power into a world where the Jewish people had been enslaved and conquered, has come in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah. He uses the phrase more than any other gospel and specifically three times as many times as Mark. This phrase is key to his book, as it is key to this thesis.

Few would argue today that the "kingdom of heaven" and the "kingdom of God" are considered to be different things. Matthew's use of Mark and their common reliance on the letter Q allows us to draw the conclusion that they

are one and the same concept. Matthew prefers the use of the phrase "kingdom of heaven", and does make use of the phrase "kingdom of God", but this in no way precludes a common definition. Keener, as do all the commentaries quoted here, support this viewpoint.

"Indeed, a simple comparison of parallel passages in Matthew and Mark would demonstrate that whereas Mark (like Luke) always employs 'kingdom of God', Matthew employs 'kingdom of heaven' consistently with but four exceptions" (Keener 1997:41).

One might ask why Matthew would use the exceptions at all. An examination of the four exceptions (found in Matthew 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, and 21:43) does not find any commonalities amongst them. The Matthew 19:24 reference actually interchanges kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven. With classic Hebrew parallelism, Jesus talks of how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The second sentence talks of how much easier it would be for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Matthew is extolling the same principle, using the same subjects, but focussing on different objects in sentiment only, not in substance. It is possible that in the context of the gospel these phrases are interchangeable for Matthew. They mean the same thing. Three of the references include allusions to Gentiles but one specifically refers to the kingdom of God being taken away from the Jews (Matthew 21:43). If there was a specific difference where "kingdom of heaven" referred to Israel and "kingdom of God" referred to Jews this would be the key place to describe that difference. Jesus makes no such distinction here. The two phrases are one and the same. Matthew's preference in using the phrase "kingdom of heaven" is to retain or communicate more effectively with his Jewish audience.

As the kingdom is a central theme of the gospel, Matthew wants to communicate clearly to his Jewish audience that the kingdom that they were

waiting for, the kingdom they were hoping for, the anticipated coming reign of God is now here, and it is now here in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is the "...good news that the reign or rule of God has begun to be realized in history through the presence of Jesus Christ" (Hagner 1993: ix). Jesus is the central figure of the kingdom of heaven, or kingdom of God, and as such, his nature will determine the nature of the subjects of the kingdom of God.

One of the purposes of the book of Matthew is to prove that Jesus, the Son of David, the self named, Son of Man, is also the Son of God. The development of the Christological theme is a powerful one in Matthew, and so is yet a third reason why we would look at this gospel as opposed to any other. The interplay of these three titles in the gospel points to the development of Matthew's purpose, that Jesus is more than just another anointed one. He is more than just a king for Israel, but rather he is the King of Israel, and more, he is the King of the coming reign of God. Blomberg, while not agreeing with Kingsbury's emphasis that Son of God is the key title in the book of Matthew, does argue that the title is at least as important as Messiah. He contends that "...Matthew and his readers will consistently view 'Son of God' as a testimony to Jesus' unique relationship with his Father and probably even his deity" (Blomberg 1992:29). If this is true, and I believe it is³, then the

³ As you read the gospel of Matthew you are struck with the multifaceted purpose of the gospel: to convince the Jewish audience of Jesus as Messiah, to prove his sonship as well as prove his purpose for coming. The focus on the sonship of Jesus as will be detailed later leaves one to ask why Matthew focuses on the parentage of Jesus. This is the primary charge brought against Jesus by the Jewish leaders (Matthew 26:63-64) and the charge which Jesus agrees to, declaring further that the Son of Man will sit in a place of authority. This was blasphemy for the Jewish leaders. It was furthermore a challenge to the Jewish audience, by Matthew, that they cannot disregard Jesus. They must agree or disagree with the proposal of Matthew: Jesus is the Son of God. Douglas and Tenney argue "...that the title is to be understood both as a synonym for Messiah (Ps 2:7; Matt 16:16; 26:63; 27:40) and as implying deity through a unique relation with the Father (John 5:18)" (Douglas, Tenney 1987:957). The primary source for this assertion is to be found in John. Further support is found in Hebrews 1. The concept of sonship was a powerful notion in the Jewish mind. The fatherless were one of the protected groups in the Old Testament, alongside the widow and the alien, because they had no rights, no power in that culture (Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17-21; 26:12-13; 27:19). This discussion of Jesus' sonship is key to developing the authority and power of Jesus and key to proving that he is not just another prophet but the King of Israel, the promised Messiah, the One with all authority and power.

development of the title throughout the gospel highlights the importance of Jesus to the kingdom of God. It further places Jesus not just as a forerunner of the kingdom of God, but as its King. While Blomberg disagrees with Kingsbury, Hagner strongly supports him. "For Matthew, the most exalted confession, which alone expresses the mystery of Jesus' identity, is that he is the Son of God (16:16; esp. 11:27)" (Hagner 1993:lx). Jesus' nature is, therefore, of vital importance to us. If the king is divided, then the kingdom will be divided (Matthew 12:25). However, if the king is united, then the kingdom should be united. The relationship of Jesus, as the Son of God, to the Father, and the role of the Spirit in this relationship directly impact the relationship between the kingdom of God and the church. The nature of the king, the identity of Jesus, effects and affects the nature and identity of the kingdom of God.

The gospel is our focus for a fourth reason. It is the only gospel that contains the word *ecclesia* in it. Matthew, as a gospel, speaks with ecclesiastical interest. Where a book brings these two subjects together, the subject of the *ecclesia* and the subject of the *Basileia tou Theou* we should examine that book. More than just mentioning these two subjects the gospel of Matthew was widely used in the early church. The book of Matthew was "...usually the most popular in the first several centuries of the church's history" (Blomberg 1992:21). The gospel of Matthew is uncontested as being the most popular in the Early Church. Morris quotes R. T. France as saying that, "...it is a fact that mainstream Christianity was, from the second century on, to a great extent Matthean Christianity" (Morris 1992:2). Morris goes on to say that "...the contribution our first Gospel has made to the church throughout the centuries must not be overlooked or minimized" (1992:2). Its popularity means that it was vastly influential on the early church. The current drive amongst many modern day churches to return to the Early Church, or become an "Acts 2" church must therefore pay close attention to the writings that influenced the early church. A book that was used in the early churches'

liturgy, guided and informed churches' on their roles, functions and discipline should be a book that we examine for its message to us.

The final reason why we examine the book of Matthew is because of its particular pharisaic stance. The gospel of Matthew is anti-pharisaic. This can be seen in how Matthew highlights the confrontations between Jesus and this highly regarded group in those days. From the parables directed exclusively at the Pharisees, like the parable of the two sons which only appears in Matthew (Matthew 21:28-32) to the comprehensive rebuke of the Pharisees, scribes and teachers in Matthew 23 (not repeated in its entirety in any other gospel), to the wealth of parables, healings and confrontations recorded at length in Matthew we discover that Matthew is warning us about the problem of being like the Pharisees. The modern day church must beware of becoming like these Pharisees. We must avoid the hypocrisy and bigotry of these Pharisees. This is the very thing that Jesus despised, and any honest person when looking at the modern day church will admit that these problems exist and must be confronted. We are called hypocrites by those outside of the church; we adopt attitudes that are at worst bigoted, at best woefully misguided and misunderstood. Matthew, written to pinpoint these attitudes to the early church, is now a prophetic book to us in this day and age.

For these reasons Matthew would seem to be the one book that is least supportive of a Trinitarian view and the corresponding effect on the kingdom of God. The focus on a Jewish audience, with parallel Jewish customs and beliefs should place this book furthest away from a faith that encompasses all people and promotes a God in three persons. However, as we have shown, Matthew, because of its supposed distance from the Trinitarian view is our strongest advocate. Matthew proves without a doubt that the nature of the King of the Kingdom will influence the subjects of that same kingdom. By focusing on the fulfilment of Judaism in Christ, the teaching on the *ecclesia*, the specific anti-pharisaic stance, the promotion of the kingdom of God and the central figure of Jesus as the Son of God Matthew stands furthest away

from what we hope to prove. Therefore, if Matthew can be shown to promote the concept of the King's effect on the kingdom, and he is furthest away from that premise, how much closer will any other book be? Clearly the answer is closer. This is precisely what we will discover, and so we will look at several key passages in the book of Matthew as he develops this multifaceted premise: Jesus is the Son of God, and therefore one with God, who promotes the equality of the Holy Spirit and the Father and defines and describes the nature of this Trinitarian relationship and its ensuing effect on the subjects of the kingdom of God.

The Baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:13-17

¹³*Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.*

¹⁴*But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"*

¹⁵*Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented.*

¹⁶*As soon as Jesus was baptized; he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."*

We open our discovery of this premise with Jesus' baptism. Matthew's first introduction of Jesus is through his genealogy. We are told in Matthew 1:1 that Jesus is the son of David, the son of Abraham. There is nothing particularly special about this introduction. There were many people who could trace their lineage back to David and Abraham. The genealogy of Jesus is neither threatening nor particularly interesting. It presents in a matter of fact method who Jesus' family was. However, from then on the gospel account takes another slant. We are told of the herald of Jesus' birth to Joseph, the birth of Jesus, the Magi, and the slaughter of the innocents. We are told of the escape to Egypt and the safe return. We hear nothing more of

Jesus until he comes to John the Baptist to be baptised. All we know of Jesus at this point is that Joseph accepts him as a son, knowing that he is not the father. We are told that Mary is with child by the Holy Spirit, but we are not told that the Holy Spirit is the father. However, Matthew hints that God is the Father through this phrasing. What we are left with is the unanswered question: Whose son is Jesus the Christ?

At the baptism we are given an answer. In this amazing interaction of the Godhead where all three persons are present we discover the answer that Jesus is the Son of God. This is Matthew's thesis. This is what he wants to prove to his Jewish audience. Jesus is the Messiah, he is the anointed One of God, more than that; he is God's Son with all the unity and oneness that this implies. The baptism account is at once an introduction to the challenge of Jesus' identity and an approval of that identity.

Keener tells us that three voices can be heard speaking to the approval of Jesus' identity. Firstly there is the voice of Scripture. A faithful account repeated by all gospels of Jesus' baptism and the revelation of the voice from heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit. Secondly, there is the prophetic voice, the voice of one crying in the desert. Apart from the many voices of the prophets of old all crying out about a coming Messiah, hinting that it will not be a person or ruler, but God himself who comes to save his people, there is the present voice of John the Baptist attesting that one will come who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' baptism intensifies John's words. The role of the Holy Spirit at Jesus' birth and now at Jesus' baptism highlights the importance of this figure. John has thrown a spotlight on who the Messiah is, and now in the midst of his many baptisms the Messiah is revealed and lo it is the Son of God. The third voice lets us know this. The third voice agrees and confirms the first two voices. The third voice is not a voice in isolation, but a voice of confirmation and approval. The third voice is the voice from heaven, "...a concept with which Matthew's Jewish audience was undoubtedly familiar" (Keener 1997:86).

More important than the presence of these three voices speaking is the content of the message of the third voice. The voice from heaven, the voice of God to the Jewish audience and to us, calls this Jesus "Son". More than recognition, the voice proclaims love and pleasure. Many a bastard son in days past has longed for recognition and approval from a father of royalty, only to find that recognition denied or avoided. No such avoidance is seen here. Instead, an overwhelming message of approval and acceptance is given and Jesus is affirmed. This is the greatest approval, and more than approval, this is the beginning of the journey of Matthew to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. Blomberg sees the Father as giving the Son a formal instalment and commissioning to work (Blomberg 1992:82). This is exactly what this is. Jesus is now commissioned to go and do the work of the Father that he was sent to do.

It is important to note that in Matthew's view this is not an adoption procedure. It is a ratification of early hints and suggestions. Jesus is fully God's Son, not an adopted man. The presence of the Holy Spirit agrees with this. This agreement is clear. The strongest objection to the process of revealing Jesus as God's Son would have been the Holy Spirit speaking out against such a revelation. If any objection could be made to the process of Jesus being revealed as God's Son then the lack of the Holy Spirit's presence would have been such an objection. Instead of a lack of presence we see the presence of the Holy Spirit manifested through the image of peace. "The Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him" (Matthew 3:16). The whole sentence speaks of approval and acceptance. The whole passage lacks any sort of objection, disagreement or lack of approval. Instead we find the Holy Spirit, ratifying through presence, the Father ratifying through voice and the Son ratifying through acceptance that Jesus is the Son of God.

We discover in this passage Matthew's particular interest in the Trinity. As we have shown, all three persons are together, working in their distinct roles, but

in complete unity and support. They are one in purpose, mind and action. As the voice proclaims the message of Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42:1 we find the coming together of two previously distinct concepts: the concept of the Son of God and the Suffering Servant. Hagner argues that the goal of the gospel is to show these two terms together in the person of Jesus.

"The Agent of the kingdom, the Son of David and the Son of God, hold through his identity a position of strength and authority. Yet paradoxically he is at the same time described as the humble Servant of the Lord whom we meet in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (chapters 42-53), the Servant who is instrumental in bringing the kingdom to fruition, not by the exertion of power but through the mystery of his suffering and eventual death. This indeed is the goal of the Gospel narrative..." (Hagner 1993:60).

This is a powerful combination because it is the very nature of the Trinity. The servant nature of God existing alongside and in union with the nature of power and authority is who God is. This is what is revealed to us by the baptism, manifestation and voice. Coincidentally, this is precisely what we are to become. Jesus is more than just the Son of God and Servant, he is also our representation. Jesus did not need the baptism of John for his own sins. Rather, to identify with Israel and the people of God in all time, he submits to John's work to fulfil all righteousness. Therefore, as every person in the church undergoes their own baptism, they discover a meeting place with Jesus and the voice spoken to him is the voice spoken to us, because we through faith become God's children, born of God (John 1:12-13). This representation remains throughout the Gospel as Jesus becomes the atoning sacrifice for all humanity. We see later on that Jesus encourages the same nature and attitude in his followers when he tells them to be servants (Matthew 18:1-4 and Matthew 20:20-28). The Son of God is telling his followers that we are to have the same nature as he has. The King of the kingdom exhorts his subjects to be like him.

The Prayer of Jesus in Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵*At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.*

²⁷*"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

²⁸*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

The entire Sermon on the Mount follows closely on the baptism of Jesus and has been seen by many to be the laying down of the law just like the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. There is little Trinitarian language in the Sermon as Jesus takes the full extent of being the Son of God and reinterprets and fulfils the Law of Moses. With phrases like "you have heard it said...but I say to you..." Jesus depicts authority and power. Yet even in this section we discover that the Father is not far from Jesus' mind. Jesus refers to the Father in Matthew 5:45, and holds the Father up as the measurement of perfection in Matthew 5:48. Furthermore, Jesus' teaching on prayer speaks of praying to the Father in Heaven, not to Jesus. However, the next significant passage that talks in depth about the Trinity is found in Matthew 11:25-30.

After a question of identity from John, and a rebuke of the towns of Korazin and Bethsaida, Jesus is found to be praising his Father in heaven (comparable to the prayer in Matthew 6) about who has discovered God's great plan – not the wise or learned, but little children. Once again the concept of servant and humility is drawn out by this prayer of Jesus. The Trinitarian language

however is found in verses 27. In a great expression of intimacy and togetherness Jesus sheds light on the relationship between the Father and the Son and between the Son and those who follow him. Although it is the Father who is prayed to in chapter 6, and it is the Father's will to be done that is prayed for, we see here that the Father has given all authority and power to the Son. The Son is the one who will carry out the will of the Father, and it is the Son who decides who will discover and gain knowledge of the Father. What we see here is more than just delegation because the Father has given "all things" to the Son. What we see here is submission, but not loss of status or unity. Rather we are discovering what true intimacy and unity look like to the king of the kingdom. All commentaries examined describe the relationship between the Father and Son as expressed here as being one of intimacy. The shared knowledge presents a relationship that is so open, so disclosed, that the two persons are one in mind and action – "...this intimate reciprocal knowledge implies intimate relationship" (Hagner 1993:320).

More than just intimate, this relationship is unique. Hagner continues "...it is the Son of God who is uniquely related to his Father" (1993:320). Nobody else has this knowledge or relationship with the Father. This is key to our discussion. No other ideology, no other person, no other reference can be obtained about the Father. It is only through the Son's relationship that we can gain knowledge of the Father. The revelation to the Son, as Hagner calls it, is a revelation of truth, and with this revelation comes the implied and implicit responsibility of further revelation. It is only the Son who can reveal the Father, and as all things are committed to him, it is only by his choice that this revelation can happen. As Hagner concludes, "...the point is that Jesus thus has a unique role as the mediator of the knowledge of God to humankind (1993:320). This is exactly what Jesus refers to when he says "...those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (Matthew 11:27b). It is no surprise then that Jesus offers rest to those who come to him. More than rest, he offers partnership through yoking. Yoking here refers to the common vision of oxen tied together as they plough the fields. Jesus emphasises his

nature even more explicitly for us to see. He is humble and gentle. This is the core of the nature of the Son who wants to reveal the Father to those who will come to him. The revelation of the knowledge of the Father is rest for the burdened, but is also a revelation that leads to discipleship. The Son invites people to come and discover the knowledge of God, and that knowledge leads them to grow, make changes and encounter parts of themselves that need work. "The invitation to come to Jesus is an invitation to discipleship" (Hagner 1993:324).

As we encounter the Trinity in the baptism of Jesus so we explore the relationship of the Son to the Father. We discover that Jesus is aware of this relationship and rightly calls a person to come to him, who is the Son, for rest. Furthermore we discover what in the nature of the Son pleases the Father. It is the gentleness and humility of the Son that pleases the Father. Jesus is revealed by Matthew as one who knows that he is the Son of God, even though he calls himself the Son of Man throughout the book. He knows, too, that he is the one who is left with the task of revealing the will of the Father to those who will come to him.

The Transfiguration in Matthew 17:1-13

¹After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶*When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified.* ⁷*But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."* ⁸*When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.*

⁹*As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."*

¹⁰*The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"*

¹¹*Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things.*

¹²*But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."* ¹³*Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.*

This famous passage is found in all the Synoptic Gospels. In Matthew the Transfiguration passage stands as a bookend with the baptism because of the repeated heavenly voice. In between these bookends we have the Sermon on the Mount and the parables and works of Jesus with the explicit prayer and offer of rest from Jesus.

The heavenly voice in Matthew 17:5 implies all that the voice implies in Matthew 3:17. Once again we see revealed to us the intimacy and uniqueness of the relationship between the Son and the Father. Once again we are told of the special relationship that they have and once again we discover how close and personal this relationship is.

However, the monologue from heaven contains a new sentence, a new command. Keep in mind that Jesus has been teaching and reinterpreting (perhaps correctly interpreting would be better) the Law for his followers. Furthermore he has issued the offer of rest and revelation of the Father. If Jesus was not the Son of God, and/or if he had mistakenly taught incorrect information or mistakenly offered what he could not offer then now would be

the time for correction, rebuke or disowning. Instead we are told three words that ratify and affirm all that Jesus has been doing and warns us to pay close attention to what he does and says in the future. The voice adds the sentence: "Listen to him" (Matthew 17:5).

In addition to the intimacy, uniqueness, and personal nature of the Son and the Father we discover a '...unique authority...' (Hagner 1995:494). The authority of the Son is beyond question, but also has no equal or superior. The Son has all authority. He has interpreted the Law as personal commands ("...but I say..."), he has offered an eternal rest and invited people to follow him. The voice from heaven, which is rightly seen as the voice of the Father hence the phrase "my Son", now commands Jesus by commanding us to listen to him. To further authenticate the command five witnesses are added: Moses, Elijah, Peter, James and John. While three of the witnesses have no understanding of the event, two of the witnesses are seeing with their own eyes, what they prophesied and fought for thousands of years before.

The Jewish audience would understand what Matthew is doing here. No evidence can be brought into a court without the testimony of at least two male witnesses (John 8:17). Matthew presents five male witnesses of the second voice and the command. Not only are they male witnesses but witnesses without dispute, the great liberator Moses and the powerful prophet Elijah. The evidence of these two ancients is unimpeachable. More than just a powerful relationship, we discover that the Son has all authority, and is given as the one to who all should listen. There is no competition for power in the Godhead. Instead of a rivalry for followers and worship, the Father freely gives all honour to the Son. In return, the Son promises to reveal the Father to those who come to him. We discover that here exists an oneness, an oneness devoid of strife and envy and full of love, honour, submission and promotion.

The Death of Jesus in Matthew 27:45-54

⁴⁵*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.* ⁴⁶*About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"--which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

⁴⁷*When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah."*

⁴⁸*Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink.* ⁴⁹*The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."*

⁵⁰*And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*

⁵¹*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split.* ⁵²*The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.*

⁵³*They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*

⁵⁴*When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"*

Following the Transfiguration Jesus teaches more powerfully and acts stronger in his condemnation of wrong behaviour. He empties the temple, teaches many parables, performs many miracles and is finally arrested, tried and sentenced. What is interesting to note during this time is that Matthew includes two teachings on being the greatest. In response to the disciples asking about who is the greatest, Jesus responds by pointing to a little child (Matthew 18:1-3), depicting innocence and unwavering commitment. Later on, at the request of a mother, Jesus teaches that honour and glory cannot be obtained in heaven; rather it is given by the Father (Matthew 20:20-28). Even though the Son is the one who is given all things, the Son in turn places

authority back with the Father. This interplay of submission, honour and power is ongoing. It is why Jesus ends this request by the mother with the words, "Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Matthew 20:26)

Prior to Jesus' death he is also engaged in a debate with the Pharisees. Jesus initiates this debate. He asks them, "Whose Son is the Christ?" This is the thesis of Matthew; this is the problem he is trying to solve. However, in spite of the voices from heaven, in spite of the witness of Moses, Elijah, and the three disciples Peter, James and John, and in spite of Jesus own words, the Pharisees respond by saying "He is the son of David." However, they discover a problem that cannot be solved with that answer, the problem of David calling his son Lord (Matthew 22:41-46). And so the problem continues. While Matthew has presented much evidence of who Jesus is, the Pharisees continue to deny the facts.

In the end Jesus is arrested. His trial is full of inconsistencies and corruption, and finally his conviction comes down to one question. While standing before the Sanhedrin, the High Priest asks Jesus the question of the book, "I charge you before under oath, by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). What is interesting to note is that in this question the high priests answers Jesus question to the Pharisees earlier. Finally they get it right, but instead of responding as the Father commands them to, by listening, they respond with ridicule, torture and punishment. Jesus' answer is the most straightforward and direct answers to this question yet. He simply responds, "Yes, it is as you say," (Matthew 26:64). And so we come to one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith, the death of Jesus and the broken Godhead.

Hagner calls this "...one of the most impenetrable mysteries of the entire Gospel narrative" (Hagner 1995:845). The mystery exists because we discover in this one event the combination of the core Christian doctrines of

God, Trinity, sin, salvation, resurrection and judgement. Furthermore, we are given no answers to the contradictions that emerge. Jesus, the sinless perfect man, who is also fully God, now dies unjustly for the sins of the world and in the process the Godhead is separated. Some use the term God-forsakenness while others talk about isolation. The mystery exists because logically one would argue that the greatest being in the universe and beyond, the God who is three persons yet one essence, now seems to be broken, split apart.

We discover a multifaceted mystery here. How does a holy God become sin, and still remain holy? How can three persons exist independently yet still be one? How can One God be broken apart, without ceasing to exist? The holy God takes sin onto the body of Jesus, yet still remains holy. One erroneous belief that existed in the early days of the church was that Jesus was not God at first, but rather was a perfect human being that God used to put sin on. This is what the early Fathers wrestled with. In the words of Bonhoeffer,

"As they contemplated the miracle of the Incarnation, the early Fathers passionately contended that while it was true to say that God took human nature upon him, it was wrong to say that he chose a perfect individual man and united himself to him. God was made man, and while that means he took upon him our entire human nature with all its infirmity, sinfulness and corruption, the whole of apostate humanity, it does not mean that he took upon him the man Jesus...It is sinful flesh that he bears, though he was himself without sin" (Bonhoeffer 1959:237)

He goes on to say,

"Consequently, the incarnate Son of God existed so to speak in two capacities – in his own person, and as the representative of the new

humanity. Every act he wrought was performed on behalf of the new humanity which he bore in his body" (1959:238)

So the holy God takes on sinful flesh as a complete, full, total representative of fallen humanity, and yet the holy God is made flesh and he lives a perfect life to be a complete, full and total representative of the new humanity that is promised to all who believe. The holy God takes on sin yet remains holy.

How can three persons exist independently yet still remain one? The mystery of the Trinity is one that many people have attempted to understand and explain. No one explanation is without fault. What is the relation of the three persons, and how is the oneness of God maintained. The belief that the Godhead is of one essence (*ousia*), yet made up of three persons (*hypostases*) has been discussed from the early days of the church until now. Some views emphasise the distinctiveness of the persons, while others focus on the unity and oneness of the Godhead. What is the view of personhood inherent in this question and what is oneness? The concept of "persons" is derived from the use of the word *persona* which was used often in reference to an actor wearing a mask on stage. Keeping in mind that this was prior to Hollywood days with CGI and special effects, and the fact that actors were predominantly male, the use of masks was used to distinguish an actor in their many roles (often actors would play multiple roles in one play). Many have used this as an explanation of how God reveals himself to us wearing different masks displaying whatever role he is currently playing. The analogy is bad for a number of reasons. Firstly, masks were used to hide the real person (actor) away from the audience so that they would see the fake role being played. Is God therefore hiding away his true self and hiding behind this fake role? Secondly, no actor ever wore the masks at the same time, yet God reveals himself to us with all three persons present at the same time, yet not in the same location. Thirdly, God is not acting a part. What he shows us and what we see are real, not scripted according to some story line.

Another explanation is to talk of the persons as personalities, each complete and whole in and of themselves, but all existing within the essence or concept of God. Modern day psychology would raise severe concerns with this view. Does this mean that God suffers from multiple personality disorder? Is there a psychosis within God? Neither explanation suffices.

However, Augustine in his book *De Trinitate* wrestled with and described the Trinity in a different view, using the biblical concept of God is love. In this sense the persons are whole in and of themselves, but fulfil a function of relatedness. Erickson gives us a synopsis,

"The major contribution of Augustine to the understanding of the Trinity is his analogies drawn from the realm of human personality. He argued that since man is made in the image of God, who is triune, it is therefore reasonable to expect to find, through an analysis of man's nature, a reflection, however faint, of God's tri-unity. Beginning with the biblical statement that God is love, Augustine noted there are three necessary elements in love: the lover, the object loved, and the love which united them, at least tends to do so" (Erickson 1985:339).

Williston Walker presents the same view of Augustine's work saying "...God is the Source, Object, and the Power" (Walker 1985:203). However, this was Augustine's early view and later led him to delve deeper into psychology and develop Trinitarian formulas based on the inner workings of humanity. According to Walker, Augustine was influenced by Gregory of Nazianzus and others and developed the concept that the persons "...are defined and constituted by their relations to one another. This idea that 'Father', 'Son', and 'Spirit' are names not of different beings but of relations he then developed further" (1985:204). The idea that a person will remember, know and will themselves to love God was, in Augustine's idea, a clue to the reality of how God relates to himself. The relational or psychology analogy is a powerful one and stands up to much scrutiny. This view does help us

understand how these three persons can be independent yet still remain one. Functionally they serve a purpose to remember, to know, and to will. In this way, the Father fulfills the remembering function, the Spirit the knowing function and the Son the willing function (or whatever association you desire). Together they relate perfectly, separately they function independently, yet they do not separate away from each other, nor do they become indistinct. Here on the cross, the Son wills himself to do the Father's will, the Father remembers the Son's perfect life, the sin of the world and the payment of the sin, while the Spirit knows the pain of the present, the payment for the past and the promise of the future. The three persons exist independently but remain one. According to Augustine, "...the question of the Trinity had become ...not so much a problem about how the theologian is to describe God as a problem of how the human mind can rise to an apprehension of God in God's threefold being" (Walker 1985:203). This is important for us to keep in mind as we look at the third mystery. If the three are one, then how can they be broken apart without ceasing to exist?

For our purposes, in the mystery of the death of Jesus, we realize that the greatest pain for Jesus was not the scourging, nor the flogging. Neither was it the jeering, mocking or abuse. It was not the crucifixion or the pain of betrayal. For Jesus, the greatest pain was the brokenness that existed in this moment between the Father and the Son. Matthew describes Jesus crying out loudly only twice in this death account. Matthew does not detail Jesus' cries during the scourging, or act of being crucified. Neither does he describe any cries during the walk to Golgotha, or any other beatings. In contrast, Jesus is described as one who is silent through accusations and beatings. The governor is amazed at Jesus' silence through the accusations and questions (Matthew 27:14). In fact, Matthew lists no comments or saying, cries or sighs, made by Jesus until the cry of forsakenness. Following the cry of forsakenness Jesus is given something to drink and then watched by those present. He cries out a second time in a loud voice and then gives up his spirit. We do not know the content of the second cry, whether it was the

sentence "It is finished" recorded in John 19:30 or the sentence, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" from Luke 23:46 or just a cry of pain with no words. The contrast of the silent Jesus in the previous 35 verses and now the loud cries highlight the pain and tragedy of this event. For me, they highlight his greatest pain. It was not the accusations that caused him to cry out, not the beatings, the ridicule, the flogging or crucifying. It was the pain of separation from his Father that caused him to cry out. This was followed by what I believe to be a cry of victory for Jesus even as he dies.

Matthew, in detailing the death of Jesus, brings the Gospel to its climax. There is no doubt that Jesus was abandoned. His cry is a direct quotation of Psalm 22. A quotation that the Jewish readers would not have missed, and so the inclusion of the cry of separation by Matthew details for us in one short sentence that there is a broken relationship between Jesus and God. When I read Psalm 22 knowing the circumstances of Jesus' death I cannot ignore the powerful, passionate and painful cry that Jesus' words were. Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Even at the cross people did not recognize Jesus. Some thought he was calling on Elijah and so sat back to watch for his coming. Yet the anguish and pain of the cry cannot and must not escape us. Jesus, the Son Of God, who had experienced full intimacy and knowledge of the Father and the Spirit, who was so united with them in thought and deed that they were one, now finds himself alone.

Only someone who knows what it is like to be alone can begin to touch on what this loneliness felt like for Jesus. Yet we feel alone even when we are not truly alone. We feel alone even when God has promised us his presence. The word alone should stand out to us because it is the one thing that God highlighted as not good in the perfect creation. Adam, who had a perfect relationship with God, a relationship unmarred by sin and disobedience, felt alone. God, who walked with him in a close, intimate relationship, looked on his creation and declared that "...it is not good for man to be alone. I will

make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). This is the essence of the nature of the king of the kingdom. He desires relationship. He desires to overcome loneliness and separation and bring suitable helpers together. We are God's suitable helpers as the church. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are suitable helpers to each other. Humanity was created to be in relationship with God. Yet, in all these examples, in even the dark loneliness of Adam's sinless state, none of them compare with the lonely, desperate, anguish of Jesus' aloneness when his Father forsook him.

At the height of this separation Jesus cries out. The words of this cry are the only words recorded by Matthew of Jesus on the cross. Traditionally, it is believed that Jesus had seven sayings or "words" on the cross. Matthew only records this one saying and ends with Jesus dying after giving a loud cry. These words are significant for Matthew because of his Trinitarian interest. He has proven the case that God and Jesus are one and so the death of Jesus aptly contains the brokenness of that relationship. Blomberg confirms that Jesus was aware of this brokenness.

"Jesus remains a psychosomatically unified entity all the way to the moment of his death. Yet shortly before he dies, he apparently senses an abrupt loss of the communion with the Father which has proved so intimate and significant throughout his life" (Blomberg 1992:419).

Hagner agrees.

"Jesus clearly feels abandoned (and *is* abandoned by God; contra Baker; on the seriousness of the abandonment...) and articulates his feeling with words from Psalm 22:1" (Hagner 1995:844 – parenthesis and emphasis his)

Morris' commentary is particularly powerful in this section. In dealing with the assertion that Jesus is crying our not to God about the brokenness

between them, but rather to God about the unresponsiveness of humanity, Morris says,

"...it is almost blasphemous to say that we know the situation, and specifically the relationship between Jesus and the Father, better than he did. It is better to face the words honestly and to accept the fact that this was part of the putting away of sin. There must always be a mystery here...When we put such passages of Scripture together (Psalm 22 and Matthew 27), it seems that in the working out of salvation for sinners the hitherto unbroken communion between the Father and the Son was mysteriously broken. It is surely better to accept this, knowing that we do not understand it fully, than to attempt some rationalization of the saying so that it becomes more palatable to the prejudices of modern Westerners" (Morris 1992:721-722 – parenthesis mine).

The fact that God forsook Jesus should be taken at face value. This is precisely what Jesus was shouting out. What cannot be determined is the extent of that forsakenness. I personally believe that it was total in order to fulfil all righteousness and justice. A good example of the lengths God will go to for holiness and justice can be found in Joshua 7:24-26. After Achan's sin at Jericho, Joshua and the Israelite nation not only punish and kill Achan, but they destroy his sons, daughters, cattle, donkeys, sheep, all his possessions, his tent, as well as all the stolen property. After stoning them, they burn them and then cover the remains with rocks. This was the response of Israel to the sin, and we are told that after this "...the Lord turned from his fierce anger" (Joshua 7:26). We must not and cannot take sin lightly, nor can we take the punishment of sin lightly. The price was not just the death of Jesus, but the sundering of the Godhead.

Keener is unwilling to claim a loss of relationship or brokenness between God and Jesus. Instead he intimates alienation but quickly supports vindication.

He heads this discussion with the sentence "Jesus dies wounded but trusting his father" (Keener 1997:389).

"That Jesus utters the complaint of a righteous sufferer (Ps 22:1) suggests that he participated in our ultimate alienation from God experiencing the pain of death. Yet he would also know that the psalm goes on to declare the psalmist's triumph (Ps 22:22-24), and the phrase *my God* indicates continuing trust" (1997:389-390).

Keener is correct on two counts. The Psalm does continue on to be triumphant, but the Matthew text gives us no clue that Jesus went on to quote the whole Psalm, nor does it give us evidence that Jesus was thinking triumphantly. Secondly, Jesus trusts still in God the Father. This can be seen in the text with the phrase "My God", a phrase which all the commentaries point to as a call of trust. The fact that Jesus continues to trust in his Father, despite the abandonment is a testimony to Jesus' faith. He has faith in the God he knows throughout his life. He has faith in the intimate communion they have had till now. He has faith in the future vindication of God. The depth of the separation points to the greatness of Jesus' faith in God. Yes, it is a cry of trust, and it is a cry that is answered as soon as Jesus' death is complete.

The brokenness of the Godhead is so powerful that Earth, Sky and Time are broken. The sky was dark, and had been for some time. At Jesus' death, there was an earthquake so powerful that it split rocks apart. Tombs were opened and the dead were raised to live, the dead of many holy people. In ancient times certain things were held to be immovable. The foundation of the Earth was believed to be secure, and any earthquake was considered particularly supernatural. The Sky was called the first heaven, and was considered the realm of the gods. The past could not break into the present and death was insurmountable as an obstacle. Yet, when Jesus dies, the dead come to life and walk around visible to many. Three immovable objects

were suddenly broken apart. The created world could not hold together when the Godhead was broken, such was the magnitude of this event.

Matthew's powerful premise of "Whose son is Jesus," now is answered by even those who kill him. The centurion, and those with him who were guarding Jesus, together exclaim, "Surely he was the Son of God!" They get it! Matthew has taken us on the journey of discovery and at the climax of the story we discover the truth. The centurion's exclamation, the soldiers' exclamations, should be our exclamations. Jesus is the Son of God, with all that this means to the Jewish audience. It does not mean separate, distinct, but rather equal to and one with. Jesus, as God's Son, is one with him, he is equal to him. This is Matthew's great argument; this is one of the purposes of his gospel.

The Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

We end our discussion of Matthew's premise about Jesus as the Son of God by looking at his final words to his followers. These final words believed by all to be the Great Commission, the last command by Jesus to his followers contain some powerful facts for us.

The beginning of the Commission brings to mind many of the passages we have already looked at. The voice from heaven, the work of the Spirit, the arguments of the Pharisees, scribes and teachers of the Law all find their fruition in Jesus' opening words. He has been given all authority. The

authority is also not just temporal or regional but global and eternal. He has been given authority over heaven and earth. The statement is designed to be as comprehensive as possible and any attempts to persuade people that Jesus has no authority under the earth, or over heaven should be excluded. The phrasing and intent of Matthew is to show that Jesus, the resurrected Son of God has complete and total authority. This authority has not been claimed or stolen through power and might, but rather it has been given. This is the very nature of the Kingdom. It is about generosity. Jesus has been given the authority and now proceeds with ruling. Hagner agrees, "God has given Jesus this comprehensive sovereignty over the whole of the created order" (Hagner 1995:886). Jesus now reigns and the Kingdom of Heaven is now here, but not yet fully. We know it is not here fully because Jesus gives a command to continue the work.

The authority of Jesus now leads him to make a command. "Therefore" implies that the one leads to the other. One could argue that the therefore in verse 19 follows on from not just verse 18 but the entire book. Therefore, because of all you have read and heard about me; therefore because of the fact that I am the Son of God; therefore because of my birth, baptism, life, death and resurrection go and make disciples. However, we do not need to make such a claim. It is sufficient to argue that the therefore relates to verse 18, which places all authority under Jesus. The command is to continue the work of Jesus. He called people to become his disciples, to listen and to obey everything he taught them. Now, his disciples are called to do the same work. The work can be found to be summed up in one word: community. Jesus is asking his followers to make a community of people who are identifiable by who they worship, who they belong to and who they become. This work is contained in three primary works: the work of evangelism, the work of discipleship and the work of reconciliation.

No one work sums up the concept of community, but all three together create the fullness of the community of disciples of Jesus. All three works capture

the essence of the kingdom of heaven that Matthew has taught and argued for. Evangelism can be seen in the command to go and make. The presupposition is that there are those who are not disciples and they need to be found, and made into disciples. Therefore the work of sharing the account of Jesus, of introducing him to others is the beginning. Furthermore, the work is not to Israel only but to all the nations. As Hagner comments, "Now after the death and resurrection of Jesus, for the first time the limitation of the gospel to Israel is removed...we finally arrive at the full inclusion of the Gentiles" (Hagner 1995:887).

The entry or initiating rite of passage into the community of the kingdom is baptism. It is here that we discover the second work, reconciliation. We do not know at what point the broken Godhead became united again. We do not know at what point the forsaken Jesus became reconciled again. Yet, in this commission, we discover that they are together again. The work, the penalty and payment for sin has been accomplished and now the work of the followers is given. The baptism into the kingdom is by one name. Jesus does not state that the disciples should be baptized in the names of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rather it is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The unity of the Godhead is again revealed, and it is in the unity and oneness of the Godhead that new disciples are initiated. Some do argue, as Hagner does, that this is a later inclusion to depict the practise of the Early Church. Elsewhere we are told that disciples are to be baptized in Jesus name only (see Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5). Morris, on the other hand, argues "that there is no objective criterion to decide the point" (Morris 1992:748), but he does argue that the use of the singular 'name' "...points to the fact that they are in some sense one" (1992:748). Blomberg agrees that "...the singular 'name' followed by the threefold reference to 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' suggest both unity and plurality in the Godhead" (Blomberg 1992:432). Keener supports this view as well,

"Disciples baptize not only in the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit, whom biblical and Jewish tradition regarded as divine, but also in the name of the Son. Placing Jesus on the same level with the Father and Spirit" (Keener 1997:399-400).

If one argues that this Trinitarian formula is a later inclusion then one must call into question all Trinitarian references throughout the Gospel. While it may have been a formula used only later in the church, Blomberg disputes that this should question the veracity of the formula. As he says, "...this view misjudges both the speed of the development of New Testament theology...as well as how technical a formula this is" (Blomberg 1992:432). Matthew is bringing a masterful conclusion to his Gospel. Opening the Gospel with the question of who is Jesus' father, and describing the roles of three individuals in the Father, in the Spirit and in Jesus at specific times through the Gospel (Jesus birth, baptism, temptation) Matthew now joins them altogether in perfect unity. No longer might they be seen to be working independently, but rather they are now seen as they always were, working together building a kingdom that would mirror their own nature, the nature of One God.

Finally, the third work of the community is to teach and learn. The disciples are to learn all that Jesus commanded. This is implicit in the command to teach. We must not teach what we do not know. These disciples had been taught much by Jesus. They had now learnt it, and Jesus is sending them out to teach others. This is the essence of discipleship. We are to learn Jesus' commands, we are to live them out, we are to be people of his word, we are to be people of the Word and we are to teach others what we have learnt. One must not overlook an important phrase in this part of the Commission. We are to learn and teach *everything that Jesus has commanded*. This is important for the church as it examines truth in the world and as it looks back to the Old Testament. We are not called to learn and teach what is being done in the world in the arenas of science, technology or any other field of study. We are not to learn and teach what other religions or what an Old

Testament without Jesus teaches. This is not the churches calling. The church must focus on being the bearers of Jesus words and commands. This is what we must become proficient in. Individual people will obviously engage the world in different ways. This is not a fruitless or disobedient activity. Rather it is essential and vital to the growth of the churches knowledge. We, who are disciples of Jesus, must obviously engage the world, and any truth discovered in these other arenas must be held up to be God's truth. What is true in science must be upheld as true by God's word, and what is true in God's word must be upheld by what is true in science. The same can be said for any other arena within the world. The key here is what is true. It is not what is thought to be true, or what is believed to be true, but what is true. The integrity of truth must be maintained. Whatever is discovered in these arenas must be evaluated through the lens of Jesus' commands to us and then learnt and taught under that basis. We are to be people who teach and learn what Jesus has taught us because he is the truth.

We will examine these works in greater detail later in this paper. However it is necessary for us to add some discussion on the Holy Spirit.

The Promotion of the Holy Spirit in Matthew 12:31-32

²²Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. ²³All the people were astonished and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" ²⁴But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "It is only by Beelzebub,^[4] the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons."

²⁵Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they

will be your judges. ²⁸*But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.*

29 "Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.

30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters. ³¹*And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.*

32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. ³⁴*You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.* ³⁵*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.* ³⁶*But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.* ³⁷*For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."*

Most of the verses and passages we have looked at through the book of Matthew describe the relationship between the Son of God and the Father. Therefore, we need to examine more closely the relationship of these two persons to the Holy Spirit. It is apparent in the other passages that the Holy Spirit has a place of prominence. The Holy Spirit is present at the birth of Jesus. More than this, the Holy Spirit is described as the active agent in the pregnancy of Mary. The Holy Spirit is described as the one through whom Mary comes to be with child (Matthew 1:18). The Holy Spirit is described as the person who gives the gift of the child to Mary (Matthew 1:20). Jesus is described by John the Baptist as the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). Here the Holy Spirit is not the giver but the gift. The very

next passage after this statement by John is the passage we began this discovery on – the baptism of Jesus. Jesus' baptism sees the three persons together. The presence of the Holy Spirit like a dove and the voice from heaven, signifying the Father, is seen to be an authentication of Jesus' ministry and a commissioning to do the work ahead. The Holy Spirit is given prominence in this important stage. To add to this prominence, the very next activity of Jesus is one where he is submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 4:1 tells us that "...Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil". Jesus, who was well aware of his identity as Son of God, who had just been authenticated by the Father and the Spirit, now continues in submission to the Holy Spirit. At the last in Matthew, the Holy Spirit is given equal footing with the Father and the Son by Jesus during the Great Commission. Jesus' disciples are to baptize "...in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19 – emphasis mine). The Holy Spirit is given great distinction by Jesus at a time when the Father is giving the Son great distinction.

However, the greatest passage, showing this equality and honour, comes from Matthew 12:31-32. The verses cannot be taken in isolation though and the context of the interaction between Jesus and the Pharisees has been included above. Jesus had just performed an exorcism through the power of the Holy Spirit Matthew tells us. Jesus specifically attributes the healing to the Spirit of God. In contrast, the Pharisees argue that Jesus is doing the work by Beelzebub. Jesus delivers this polemic to explain the fallacy of the Pharisees' statement. More than just an argument Jesus delivers a judgement on them for their errant statements and belief. In the midst of this judgement we discover the level of honour and love bestowed on the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.

Jesus presents the facts that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unforgivable sin. Jesus is using a term understandable to the teachers, the concept of an unforgivable sin. "Jewish teachers acknowledged that

deliberate sin against God's law ('sin with a high hand' or 'defiantly' – see Num 15:30-31; Deut 29:28-20...such as deliberate blasphemy against God, was normally unforgivable" (Keener 1997:232). They knew the term, but now Jesus was giving it its correct context. Instead of just any defiant act against God, the unforgivable sin was set aside for speaking against the Holy Spirit. Jesus continued to differentiate that even speaking against the Son of Man could be forgiven, but not speaking against the Holy Spirit. The tribute paid to the Holy Spirit is high indeed. The Holy Spirit is set aside as being untouchable. Speak against Jesus if you will, but never speak against the Holy Spirit as this is unthinkable and leaves one with no recourse to salvation. Two issues need clarification here. Firstly, who does the "Son of Man" refer to, and secondly, what is speaking against or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

Firstly, the Son of Man refers to Jesus. Some have argued that this phrase could simply mean a human being (Hagner 1993:347). However, as Hagner goes on to rebut, the phrase is not used by Matthew in a generic sense, but rather in a titular sense, hence referencing Jesus specifically. Therefore the contrast between Jesus and the Son of Man is more difficult to understand. Some argue that the reference to Jesus is only in light of his work in ambiguous settings, and therefore people cannot have forgiveness withheld from them in light of the possible confusion. Both Hagner and Blomberg suggest that this difference in blasphemy relates at least to an ambiguous Jesus (Hagner 1993:347-348 and Blomberg 1992:204). The difference could not hold up, they argue, when Jesus is seen in a clear, unambiguous sense. Irrespective of the extent that the phrase Son of Man refers to Jesus, whether in ambiguity or not, all commentaries reviewed see this phrase as referring to Jesus.

Secondly, the exact nature of the sin can be determined by the context of the discussion. The discussion is seen as a result of the Pharisees crediting work done by Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, to work done by Jesus in the power

of Beelzebub. It is to this that Jesus gives his reply. In discussion of this sin, each commentator has their own viewpoint to offer. Blomberg offers that "...probably, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is nothing more or less than the unrelenting rejection of his advances" (Blomberg 1992:204). Keener offers a slightly different take, "...the context of blaspheming *against the Spirit* here refers specifically to the sin of the Pharisees, who are on the verge of becoming incapable of repentance. The sign of the hardness of heart is their determination to reject any proof for Jesus' divine mission..." (Keener 1997:232 – emphasis his). He goes on to say "...the sin is unforgivable only because it reflects a heart too hard to repent" (1997:232). Morris agrees with this sentiment offering some justification, "...it is not that God refuses to forgive, it is that the person who sees good as evil and evil as good is quite unable to repent and thus to come humbly to God for forgiveness" (Morris 1992:318-319). Hagner, too, offers a slightly different slant to the same presupposition,

"To blaspheme against the Spirit was in this case to attribute the work of God's Spirit to Satan and so in the most fundamental way to undercut the very possibility of experiencing the reality of God's salvation. In other words, this blasphemy by its very nature makes forgiveness impossible..." (Hagner 1993:347).

Therefore, the work of the Spirit is held in high regard, higher than at least the ambiguous view of Jesus, and even as high as a clear view of Jesus work of salvation. What is interesting to note is that the Holy Spirit is given significant credit in the work of salvation. This continues to raise the import of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Father and the Son. No commentary or discussion views this passage from a Trinitarian relationship. All views immediately follow a salvation framework. However, we are also taught something important about the relationship between the Son, Father and Holy Spirit. We are taught that the Son and Father hold the Spirit in such high regard that they are prepared to decline salvation to someone who does not

credit the Holy Spirit as highly as they do. This is key to our discussion of the relationships between the persons of the Trinity. Jesus has submitted himself to the leadership of the Spirit. The Father has given the important work of the conception of Jesus to the Holy Spirit. The Father authorises Jesus with the words, "Listen to him" (Matthew 17:5). Prior to that Jesus issued these words about the Holy Spirit and the unforgivable sin. The Father, if he was not in agreement, could have, would have and should have corrected Jesus words about the Spirit. There is no such correction allowing us the only viewpoint that the Father was in agreement. Keeping in mind the Jewish audience of Matthew who would have kept the work of offering forgiveness squarely on the shoulders of the Father, we see an approval of both the Son and the Spirit. Jesus is dictating what can be forgiven and what cannot be forgiven, and discussion of the work of the Spirit is the dividing line. The Father stops none of this, but rather supports and approves what is being done. Both the Son and the Spirit stand on an equal footing with the Father.

We have examined Matthew and discovered that he argues for Jesus to be seen as the Son of God, and therefore one with God. It is not that Jesus was an orphan who was then adopted by God because of his perfect life. It is not primarily approval of Jesus work, although God the Father and the Spirit approved and supported Jesus. In the very beginning the Holy Spirit, a person understood to be the efficacy of God Almighty, is at work producing a son through Mary. Instead of a human man being set aside as the Father of Jesus, his paternity is ratified early in the gospel by the voice from heaven, where the Spirit is also present giving approval. This premise is discussed and promoted throughout the gospel. When Jesus prays he prays to his Father, not only in the passage we highlighted but throughout the gospel. His Transfiguration contains the same voice from heaven saying the same sentence with one addition reinforcing the approval and ratification. Jesus' death gives powerful evidence of something unique happening. This uniqueness is captured by Matthew in the Gentile observers' comments that surely Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus final words of commission are done

with reference to the three persons in complete unity and equality. Even the contrast between the Holy Spirit and Jesus are seen to promote the Son of God. The use of the title Son of Man lends itself to an ambiguous understanding of Jesus. It can be believed that Jesus seen in an unambiguous sense, seen as the Son of God, is not possible unless the work of the Holy Spirit is affirmed and allowed. This is, of course, in part what Paul refers to when he says in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit . So while Matthew does not offer any conclusive proof of Jesus as the Son of God he offers persuasive evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. The Father, the Spirit, John the Baptist, the crowds, the Gentiles soldiers all testify that Jesus is the Son of God. The only opposition is found in the Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes and teachers who considered this blasphemy. The Jewish audience to whom Matthew is writing is left with a choice. They can choice to consider the claim that Jesus is the Son of God as blasphemy, or they can choice to consider it truth. Matthew presents a powerful argument of persuasion that Jesus is the Son of God, and as such is equal to the Father and Spirit. It is an argument of which I am convinced, and an argument from Scripture on which this thesis is based.

Furthermore, what has emerged from these passages in Matthew is a powerful picture of how the persons of the Trinity relate to each other. Each person of the Trinity approves; supports; encourages; protects and loves each other person of the Trinity. Each person works in close relationship with the other persons. They are of one mind and one purpose. They work in complete support and service to each other, never drawing attention to their work or their role. Furthermore each person of the Trinity is seen to be on an equal footing as each person exalts the other to a higher status. The Father, Son and Spirit depict, define and describe the nature of this Trinitarian relationship and its ensuing effect on the subjects if the kingdom of God. This is what we set out to prove, and Matthew has proven it so.

Chapter 2: Weaving the Wool: The Trinity as King of the Kingdom

As we examine the common threads in the passages from Matthew a comprehensive picture emerges of the King of the Kingdom. The powerful proof in Matthew that the Son, Father and Spirit are one, and that each serves and supports the other in their various functions is clear. Likewise, as we saw with the words of Jesus about the Father in Matthew 11, we discover that the nature of the king of the kingdom, the nature of the Godhead is to become our nature as subjects. We now look at what this nature is for us. It is fundamental that we look to the Trinity to learn how we are to be as the church. Already Erickson has brought our attention to the importance of this earlier.

The first common thread to all the relationships of the Trinity is love. The overriding factor in all the relationships is their love for each other. Over and over we see their love for each other expressed. It is no surprise that the first letter of John describes God as being love. In 1 John 4:7 we are told "...love comes from God..." and later on in verse 16, "...God is love..." Gilbert Bilezikian aptly describes this point further,

"God is love. Therefore he is also a giver, and his giving is done on the scale of infinity. (Bilezikian 1997:19)

While we will return to more of his writing later it is appropriate to note that he affirms the love of the person's of the Trinity for each other person. He especially uses the term, "complete mutuality and equality" (1997:18). While these are lofty terms, they suitably describe aspects of a love relationship. Erickson in searching for analogies to describe the Trinity turns to the realm of human psychology. He describes the Trinity in this way,

"As a self conscious person, I may engage in internal dialogue with myself. I may take different positions and interact with myself.

Furthermore, I am a complex human person with multiple roles and responsibilities in dynamic interplay with one another. As I consider what I should do in a given situation, the husband, the father, the seminary professor, and the United States citizen that together constitute me may mutually inform one another." (Erickson 1985:341)

As he says, the analogy breaks down because the situations where this sort of multiple roles and responsibilities are seen the various positions and roles of the human psyche are in competition, in "...virtual warfare" (1985:341). He goes on to say,

"But in God, by contrast, there are always perfect harmony, communication and love." (1985:341)

He agrees that a common thread to all relationships of the Trinity is the thread of love, a thread that brings harmony, an open acceptance and agreement with the other person's of the Trinity.

The thread of love connects to the thread of selflessness. Each person of the Trinity can be seen to be selfless - the Father in directing us to the Son, the Son in pointing to the Spirit, the Spirit in indicating the Father, and so on. This selflessness exists on the basis of mutual reciprocation. Each person of the Trinity in mutual compliance with the other persons chooses to willingly be effaced. Bilezikian agrees, "...the three members of the trinity function together – never independently of each other." Bilezikian 1997:18). Each person is inconspicuous in their work, often crediting the glory and honour to other person's of the Trinity, extolling the virtues of the other person's work. A great description of this selflessness can be found in Neighbour's book entitled, "*Where Do We Go From Here?*" Neighbour quotes an article from Servants among the Poor written by John Samaan:

"...Within God's very nature is a divine 'rhythm' or pattern on continuous giving and receiving – not only love, but also glory, honour, life...each in its fullness. Think about it for a minute. God the Father loves and delights in the Son (Matt. 3:17), Jesus receives that love and pleases his Father as an obedient and loving Son (Jn. 8:29), and honours the Spirit (Matt. 12:31, while the Spirit glorifies both the Father and the Son (Jn. 16:14). Each person in the trinity loves, honours and glorifies the other and receives love and honour back from the others, because he is worthy. There is never any lack" (Neighbour 2000:116).

This leads us effectively to a third common thread, the redirection to worship the other person's of the Trinity. Each person of the Trinity redirects us to worship the other person's. In each case a person of the Trinity is exalted by the other persons of the Trinity. Samaan agrees above with this too. The most powerful passage of this exaltation comes from Philippians 2 and has already been referred to in the descriptions of the relationships of each person of the Trinity. The elements of selflessness and redirection to worship are very powerful because they begin to weave together the picture of the kingdom of God for us.

The one activity that continues after the end of time or the day of judgement, as described in Matthew 25, is the activity of worship. The picture John describes in Revelation for us is one of worship. The elders worship "...him who sits on the throne" (Revelation 4:10), the great multitude worships God (Revelation 7:10), the angels worship God (Revelation 7:11). Jesus describes God's kingdom in John 4 as being a relationship of worship. The number one activity God's people are called to do is worship. It is such an important activity that Jesus declared to the Pharisees that if his disciples did not worship in the manner that they did, then the very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). There is a King in his kingdom and there are his creations and they worship him. This is the reign or kingdom of God (Botsis 1996:9). The

nature of the relationships of the persons' of the Trinity leads us to make this conclusion because it is what each of them encourages us to do for the other.

A fourth thread weaving its way through this tapestry of the Trinity is the thread of service and obedience. Each member of the Trinity freely serves and obeys the other members of the Trinity. This is again captured by Bilezikian's phrase "...complete mutuality and equality" (Bilezikian 1997:18). The members of the Trinity serve each other with love and devotion. It is what they love to do, it how they operate together. However, unlike Bilezikian and Erickson I do not believe this choice to obey and serve, to in essence subjugate themselves to a position of lower standing, is temporary. I believe it is the very essence of the Trinity. A constant movement of the one serving the other, of one obeying the other to such an extent that to try to describe anyone person as above or below the other becomes nonsensical because each does what needs to be done in order for the others to be glorified and worshipped. The Evangelical Theological Society very clearly states the following as its doctrine of the Trinity, "God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory" (1997:188). Bilezikian makes it clear that the work of Jesus on earth, and his limiting of himself was a temporary function, and that now he exists in absolute oneness with the Father and Spirit. "But this self-humiliation was only temporary. In its eternal state, the divine community is united in absolute oneness, Father Son, and Holy Spirit, 'one in essence, equal in power and glory'" (1997:19). Erickson is in support of this view,

"The function of one member of the Trinity may for a time be subordinate to one or both of the other members, but that does not mean he is in any way inferior in essence...This is to be understood as a temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not a change in his status or essence" (Erickson 1985:338)

While I agree with the sentiment I do not feel that if the members of the Trinity choose to subordinate themselves they become less in essence or power or glory. In fact I think that the focus in the Evangelical Theological Society's statement on the Trinity misunderstands and confuses the purpose of that picture of God given to us. The members of the Trinity seek to depict in very tangible terms what service and obedience means when done in perfection. I believe that that statement should replace power and glory with service and selflessness. This is the essence of the Trinity: the power and glory that God desires us to focus on is the power of selflessness and the glory of service.

A final thread that needs to be woven in is the thread of humility. It cannot be overstated that our God is a humble God, yet far too often God is depicted to be an arrogant and egotistical God by many. This is not the picture of the Trinity as described in God's word, and not the point of the God revealing himself to us in this way. He wants us to see what a community of persons looks like when each is committed to helping the other do better, look better, be better, so that the end result is not better, but best.

Chapter 3: Unfurling the Tapestry: The Kingdom of God

We have looked extensively at the ruler of this kingdom with the hope that we would discover how the king desires his subjects to act towards each other and towards the king. Now we have the opportunity to look at the wider picture of the kingdom of God, a look at the whole garment if you will. As we have weaved the threads of the above relationships together it has become apparent that the kingdom of God and the nature of the king are closely interwoven. The common threads of love, selflessness, worship, service and obedience and humility are all major elements in God's word, and are all major elements of what is expected and desired of the followers of Christ. Bringing the two together becomes a logical step. The King of the Kingdom displays the common threads of love, selflessness, worship, service and obedience and humility perfectly and the follower of Christ is commanded to display these same threads in the same manner, perfectly (Matthew 5:48).

As I look at these threads I find that they are summed up by the word worship. Worship is an overused word, but even so, it is a word necessary, if not vital to our vocabulary as people. Rick Warren describes worship as bringing pleasure to God. "Bringing enjoyment to God, living for his pleasure, is the first purpose of your life" (Warren 2002:63). Later on he describes this bringing pleasure to God as worship, "Bringing pleasure to God is called 'worship'" (2002:64), and still later he clarifies further that "...worship is a lifestyle" (2002:65). Worship is the core focal point of a created life. As Warren explains we all worship something. "Worship is as natural as eating or breathing. If we fail to worship God, we always find the substitute, even if it ends up being ourselves" (2002:64). Worship is about filling the innate desire within us to fulfil or purpose, our created design, if you will.

Moltmann describes worship in a similar way when he describes the worship of the assembled community as a Messianic Feast. Essentially the assembled community comes together to declare through words and being the dealings

of God with the world. Worship as a messianic feast is a "...feast of the assembled community, which proclaims the gospel, responds to the liberation experienced, baptizes with the token of the new beginning and, at the table of the Lord, anticipates the fellowship of God's kingdom. The divine lordship which is manifest in the history of Christ and is experienced in the Spirit gives new quality to the whole of life" (Moltmann 1993:261). Worship, even in Moltmann's description, is about the whole life, the entire life, the lifestyle of the assembled community and certainly of the individuals of that community. Moltmann even enforces the view that the Godhead determines the nature of the kingdom of God. Going on he says the following,

"Understood as a messianic feast, the Christian service of worship is entirely determined by the history of God and by what takes place in it. The assembled community perceives anew the complete history of Christ, his giving himself up to death for the salvation of creation, and his glorification in the life of God for creation's future. The messianic feast renews the remembrance of Christ and awakens hope for his kingdom. In this way it sets everyday life in the great arc spanning this remembrance and this hope. In this history of Christ the assembled community perceives the Trinitarian history of God, his love's openness to the world and the perfection of all things in his joy...The messianic feast sets the assembled community, with its daily pains and joys, in the broad context of the Trinitarian history of God with the world" (1993:261)

When one turns to Moltmann's discussion of the Trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world it is filled with the language of worship. "The Son glorifies the Father through his obedience. The Father glorifies the Son through his resurrection and exaltation" (1993:59). As Moltmann begins to describe the work of the Spirit he too finds the common thread of worship, "When we consider the history of the Spirit in the light of its future, glorification is also at the centre" (1993:59). The Spirit works to fulfil Christ's

mission, the union of people and creation with God in which each glorifies the other, "In this union God is glorified through men and in it they partake of the glory of God himself" (1993:59). He goes on to describe the work of the Spirit as being "...the power which glorifies men in the glory of God" (1993:59)

"The Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son by freeing men for fellowship with them, filling men in their freedom with joy and thanksgiving. The glorifying of the Son and the Father through the Spirit sets men on the road towards the glory for which they themselves are destined" (1993:59)

Moltmann concludes,

"This Trinitarian history of glorification points beyond itself to the goal of the Trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world" (1993:59)

And so we come full circle to the assembled community that joins in with the Trinitarian history of God's dealings with the world, which is glorification, which is worship. Worship is central to God's dealings with the world. It is central to each of the relationships of the Trinity. It is the central thread in our common threads, both by linguistic design and by thought. Worship is therefore central to God's kingdom.

Amazingly both Warren and Moltmann subjugate worship as an activity that the church, and the individuals within her, performs. Moltmann talks about the service of worship, pointing to a particular service with an end and a beginning; while Warren speaks of worship as an eternal purpose but structurally equates it to four other purposes that each has their own eternal standing. Both move from describing worship as an intricately woven rug worthy of being hung on a wall to becoming a simple welcome mat or cosy carpet. Worship is so much more, because it really is the lifeblood of God's

kingdom, the work we are to complete, and the activity we are to pursue for eternity. However, we will examine worship in more detail later; suffice it to say that worship is the central thread for our carpet.

The only question that should remain is where does all of this work take place. In the words of Moltmann where does the history of God's dealing with the world take place, in the words of Warren, where does this purpose get fulfilled, in the words of the kingdom, where is the kingdom to be found, in the words of a carpet weaver, where do I put my rug. I believe the answer lies in the description of worship. If worship is a lifestyle, if it is any activity that brings pleasure to God, that spans time, taking hold of the historical and pointing to the future then worship can take place anywhere. If this is the case then to answer Moltmann, anywhere, to answer Warren, anywhere, to answer the kingdom, anywhere, to answer the carpet weaver, anywhere.

When we consider the nature of the kingdom according to the nature of the king we discover that worship is central to the nature of the King and therefore it is central to the nature of the kingdom. Therefore, the kingdom of God is established and furthered wherever worship of the Triune God, in the manner that the Triune God displays worship, is to be found. To define this simply, the Kingdom of God is any area where the Triune God is worshipped as Lord.

Now that we know where the kingdom of God can be found, we need to discover what the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God is. It is to that discussion that we now turn.

Section 2: The Church

Chapter 4: Hanging the Tapestry: *Ecclesia*

"The church in Genchrea" (Romans 16:1).

"The church that meets at their house" (Romans 16:5).

"And the whole church here" (Romans 16:23).

"To the church of God in Corinth" (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:2).

"To the churches in Galatia" (Galatians 1:1)

"To the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1)

This is how Paul addressed the believers in his letters. He also addressed them as saints, brothers, the faithful, and of course to Timothy and Titus, the term "son". The singular Greek word used for the translation of church is "*ecclesia*". It is a powerful word, a word that, in the English, has been adopted, changed, overused, mutilated, and even discarded. This was certainly not the intention of the writers of the New Testament, neither was it their intention for a word used to describe a group of believers to become such a divisive element in the world today. People fear the word church, they hate the word church and they love the word church. Personally, I feel there are far too many emotions ascribed to the word church. It is as though our vision has been clouded, our sight blinded by the very word that should describe who we are as people. So we are going to examine the word *ecclesia* again, and hopefully allow our discussion of *Basileia tou Theou* to influence our examination of *ecclesia*.

Ecclesia finds its roots many centuries before the New Testament writers' usage. Henry Liddell and Robert Scott translate *ecclesia* as "...an assembly duly summoned" (Liddell; Scott 1968:509). Their translation integrates Homeric, Samian and Spartan assemblies as well as the meeting of the Amphictyons at Delphi. Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida also agree "the

term '*ecclesia*' was in common usage for several hundred years before the Christian era and was used to refer to an assembly of persons constituted by a well defined membership" (Louw 1988:126). What is central to each of their translations is that the term was used to refer to a group of summoned individuals, often in a political or secular realm. *Ecclesia* was seldom used in a religious setting before the time of the New Testament writers. Liddell, Scott and Louw, Nida translate *ecclesia* in the bible as a group of people duly summoned or called to assembly. Their calling or assembly is around their belief, or common situation, for example "...a body of Christians..." (Liddell et al 1968:509).

Kittel's approach is similar as he starts with the Septuagint's use of *ecclesia* referring to the "...total community of Israel..." (Kittel 1965:503). In the New Testament he sees 'ecclesia' as speaking of the "...saved community of the New Testament...first as a total community and then locally." (1965:503). It is for this very reason that Kittel expresses the following warning in translating *ecclesia*.

"We must always understand and translate either 'congregation' or 'congregations' or 'Church' or 'churches'. Of the two the former is preferable, though we cannot entirely dispense with the latter because congregation is now commonly used to differentiate the local congregation from the community as a whole" (1965:505).

The New Testament writers never differentiated between the terms congregation and church. They simply used *ecclesia* for both. However, the focus of the term *ecclesia* was always around who was doing the summoning, around who was calling this group of people into existence. For Kittel, the important point when looking at *ecclesia* is not the size of people being addressed, but whether it is if God assembles them (1965:505).

Colin Brown confirms this sentiment by looking closely at the use of the term *ecclesia* in the Old Testament.

"*Ecclesia*' is only used where it is a question of the people as God's assembly; characterized by having answered Yahweh's call. Admittedly it is used especially where the historic greatness of Israel is implied and avoided where it could perhaps suggest to the Greek reader merely a political claim on the part of the contemporary Jewish leader - ('qahal' is translated as 'synagogue' in these cases.)" (Brown 1971:296).

Earlier Brown says

"...Where '*ecclesia*' is used in the Septuagint for 'qahal' it indicates the assembly of the people or a judicial assembly, it also indicates the assembly of the people for worship (2 Chr. 6:3; 30:2, 4, 13, 17; Joel 2:16 and several times in the Psalms.)" (1971:295).

Kittel would agree with this concept of being called or summoned for worship, as he goes on to say that "...the decisive point (in translating *ecclesia*) is fellowship with Christ." (Kittel 1965:512). The basis for the community's existence is fellowship with Christ. The discovery of the invitation to have fellowship with Christ and the resultant relationship is an activity of worship. We acknowledge that Jesus is Lord; we believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, and on that basis we are saved (Roman 10:9). This is the beginning of fellowship with Christ, and these are the beginnings of worship.

The phrase "...if he has fellowship with Christ..." also stands in support of Kittel saying that "... the congregation of the Church of God always stands in contrast and even in opposition to other forms of society." (1965:505). By this Kittel is saying that because the important facts are God's calling and fellowship with Christ, the societal form of God's congregation is not just

another societal form. "In terms of a sociologically defined concept of society one can never grasp the nature or meaning of the assembly of God in Christ. The '*ecclesia*' as the '*soma Christou*' is no mere human fellowship." (1965:512).

Kittel raises an excellent and important question regarding the use of the word *ecclesia*. "Why did the New Testament avoid a cultic term and choose instead a secular one?" (1965:503). While we can never know exactly what motivated them to choose this term over a religious term, one can put forth an opinion.

Liddell, Scott; Louw, Nida; Kittel and Brown all when using the term *ecclesia* place the society of believers in direct contrast to the other societal forms of the day. They were a group, called together in a particular location with a particular function and they were to remain as this group impacting their particular location with whatever needed to be addressed and dealt with. In Ephesus the trade in idols needed addressing, in Jerusalem the attitude of racism or segregation, in Corinth the impact of hedonism and later on division. Each *ecclesia* was called to fulfil the function of bringing God's reign to bear, of preparing those around them to search for, look to and respond to the call of God. Were the writers to use a religious term, the possibility of this group of people withdrawing from their society, placing their society above those with whom they came into contact with would be greatly increased. The New Testament writers had discovered that Jesus came to change and impact the whole world, not just one group of people. Using a religious term would place them immediately into a conflict of beliefs. Using a secular term placed them in camaraderie of function. The *ecclesia* was there to serve, to help, to be a vision for the kingdom to be seen and a rallying point to and from where the kingdom could progress. The singular focus on this one term *ecclesia* shows a specific avoidance of all other terms. Discovering the reason for this avoidance and choice is paramount to determining the definition of *ecclesia*.

The reason for the avoidance of a religious term is that the *ecclesia* were not to be another religious body, they were to be a different people, a people who loved differently, a people who thought differently and acted differently. They were not to become another religion, they were to become the people of God who lived in the kingdoms of the world, but at the same time lived out of another kingdom, the kingdom of God.

Brown describes this concept as well.

"The primitive Christian '*ecclesia*' understood itself as the herald of the Lordship of Christ, which was approaching with the imminently expected parousia and was already being realized in their midst...But the church was also aware that it was still a part of this age, and was therefore not identical with the '*basileia*', the Kingdom of God" (Brown 1971:298).

This leads Brown to say that, "Where the '*ecclesia*' is an event, the institution of the '*ecclesia*' comes into being and will continue to do so in the expectation that the Lord will continue to make his presence real. Coming together must be reckoned an essential element in '*ecclesia*'. Hence the '*ecclesia*' can be thought of in purely concrete terms and any spiritualising in the dogmatic sense of an invisible church is still unthinkable for Paul" (1971:299). This leads Brown to suggest, "...the '*ecclesia*' has its location, existence and being within definable geographical limits. The apostle thus writes of the church that is in Corinth... The '*ecclesia*' is always described and ordered in terms of its particular, local form." (1971:299-301).

Alfred Kuen's view seems to both agree and disagree with this. As he discusses the meaning the word church, he discovers that "in the writing's of the apostles the church appears to us under two forms. They are the universal church and the local church" (Kuen 1971:51). Kuen makes four

observations about the immediate context of the word *ecclesia* in the New Testament. Firstly, in agreement with Kittel above, the word "designates at one and the same time the universal church and local assembly" (1971:51-52). Secondly, Paul describes the church in association with the name of her founder, using descriptions like "church of the living God", "the church of God", or "the church of the Lord". Thirdly "...the churches are named with reference to their members." (1971:52). His final observation is that "frequently the word *church* is associated with a geographical term" (1971:52).

What is confusing is that the very next paragraph after this observation Kuen says, "We never find the expressions: the churches of Rome, of Jerusalem, nor the church of Macedonia, of Judea, of Galatia" (1971:52). This is confusing because Kuen in his first observation speaks of the nature of New Testament writers to interchange *ecclesia* for universal and local uses, but battles with it being used for plural or singular uses. The confusion comes not from how the New Testament writers used the term *ecclesia* but with how we are translating it. The confusion stems from our usage of the word church to describe a universal and invisible ideal for church, and the reality of the church in its local setting. Kuen's specifically highlights that *ecclesia* is used 90 out of 108 times in a local context. Its descriptions in a universal sense refer to the reign of God over the church, a general experience of the whole church, or how God relates to his church. These are the universal meanings of the word *ecclesia*. They are not insurmountable in defining *ecclesia*.

This then is a fundamental aspect of defining *ecclesia*. The *ecclesia* has definable geographical limits; it is summoned by God into fellowship with Christ and each other to fulfil the need for the definable geographical limits where it finds itself.

Chapter 5: Holes in the Tapestry: Universal/Invisible Church and Local/Visible Church

As we ponder the impact of defining *ecclesia* within clearly definable geographical limits we discover holes emerging on our tapestry. There are three types of holes that need special attention. Firstly, there are holes telling us where the church is not, holes where the church needs to become a reality, a specific existence that can be seen and addressed. These are called mission fields today. Some exist right behind the houses where we live.

Secondly, there are holes where groups of churches have gathered together and declared themselves separate from the rest of Christianity, defining themselves by additional criteria not stipulated as essential criteria by God's word or by the picture we have of his Trinitarian existence. These are called cults by some. However, were we to be honest, there are other groups that also fit this description. These groups are what are commonly known as main line denominations. These additional criteria are numerous in their description, and some are innocuous, while others are blatant deviations from God's word. A specific example might describe one of the more innocuous criteria.

I will never forget an occasion with a leadership team of a specific denominational church. After examining the criteria for membership of God's invisible/universal church as described in God's word and after determining that what we had learnt was the truth, we came to the point of application. We found ourselves in direct conflict with the laws and disciplines, the constitution and by-laws of that specific denomination. The application pushed for us to disband membership as it currently existed and for all involved to relearn the biblical criteria for being part of God's church. The application strove for us all to start afresh together as people striving to be part of the community of the *ecclesia* by becoming part of the *Basileia tou Theou*. A leader in the meeting pointed out that this application would cause

people who were members according to the constitution, to no longer be members under this new endeavour. The meeting decided to disband the process that we had embarked upon. Instead of holding to the truth we believed was part of God's word, we chose to hold to the constitution and by-laws of the denomination. While affirming that God's word was our canon, our biblical standard for living and that every other document or law was subject to its authority, we subjected it to the authority of a human document. This is a hole in the tapestry.

There are also holes where individual people declare themselves part of the broader church, the invisible church, the universal or Catholic Church, but never go to church, never meet with other Christians where they can serve and be served, where they can be accountable and hold others to account. These are the hundreds and thousands that exist on membership rolls around the world that have signed up, done the courses, and paid their dues, but can not, or will not, be actively involved in a community with a definable geographical limit. They also describe the many people who are Christian by verbal agreement, but do not or will not attend a local church.

It is for this reason that we must discuss this issue of the universal/invisible/catholic church and the local/visible/specific church. There are two major issues at work.

Firstly we must discuss the universal church and local church issue. Nearly all of the writing of the New Testament is in the form of epistles or personal letters are written to people or groups of people by the authors. The specific nature of the epistle literature format lends itself to the usual interpretation of *ecclesia* being a specific local community. This is exactly the point that Millard Erickson makes about the usage of *ecclesia*.

"Since the majority of his (Paul's) writings were letters addressed to specific local gatherings of believers, it is not surprising that the term

usually has reference to a group of believers in a specific city...This local sense of the church is evidently intended in the vast majority of occurrences of the word *ecclesia*" (Erickson 1985:1032-1033 – parentheses mine)

In most cases the use of the word *ecclesia* is to address a large group of believers, like all the believers in a city. In a few instances it is a reference to a specific group meeting in a house, and in some instances it is to a wider geographic area like a province of the Roman Empire (1985:1033).

What is meant by the concept of a local church is a church with a specific geographical, racial or social locality, for example a church meeting in a home (Romans 16:5), all the believers in a city being a church (Acts 8:1), and the churches of an area (Galatians 1:2).

In contrast the universal church is a reference to all the churches together, the totality of believers in the world. The universal dimension of *ecclesia*, Erickson notes, is helpful in understanding "...certain New Testament passages more clearly" (1985:1034). Passages like those in Ephesians where Paul addresses the idea or concept of the church as the body of Christ are universal in nature. They capture the meaning of church for all believers, in all generations across all races. While this concept receives only limited exposure in the New Testament, it is present.

Erickson makes a powerful observation about the references of *ecclesia* in the local sense and universal sense.

"We should note that the individual congregation, or group of believers in a specific place, is never regarded as only a part of the component of the whole church. The church is not the sum or composite of the individual local groups. Instead the whole is found in each place. Karl Schmidt says, 'We have pointed out that the sum of the individual

congregations does not produce the total community or the church. Each community, however, small, represents the total community, the church" (1985:1033)

Erickson points out that there is a Platonic perspective in the New Testament to the writers of Paul and Luke in this regard. He argues that this is a fact, not something read into the text, but already present: "...local churches are regarded as instantiations or concrete particular manifestations of the pure Form, the abstract Idea, of church" (1985:1033). This is important for us to grasp. Rex Mathie coined a phrase that captures this exact idea. He called the local church the microcosm of the universal church.⁴ The local church contains within it all the elements of the universal church. A cross section of the universal church and the local church should be identical. Biologically, they have the same DNA. However, just like the hair of a person is not the whole person, but contains the exact DNA make up of the whole person, so the local church is not the whole church, but contains the exact DNA make up of the whole church.

Our discussion of *ecclesia* above leads me to conclude that the *ecclesia* of the bible, while universal in nature, deals conclusively with the local church. *Ecclesia* in the bible is about a specific group of people, who have been summoned together by God for a particular purpose. Efforts to address a universal church, to dream or idealise about a universal church are fruitless efforts, because the church must be grounded. It needs to be grounded in a specific geographical area. It, or more correctly, we "...live in the world..." (2 Corinthians 10:3) but we are not "...of this world" (John 17:14). *Ecclesia* can only be experienced in a specific local setting. While it can be discussed or theorised in a universal setting, it must find local expression. Erickson agrees.

⁴ This was discovered in private discussion with Rex Mathie. It is however, obviously the intentions of other authors already cited, like Brown for example.

"While it is universal in nature, it finds expression in local groupings of believers which display the same qualities as does the body of Christ as a whole" (Erickson 1985:1034)

If we are to tie the concepts of *ecclesia* being a group summoned together with the issue of a universal and local church we find that the *ecclesia* is universally summoned by God, but gathers locally to fulfil a specific need.

The second issue needing clarification is the issue of the invisible and visible church. The invisible church is the ideal of what we describe the church to be, the visible church is the church as it is. Erickson is again helpful in dealing with this issue.

"This distinction, which appeared as early as Augustine, was first enunciated clearly by Martin Luther, and then incorporated by John Calvin into his theology as well. It was Luther's way of dealing with the apparent discrepancies between the qualities of the church as we find them laid out in Scripture and the characteristics of the empirical church, the church as it actually exists on earth" (Erickson 1985:1044)

This same sentiment of an invisible church being an excuse for the discrepancies in the concept of the church and the reality of the church is expressed by Kuen. In an attempt to define the word church, Kuen looked to various definitions given from the thinkers in the Reformation, to various confessions in the sixteenth century, through to the men of the Revival in the nineteenth century, and finally some modern theologians. He articulates it in this way,

"Some may be astonished at this assent of theologians from all over the world concerning the biblical description of the church when the churches they represent correspond so poorly to the definition which they give of it. Brunner's explanation puts the finger on the sore:

'It is however a well-known fact that dogmatists and Church leaders often pay but small attention to the results of New Testament research, and are only too ready to bridge the gulf between then and now by a handy formula such as that of development or by appealing to the distinction between the visible and invisible church, and thus to give a false solution to this grave and distressing problem. But while many theologians and Church leaders are able to quieten their consciences by such formulae, others are so much more painfully aware of the disparity between the Christian fellowship of the apostolic age and our own 'churches', and cannot escape the impression that there may perhaps be something wrong with what we now call the Church'" (Kuen 1971:50)

I agree fully with Brunner. This appeasing of our conscience by talking about an invisible church is our attempt to explain away our own weakness in being what God's word calls us to be, the body of Christ. We cannot speak of an invisible church while continuing to call the fellowship we are in by the same name. Does this mean we must discard our ideals? Absolutely not! We must savour our ideals, but discard our failures. We must make every effort to become the ideal, make every effort to turn the visible church into the ideal of the invisible church. We can never replace God as judge of who will be saved and who will not be saved. If anything is to be learnt from Jesus' interaction with the religious leaders of his day it is to avoid their arrogance in assuming the role of judge. We can only be faithful in applying our knowledge of God's word and discarding what fails to meet those standards.

How far are we to go in this discarding? All the way! We are to engage in revolution, not reformation of the church. Referring to the example of the leadership team above, when the conflict between God's word and the constitution of the denomination was discovered the correct response would have been to discard the constitution, to rewrite the by-laws, so that they

reflect our understanding of God's word. If this meant that the visible church suddenly appeared one tenth of its size then that would be acceptable. If it meant secession from the denomination then that would be acceptable.

Far too much has been written on the need for the reformation of the church. We don't need reform; we need revolution, a breaking down of the traditions and laws that have kept the church from becoming what it is supposed to be. This is not a call for the wholesale destruction of all tradition and all law. It is not a call for anarchy. Rather it is a call to go beyond the invisible definition of the church, as we would like it to be, and to become the visible reality of that definition.

So as we examine the issue of the invisible church and visible church, we need to stop using this concept as an excuse for our unacceptable practises, and begin to implement the changes to turn the invisible church into the visible church.

As we look at the tapestry we can now see the holes that need to be fixed. The church, while universal in nature (being summoned by God), gathers in a specific locality (visible not invisible) and must fulfil the reasons for her summoning, the reign of God.

The holes we discussed above can now be reworked and filled. In the first case we spoke about the holes where the church is not. We must now be attentive to God's summoning of us to work in those areas where the church does not exist. We must move into the mission fields. This is the work of evangelism.

In the second instance, where churches have gathered together to separate themselves from other believers we must be bold to speak out against this division. Efforts at reconciliation and reunification must be made, and where these efforts are rebuffed a clear break must be made. However, the

opportunity for reconciliation must always be made available, but there can no longer be the issue of calling one another brothers and sisters in Christ, when in our pulpits we discredit each other. For some, it requires the discarding of years of tradition, for others it requires the humility of relearning what needs to be done instead of trying to reinvent what already works. For some it requires repentance from erroneous actions and beliefs, while for others it requires practical, and even forceful, action to correct either wrong actions or failure to act. This is the work of reconciliation.

In the third instance there needs to be patient invitation and love made available to those who for whatever reason choose not to belong to a local community. This may mean a reworking of what local churches call church, or gentle invitations extended. A practical example may suffice. A person who does not attend the weekly service on a Sunday, but faithfully goes to a small group, where there is a study of God's word, opportunities to serve others and the accountability to share this love with those who do not know of it is being the church. Their attendance on Sunday is immaterial. However, a person who does none of the above is in no way being the church. The reason for their not being a part of the church must be discovered and changes suggested to them, or made by the church to incorporate them. Another example will illustrate what I mean. Churches today are beginning to discover the effects of technology in reaching those who previously did not attend any form of the church. As this area of technology advances, we must be challenged to make the necessary changes to keep new people being introduced to God. This is the work of discipleship.

However, there are some legitimate reasons for people who cannot be a part of the church as it currently operates. Here again the need to rework what we mean by church is important. Someone who is housebound, or involved in work that conflicts with church meeting times still needs to be a part of the church. Instead of them coming to the church, perhaps the church should go to them. Have a service at the bedside of the housebound person, or at the

person's work, or at the times when they are available. These are not ideal solutions, and obviously do not account for the many and varied problems that exist or will arise, but the point is clear.

The *ecclesia* appears wherever God summons them to be. Where God summons people together to worship him is the church. It is local because this summoning is always to a definable geographic area; it is visible because it is always to fulfil the purpose of God's kingdom, to worship him as the Triune God. This is the essence of *ecclesia*.

Chapter 6: Cleaning the Tapestry: *Basileia* to *Ecclesia*

We have begun to define the church more clearly in our discussion, making use of the word *ecclesia*, but we now have to bring the two terms of *ecclesia* and *basileia* together - the essence of the Kingdom of God, and the essence of the church. There are many points of view about the nature of this relationship. We will focus on four descriptions from modern theologians and attempt to offer our own description. For part of this discussion we will dispense with the Greek word *ecclesia* and *basileia* as we look at other opinions about the church and the kingdom of God. The reasoning behind this is simple – we have moved on in our thinking from the word church. We live in an age where new denominations are being formed around us, where churches are non-denominational, inter-denominational and multi-denominational.

Take for example the rise of Willow Creek Community Church. Willow Creek has a high focus on community, evangelism, and equality⁵. With the success of the church came the rise of the Willow Creek Association, an organization that exists to serve other churches in developing and growing. Membership of this association is relatively cheap, requires an agreement with a doctrinal statement, and carries some benefits and almost no penalties (other than the membership fee). They do not ordain ministers, determine local church practise or hold any accountability over these local churches. However, it is a short step in my opinion, from this to becoming a new denomination.⁶

Likewise take the rise of Saddleback Community Church and its related organization Purpose Driven. Saddleback Community Church is a Baptist church by affiliation, yet has within it an organization that includes thousands of members of many different churches – the Purpose Driven organization.

⁵ Bill Hybels writes about the development of Willow Creek Community Church in his book *Rediscovering Church* and covers these themes amongst many others.

⁶ Information about the Willow Creek Association comes in many forms from handouts, books like *Rediscovering Church*, and *Community 101* by Gilbert Bilezikian and their website <http://www.willowcreek.com/>.

Similar to the Willow Creek Association, Purpose Driven runs conferences and training seminars for churches to improve on their impact in the world.⁷

Just using the example of Saddleback Community Church, we have a Baptist Church by traditional denominational ties, yet it is the founder of a potential new denomination in Purpose Driven. It is common language for churches to describe themselves according to traditional denominational ties, and then to describe their practise according to new denominational ties – Purpose Driven Church, or Willow Creek Association member. If one were to add the impact of the Cell Movement as defined by Ralph Neighbour in *Where Do We Go From Here?* we can easily see the emergence of multi-denominational churches. For example Durbanville Methodist Church is a Methodist Church by tradition, a cell church by philosophy and practise, a Willow Creek Association member, and runs a youth ministry that is Purpose Driven. It is a multi-denominational church.⁸

This trend towards new denominations, which is merely my own opinion and not an established purpose of the organizations discussed above, leads me to conclude that we must, for part of this discussion, move away from the Greek words. As we discuss the nature of the relationship of the kingdom of God and the church we will discover that both enjoy a wide variety of usage and to be clear in this chapter, we will differentiate between our usage of *ecclesia* and *basileia* and other's usage of the words church and kingdom of God by using the Greek and English separately. This distinction is not to separate error from truth; it is merely to separate my own personal thoughts from others.

⁷ Information about Saddleback Community Church and The Purpose Driven Association can be found in Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Church* and on their website <http://www.purposedriven.com/> and <http://www.saddleback.com/>.

⁸ The author of this paper was employed by Durbanville Methodist Church in Cape Town, South Africa from 2000-2002, hence the intimate working details of that church. However, it is common practise to find churches round the world describe themselves in a similar way.

Some brief words about the nature of this relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church before we examine the chosen opinions more closely.

Firstly, very few theologians, and almost no modern theologians, equate the Kingdom of God with the church. There has been a shift in thinking here from the earliest thoughts in Christianity. Augustine was the first to equate the kingdom of God with the church, or at the very least to identify the church with the Kingdom of God (Ladd 1974: 58). The vast majority of modern theologians do not see the kingdom of God and the church as the same thing.

Kung seems to be the only person who sees no relationship at all. In other words, nearly all theologians believe that a relationship exists. Dulles quotes Kung:

"Kung stresses that the Church neither is the Kingdom of God, nor does it build the Kingdom, or extend it on earth, or work for its realization. "It is the reign of God which the Church hopes for, bears witness to, and proclaims. It is not the bringer or the bearer of the reign of God which is to come and is at the same time already present, but its voice, its announcer, its *herald*. God alone can bring his reign; the Church is devoted entirely to its service"" (Dulles 1974: 74)

It would seem clear from Kung's viewpoint that the churches work is to fulfil the reign of God, but is not the reign of God itself, or even a part of the reign of God.

Clearly, then, a third view exists. Most theologians believe that a relationship exists between the Kingdom of God and the church. Broadly speaking, theologians range from believing the church to be a part of the kingdom of God, alongside many other specific parts, to the church containing all that the Kingdom of God is within it, but not being all of the Kingdom of God. The

four theologians we will look at fall into these broad categories in various degrees. We will examine the viewpoints of John Adam Heyns, Jurgen Moltmann, Avery S.J. Dulles, and George Eldon Ladd in depth.

John Adam Heyns argues strongly for the church to be seen as one part of the Kingdom of God. Heyns examination of the bible unearths five statements about God's reign. Firstly, God is King, secondly he reigns, thirdly he reigns over his subjects, fourth, his subjects obey him, and finally, they are blessed by the King. Thus, for Heyns, the reign of God is where "his will is triumphant" (Heyns 1980:5-6). Heyns' statements lead him to make several conclusions. The first conclusion is of importance to us here. He concludes that God's reign is universal,

"All human activity is involved in the Kingdom...not just cultic activities in the church, but also his (humanity's) rational activity in science and politics, aesthetic activity in literature and drama and recreation in sport and play, if he acts and behaves in obedience to God's word."

(1980:6-7)

The universality of God's reign distinguishes between two types of people. There are those God "has chosen and called...in Jesus Christ (and those) people who obediently concur in God's purpose" (1980:20 – parentheses mine).

Several of his conclusions deal with the reality of God's reign as a dynamic reality, that is both present and future, yet is characterized by a counter reality. Sin cannot exist in God's kingdom, and so there is a reality of people who fall outside of God's kingdom. The relationship of the church and the kingdom of God is therefore phrased negatively and positively by Heyns.

Negatively, the church is not identical to the kingdom of God but should not be set dualistically apart. The church is only one part of God's kingdom, but

is a part of it, not separate to the kingdom of God, nor working in opposition to the Kingdom of God. Heyns says it is "wrong to equate them, but also wrong to set the two dualistically apart" (1980:22). The church has a clear role to play in the kingdom of God, but so do other structures and all must be encouraged to do so.

Negatively, the relationship of the church and the Kingdom of God is also not mystical. There is no "God within" mentality. This mentality leads to too wide a scope of the relationship allowing for very little distinction between the two realities, God's dynamic reality and the counter reality of sin. It also blurs the line of the present and future aspects of the reign of God. There is a clear line between the kingdom now, and the kingdom to come, and a mystical approach allows for that line to be blurred, leading to confusion and compromise.

Negatively speaking, the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church is also not based on morals, in the leading of "a virtuous life" (1980:22). This distinction is important when placing the church as a part of God's kingdom, because so many other structures and organizations exist for moral improvement. The churches existence is far more than mere moral development. Therefore, the relationship cannot be defined on moral ground alone, it must be wider.

Positively speaking, Heyns sees that only citizens of God's kingdom belong to it. Therefore, there may be people in the church and in other modes of God's Kingdom who are not citizens of God's Kingdom, and therefore they do not belong to it. Of course, conversely, there may be citizens of God's Kingdom, not in any of these modes, who because of their citizenship belong to God's Kingdom.

Positively speaking, the dividing line of this citizenship is in the acceptance of God's sovereignty. These citizens "accept his sovereignty over their lives,

obeying him in all they do, think and say." (1980:22). Heyns finds biblical backing in Colossians 3:17, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." Therefore, he finds that the "church is the citizens of the kingdom who, to the glory of the King and guided by the officials

- a) Experience and proclaim the blessings of God's kingdom liturgically and cultically and
- b) Concern themselves with matters related to the kingdom." (1980:23).

Positively speaking, the church is therefore a sign of the Kingdom of God according to two perspectives. Referentially, the church is only one mode of the Kingdom of God. Heyns says, "anyone who regards the church - or his particular church - as the sole mode of the kingdom sells its other legitimate modes short, mangles society as a whole, and impoverishes the kingdom....all genuine formation (i.e. formation committed to the Word and obedient to it) of a state, an organization, science, art and so on is a formation of the kingdom and proclamation of it" (1980:24-25). On a participatory level, the church is an active participant in the Kingdom because "the light the church radiates is the light of the kingdom" (1980:25). The church as a participant in God's Kingdom therefore has an enormous responsibility to keep the goals and demands of God's Kingdom in sight. "A church that loses sight of the kingdom and labours in its own interests, dreaming of its own greatness, splendour and power, has become secularised and renounced its calling." (1980:25).

Jurgen Moltmann is similar to Heyns because he sees the church as one of many modes in God's Kingdom. Moltmann, however, talks about relationships and processes rather than order and structure. He uses the word processes because it conveys dynamism and movement to the discussion, rather than static ideas or thoughts. He uses the word relationships because it signifies a partnership, a common hope for both

parties. Moltmann seeks to avoid using the word order because of the static nature of the word.

"We shall therefore talk about processes instead of orders, processes in whose conflicts and trends Christianity is involved, and has to be involved today, more consciously than ever before" (Moltmann 1993:164).

The relationships and processes that the church needs to be involve in include the relationship of the church with Israel, the relationship of the church with other world religions, the relationship of the church with the processes of economic life, the relationship of the church with the processes of political life, and the relationship of the church with the processes of cultural life.

The relationship of the church with these different processes and ideas is vital because it breeds a hope, a hope for the church and a hope for the church's partners. "The church of the kingdom asks itself about Israel's hope, the hope of the world religions, the hope of human society and the hope of nature" (1993:135). The church cannot withdraw and avoid its responsibility to know the world in which it lives.

"No life can be understood from its own standpoint alone. As long as it lives, it exists in living relationships to other lives, and therefore in contexts of time and with the perspectives of hope. It is these that constitute in the first place a living being's unique vitality, openness and capacity for communication. Accordingly the church's reflection on itself cannot be carried out merely through the exploration of its foundations and the motives that impel it. We must investigate with equal intensity the context of the time in which it displays its vitality, develops its relationships to other lives and unfolds its activities" (1993:133).

It is therefore, essential, vital and fundamental that the church enters into a relationship with the above parties. Moltmann begins to examine these relationships in depth beginning with the relationship of the church to Israel.

"Israel is Christianity's original, enduring and final partner in history" (1993:135). It is here that the church must begin, and here that the church must draw its understanding for all the other relationships. "If the church loses sight of its orientation to Israel, then its religious, political and earthly relationships will also be turned into pagan ones, indeed into post-Christian and anti-Christian ones" (1993:135). In fact, the church has lost sight of its orientation to Israel for three reasons. Firstly, "...after Auschwitz...through their anti-Judaism, sometimes beneath the surface, sometimes obvious, the Christian churches have been paganizing themselves for centuries" (1993:136). Secondly, by setting itself up as the Kingdom of God on earth, "...through its triumphalism it maintained and practised for centuries, the church has set itself up as the Kingdom of God on earth in absolute form..." (1993:136), and by so doing it has detached itself from the history of Israel (1993:136). Thirdly, "the founding of the state of Israel in the 'land of Israel'...has put the relationship of Christians to Jews on a new footing" (1993:137). This third reason creates problems for both sides, but for Christians the problem arises concerning the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians (1993:137).

The church needs to rediscover this relationship, by freeing itself from the anti-Semitic stance, demolish its triumphal stance, and deal with Israel as a state and a people. The essential problem lies in the fact that the church has become a bastion of "...Gentile Christian theology..." (193:141), and it must break down this bastion, a bastion built upon 3 assumptions as detailed by Erik Peterson. Firstly, the assumption of the church is that the Jews did not become believers. Secondly, there is the assumption that Christ's return is not imminent leading to a Hellenization of Christianity. Thirdly, there is the

assumption that the twelve apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit decided to go to the Gentiles (1993:141-142).

In contrast, Moltmann finds that an examination of the early days of the church describes a different viewpoint. Firstly, Jesus established a fellowship of disciples, not a church. This fellowship "...took place inside the nation..." (1993:142) but because it included tax collectors and sinners, "...in tendency it points outwards as well" (1993:142). Secondly, the community of disciples represented "...the messianically renewed people of the twelve tribes" (1993:142). "It could be termed a revival movement within Israel itself" (1993:142). This can be seen in the use of the term *hodos* – The Way (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 23). Thirdly, the transition from *hodos* to *ecclesia* "...probably first came about in the circle of the seven gathered round Stephen...It was they who discovered for the first time that Gentiles believed without first becoming Jews, that is, that the Spirit descended directly on Gentiles. It must have been in Antioch that the Christian community termed itself *ecclesia* for the first time (Gal 1:14)" (1993:142). This term, *ecclesia*, showed a criticism of the law, and "...a rejection of the temple cult in Jerusalem" (1993:142). Fourth, the mission to the Gentiles is a reversal of the Jewish order of hope, "...first for the Jew, then for the Gentile..." (Romans 1:16) where the first become last and the last first. Neither is this reversal of the order of hope a "...surrender of imminent expectation and an exclusion of precise eschatological expectations" (1993:143). Simply put by Moltmann, "even if the church becomes a purely Gentile church, it is still a church for Israel and with Israel" (1993:143). Finally, this mission to the Gentiles and the church of the Gentiles become "...eschatological signs and wonders" (1993:143). The church brings the future into the present; the church brings expectation into realization. "The church itself is this mission of hope" (1993:143) for the salvation of Israel, which is the last thing.

This examination of the early church sheds light on the nature of the new relationship with Israel. There needs to be an acknowledgment of Israel's

special position and the abiding vocation of the people of Israel must be accepted. The relationship of the church to Israel needs to remain open-ended, as what their "positive fellowship" consists of is not certain (1993:146-149). There must be room left for the church and Israel to discover how to move forward. If the route of salvation for Israel is through the salvation of the Gentiles, then the mission of the church to the world apart from Israel is vital and essential to the salvation of Israel. Moltmann describes Paul's missionary journeys in precisely this light. "For 'if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead', declared Paul, the Jew, who for Christ's sake went to the Gentiles in order to save Israel (Rom 11:15)" (1993:144). The Kingdom of God now becomes a hope for the church and for Israel, and together as partners they fight for its imminent arrival.

The second major relationship Moltmann examines is the relationship of Christianity and the World Religions. The nature of this relationship is to be through the process of dialogue, dialogue that cannot "...be determined by arbitrary and predetermined attitudes" (1993:150). Due to the simple fact that this has exactly been the case in the past relationship of Christianity and World religions, Moltmann draws our attention to the changed world situation. Effectively the world situation is no longer a place of multiple nations, with multiple histories and multiple futures. Rather the divisions need to be worked through and the multiple futures need to become one future. "This means that the future of the nations is a single humanity" (1993:151). For Christianity this means the "...period of 'Western mission', with its opportunities and its burdens is irrevocably coming to an end. The era of 'world mission' is beginning" (1993:151). Moltmann describes what this means for Christianity in a good piece of writing. It is kept in its entirety for us:

"Indigenous forms must therefore develop, so that an authentic Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, African and Latin American Christianity

may grow up, with corresponding indigenous theologies. The centring on Europe will come to an end. It further means that indigenous Christianity will enter into dialogue, exchange and mutual co-operation with the respective indigenous religions. In this way, without the support of Christina peoples and states, Christians will enter into living relationship with people of other faiths" (1993:151)

This is the new situation for the world, and for Christianity in that world. This new situation no longer focuses on the quantitative mission of Christianity, saving as many people as quickly as possible. Rather it focuses on the qualitative mission of Christianity – a better life and atmosphere for all. "In the new world situation in which all religions find themselves, and the new situation of Christianity in particular, the qualitative mission directed towards an alteration of the whole atmosphere of life should be pursued consciously and responsibly" (1993:152). The best method of doing qualitative mission is through dialogue. In order for this dialogue to be serious and for Christianity to play a serious role in the dialogue some presuppositions and prejudices must be dealt with.

Firstly the absolutism of the church must be done away with. No longer can the viewpoint of "outside the church no salvation" be agreed to. Rather, Moltmann suggests a change,

"Outside Christ no salvation. Christ has come and was sacrificed for the reconciliation of the whole world. No one is excluded. Outside the salvation that Christ brings to all men there is therefore no church. The visible church is, as Christ's church, the ministry of reconciliation exercised upon the world. Thus the church is to be seen, not as absolute, but in its relationship to the divine reconciler and to reconciled men and women, of whatever religion" (1993:153-154)

Secondly, the absolutism of faith must be revised. By this Moltmann is attacking the throne of religion against the reality of people's faith. The criticism levelled by philosophers and critics against religion, including Christianity as a religious ideology, must be accepted. The focus on faith as opposed to religion is important. Rather than holding to the absolutism of religion, and for many this was Western Christianity, there must be a move towards the absolutism of faith. This in Moltmann's words presents "man...with a general alternative: religion as the self-assertion of man, who feels himself lost – or faith as man's response to God's self-revelation" (1993:154).

Thirdly, the relativism of the Enlightenment must be realized and addressed. No longer should there be a focus on tolerance, whether sceptical or productive. The world has moved from sceptical tolerance, where any assertions of truth are false, to productive tolerance, where each religion is encouraged to strive for its best without disapproving of other religions, and back to sceptical tolerance again. Instead, relativism and absolutism must be seen for what they are, two sides of the same coin. "Absolutism and relativism are really twins" (1993:157). Instead of trading between the two, Moltmann suggests focussing on what can be learnt from the relationships in which you find yourself now. "In the open history of potentiality one can only move specifically from one relationship to other relationships in the hope that living relations will enable us to gain 'everything' and to combat the threat of 'nothingness'" (1993:157).

Moltmann next addresses the traditional theological models for the relationship between Christianity and the world religions. Rather than suggest a change to these models, Moltmann suggests a new way of using them. Taking the example of nature and supernature, which belongs to the period of Christian absolutism, Moltmann suggests that Christianity present itself as the absolute religion only if it takes into account the good, true and beautiful aspects of the other world religions and seeks to enhance or add to

them. "Wherever the church is implanted, therefore, it will take over all the elements which according to its supernatural wisdom, it holds to be 'good, true and beautiful', and will heighten them, correct them and so perfect them" (1993:157). If it does this it will prove itself to be the absolute religion.

As such this causes Christians to be a critical catalyst, a better model in the post-absolutist era, Moltmann suggests. "A catalyst causes elements to combine simply through its presence. The simple presence of Christians in environments, determined by other religions provokes effects of this kind, provided that Christians live, think and act differently" (1993:158). In this way Christians hope to infect the world religions for their betterment. Christians hope to infect other peoples for their betterment. Christians hope to infect their communities for their betterment. The danger is when Christians infect the communities, peoples and religions with concepts and ideas not Christian, but western. Moltmann calls these catalytic influences ambiguous, because they are not related to Christianity, but are used as though they were. In particular he talks about science and technology, capitalism and socialism as being seen as a society being Christianised. "We must become conscious of them today so that the catalytic influences of the Christian faith can be less ambiguous than they have been, and are not confused with the influence of the West, merely under Christian auspices" (1993:158).

In conclusion for this relationship Moltmann affirms that these models all grow out of the "Christian monologue" (1993:159). "They all formulate the Christian position before the entry into dialogue" (1993:159). The next step in Christianity's history is to discover heir profile in the context of dialogue, a much greater and harder step to take. It is greater and harder because Christians when entering into dialogue must be willing to give and receive. "They can only enter usefully into dialogue with them if they do not merely want to communicate something, but to receive something as well"

(1993:159). The beginning point for this sort of dialogue is first on the individual level. It must not be on the theological level, because this is a Christian specialty. Other religions must be allowed to choose the arena for the dialogue, and it may well not be in an intellectual arena. "There are starting points enough...but we shall only be able to discover what they are through dialogue" (1993:160). While Christianity may surrender the initiative in choosing the arena for dialogue, it does not have to surrender the hope it has for dialogue. This is true for every religion and so is true for Christianity as well. Moltmann suggests one hope for Christianity in relation to the world religions with regards the reality of human suffering:

"Dialogue is a sign of hope for these people if it is carried on in the interests of their life and liberation. In the interests of cultural indigenisation, a truly Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Arabic and African Christianity must come into being. Moreover, in the dialogue with the world religions a Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem, animist, Confucian, Shintoist Christianity will come into being. There were Jewish reasons for believing in Jesus to be the Christ. There were Greek reasons for believing in Jesus as the Logos. There were Germanic reasons for reverencing Jesus as the leader of souls. In their own period these reasons were not merely cultural; they were more religious in kind. Culture and religion cannot be separated. Consequently, today we shall also have to enquire into Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic reasons for faith in Jesus. This must not be condemned as syncretism. A Christianity coloured by different civilizations does not result in a cultural mixture; and a Christianity tinged with different religions does not produce a religious mixture. What is at issue is the charismatic quickening of different religious gifts, powers and potentialities for the Kingdom of God and the liberation of men"

(1993:162-163)

The third major relationship that Moltmann addresses is the relationship between Christianity and the processes of the World's Life. It is here that he deals with the term processes in a more detailed manner. The partnership between Christianity and the world processes is formed in three major arenas, the economic, political, and cultural processes.

- "1. The economic process, which is acted out in economic struggles and the exploitation of nature. Here the economic liberation of man and nature from man's exploitation is essential.
- 2. The political process, which is acted out in the struggle for power and the control of power. Here the need is for man's political liberation from man's repression.
- 3. The cultural process, which is acted out in the struggle for educational, racial and sexual privileges. Here the aim is man's cultural liberation from his alienation from other men" (1993:164-165)

Moltmann addresses each of these processes from the basis of the content of the partnership between Christianity and the processes. The motivation for examining this partnership is because of the demise of the world. "Progress is beginning to devour itself" (1993:165), Moltmann says. This demise needs to be addressed because it is sapping the will of people to live; it is leeching their hope away and blinding them to the suffering of the world. Following this train of thought in reverse, there must be a rediscovery of our capacity for suffering, which will refresh the power of hope and recover our will to live. Christianity has a great gift to give to these processes, "its passion for living" (1993:167).

In the economic processes of life, Christianity must break through the downward cycle of demand and satisfaction, a race that the economic world is caught in, and a race that cannot be won. Christianity breaks through in these processes when it teaches and exemplifies symbiosis. "They will choose the path that leads away from the ruthless satisfaction of demands,

to community; away from the struggle for existence, to peace in existence; away from the will to supremacy, to solidarity with others and with nature" (1993:174). The direction this partnership must head is towards a symbiosis, a relationship that benefits each party. The downfall of the economic world can be averted, if this symbiosis is acted upon.

"The catastrophe we can already see ahead of us can only be averted if people are no longer forced by their social system, and its public marks of approval and condemnation, to see one another as mutual competitors in the struggle for existence and the hunt for happiness, and if, instead individuals, groups and nations move towards a symbiosis with one another" (1993:174)

The business world has already caught sight of this approach, although not from theological dialogue, but rather from personal reflection and research. James Collins and Jerry Porras did intensive research on various longstanding companies and some comparison companies that had been around as long, but had not achieved as much. Their focus was to discover what it is that causes an organization to last. One of their conclusions was that a company driven to merely meet a demand, and gain as much benefit from a singly idea was doomed to failure. The great companies were those that focussed on developing their organization as the goal. The greatest contribution of the founders of Proctor and Gamble was not any one of their products, but the company itself, "...their primary contribution was something that can never become obsolete: a highly adaptable organization with a 'spiritual inheritance' of deeply ingrained core values transferred to generation after generation of P&G people" (Collins and Porras 2002:30). The key phrase here for this discussion, because there are many key phrases that need to be applied, is the phrase "highly adaptable". Symbiosis implies adaptation. Symbiosis implies changing to the climate to draw the best out of the situation. The focus of these great companies is not on meeting demand and satisfaction,

but on enduring beyond the lifetime of its owners. What Moltmann calls symbiosis, Collins and Porras call adaptability. They are the same.

These symbiotic relationships, which occur on an individual level and wider societal level become signs of the kingdom of God.

In the political processes of life, Christianity must break through the repression of political rule and reign. The arena of this relationship is in the human rights debate. "Political rule must therefore be justified by the people, for the people and with the people" (Moltmann 1993:177). There must be equal rights that apply both to the rulers and the ruled, and these rights must direct and inform the numerous changes that occur in the political realm. Christianity's role in this process is clear,

"...because political constitutions and forms of government are themselves going through a process of alteration, Christianity must also encourage the forms of government which best serve human fellowship and human rights and dignity, and it must resist those forms which hinder or suppress these things. The political task of Christianity is not merely to live in an already existing political order, but actually to take part in forming it" (1993:178)

Christianity's contribution is clear. People do not exist for the betterment and development of the state, rather the state exists to develop and empower the people. Ruler and ruled must together be seen as people. No image is more powerful to convey this than the sight of a ruler casting his own vote. People cannot claim their rights as long as they are restricted from having those rights. They must therefore be freed from poverty, hunger, contempt and persecution. In fact, political orders that allow for this are exactly the types of orders that must be opposed by Christianity. The human rights debate must include human duties or responsibilities for those rights. The human rights as stipulated in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948

must move beyond individual nations adopting them, and must become a basis for humanity's total existence. In other words, "solidarity in overcoming common economic and military crises must take precedence over loyalty to one's own people, one's own class or race or nation" (1993:181). Lastly, human rights are an aid for unification and human development; they are not possessions or ideals in and of themselves (1993:179-182)

In the cultural processes of life, Christianity must break through the many culture conflicts that exist. Moltmann highlights three cultural conflicts: racism, sexism and separation between the healthy and the handicapped. There are many other cultural conflicts, but all must be addressed, and the solution to all these conflicts lies in the same approach, one of open identity. At the centre of each conflict lies "...the fundamental question of the human identity" (1993:186). Moltmann differentiates between two types of identity, the ego-identity and the I-identity. The ego-identity is based on the concept of having; the I-identity is based on the concept of being. The step forward in the cultural process is on the basis of being; "...the person who experiences himself not as having but as being permits himself to be vulnerable" (Moltmann quoting Fromm 1993:186). Christianity has much to contribute to the I-identity. Ego-identity fits the description of self-justification, while in contrast justification by faith related to the I-identity. No longer does a person have to justify their existence on the basis of their having (a certain colour skin, gender, or health), but now they justify their existence on the basis of being, a person loved and accepted by God. "Human life has eternal value because it is loved and accepted by God" (1993:187)

"In cultural conflicts Christianity will live the I-identity of faith, freed from the ego, and will demonstrate recognition of the other as a person in his identity and his rights" (1993:189). Christianity therefore lives out the I-identity, and in so doing contributes to the cultural processes of life.

Avery S.J. Dulles is the third theologian we will examine. Dulles offers an interesting perspective to the relationship of the church and the Kingdom of God. In contrast to the thoughts of Heyns and Moltmann, Dulles suggests that it is the church's work to be in partnership with the Kingdom of God and this partnership is unique. Instead of adopting one view of the relationship of the church to the Kingdom of God, which Dulles calls the Servant model view; he looks at a complete picture of various models and draws conclusions from there. Dulles succinctly sums up the above two positions, "the Church is not the Kingdom, but is merely one of a number of agencies within history that are building up the future Kingdom of God. The servant role of the Church consists in its dedication to the transformation of the world into the Kingdom" (Dulles 1974: 94). Dulles does not agree with making this model of the church the only operating model, but instead tries to draw a more complete picture.

Scripture, Dulles affirms "does not envisage other agencies than the Church as heralds or catalysts of God's Kingdom" (1974: 94). The church is the only body or agency tasked with the work of bringing in the Kingdom of God. The recent development of seeing the church as an agency alongside other agencies cannot be justified on scriptural grounds for Dulles. "The concept of service must be carefully nuanced so as to keep the distinctive mission and identity of the church" (1974:95). The church has a clear mission set aside for it and this mission must be kept in the forefront, no matter the political climate, nor the correctness or incorrectness of this stance. Scripture ties up the Kingdom of God and the gospel with Jesus Christ so as to form one strand. Separating these strands would cause the impact of the church and Kingdom to be so weak as to break. Redefining God's Kingdom as merely moral values or ideals is just such a separation.

"Interpreted in the light of the gospel, the Kingdom of God cannot be properly identified with abstract values such as peace, justice, reconciliation and affluence. The New Testament personalizes the

Kingdom. It identifies the Kingdom of God with the gospel and both of them with Jesus" (1974:95).

This is not to say that the focus on moral values and ideals is wrong, it is merely the separation of these ideals from the rest of the relationship that causes weakness. Rightly so the social dimension and responsibility of the church and the Kingdom is essential in our modern and now post-modern world. However, these moral values and ideals must be grounded in the Lordship of Jesus Christ otherwise they come adrift and in so doing are meaningless.

"The notion of the Kingdom of God, which is rightly used by secular theologians to point up the dimension of social responsibility, should not be separated from the preaching of Jesus as Lord. The servant notion of the Kingdom, therefore, goes astray if it seeks to set itself up in opposition to the kerygmatic" (1974: 96).

While this is a rebuttal of the above views, Dulles's own view is a combination of many different models. He believes strongly in models and images. "Any large and continuing society that depends on loyalty and commitment of its members requires symbolism to hold it together...The biblical images of the Church...operate in a similar manner. They suggest attitudes and courses of action; they intensify confidence and devotion. To some extent they are self-fulfilling; they make the Church become what they suggest the Church is." (Dulles 1974:18). Dulles focuses on five specific models of the church: institutional; mystical communion; sacrament; herald; and servant model. These models incorporate a historical and biblical approach taking into account well known biblical images of the church and traditional illustrations of the church.

Dulles presents each model placing it in its historical context, evaluating its relevance, biblical basis, effects on the church as an organization. He also details the beneficiaries of the model, ranging from the ordained clergy to the

world, the bonds of union that keep the model alive, from acceptance of a prescribed set of beliefs to the common brotherhood of humanity and the goal of the church, from eternal life to service to the world (1974:37, 53, 66, 77, and 90).

Dulles completes his evaluation by giving strengths and weaknesses of each model. It is here that we begin to see Dulles view of the church and its partnership with the Kingdom of God. We will briefly examine each model in light of its strengths and weaknesses.

For the institutional model Dulles sees it as having strong historical support. There are "...strong endorsements in official church documents." (1974:39). Secondly, it is traditionally empowered as a model. There is a strong traditional sense that this is the way church should be. While this is loved and hated, it remains true that this traditionally what is seen to be the church. One of the greatest strengths of this model is that it is of greatest benefit to itself. The protection of this model by the believers in this model is strong. One of the bonds of union of this model is that the members all need to accept and believe in the doctrines as approved by the clergy. This causes longevity in belief of the model despite its weaknesses. There are two major weaknesses of this model, although Dulles highlights others. Firstly there is little scriptural basis for such a view of the church. Secondly, there is very little relevance to the current times (1974:39-41)

For the mystical communion model four major strengths stand out. Firstly, it receives wide biblical support. Secondly, it opens the members up to the wider ecumenical church. Thirdly, it goes further than just ecumenical appeal to leading the church to be open to interfaith dialogue. Finally, the appeal of its large community focus, a focus on the fellowship, causes it to be relevant to the times. The two chief weaknesses lie in the obscurity of exactly where the church is and secondly the real danger that the church can become an end in itself (1974:54-55).

For the sacramental model of the church a major strength is its clear view of its position in relation to the Kingdom of God. The church, as a sacrament, is a visible sign of the Kingdom of God. Just like baptism is an outward sign of an inward rebirth, so the church is an outward sign of the inward working of the Kingdom of God (1974:59). It also cleverly combines the previous two models without losing any of the strengths of those models. This leads to this model being open to questioning without losing its own identity. In contrast, however, Dulles shows this model to have little biblical basis and traditional support. It quickly leads to a lack of service on the part of the church and its members. The sacramental view also minimizes the impact of teaching because participation in the church is participation in the Kingdom (1974:67-69)

For the herald model of the church the strengths are manifold. Firstly, there is a good biblical basis for this model. It leads to a clear sense of identity and a clear sense of mission for the church. There is a strong theology of the "Word" creating a canon outside of the church's own experience and tradition. This model also aptly displays humanity's true spiritual state; it is "...conducive to a spirituality that focuses on God's sovereignty and on man's infinite distance from him" (1974:79). The single greatest weakness of this model is its lack of focus on service and action in the world. It can easily lead to a model of a church that speaks to the world but lives apart from the world (1974:78-79)

For the servant model Dulles highlights two strengths. Firstly this is the only model that takes into account the needs of the world, and tries to meet those needs. This, of course, makes this model of the church extremely relevant to the times in which it exists. Unfortunately the weaknesses of this model outweigh its strengths. Dulles finds little biblical support for this model. The focus on the word servant implies service under coercion or force. Something

that is untenable for him. Finally, the service of the church should be to each other, not to the world.

If we were to examine the strengths and weaknesses as drawn out by Dulles we find that his model of the church is one that has strong biblical support, is relevant to its times, maintains a broad view of the church without limiting it to one specific time frame or context, but remains steadfastly involved in action to the world. The nature of this action is unclear. How does the church get involved in the world? It would seem that Dulles falls heavily in favour with the mystical communion and herald model. The church's work is to speak to the world, point it towards the Kingdom by showing the world its own fellowship or community.

The church contains within it all that the kingdom of God is, but does not encapsulate all that the Kingdom of God is. Therefore the church is a "community of grace (which) is an anticipation of the final kingdom" (1974:114). The church is furthermore a "sign or representative of the salvation to which we look forward" (1974: 114). The church also "proclaims the coming of the Kingdom in Christ, and that the proclamation itself is an eschatological event, in which God's saving and judging power is already at work" (1974: 114). He also holds that the church has the responsibility of "introducing the values of the Kingdom into the whole of human society... (but)...the final coming of the Kingdom...will be the work of God" (1974:114). The church is a forerunner of the Kingdom of God in the world, but also is the Kingdom of God in the world.

George Eldon Ladd is the final theologian we will look at. Ladd's approach to the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church follows an opposite tack to Dulles. Instead of coming from the viewpoint of the church, Ladd approaches the relationship from the viewpoint of the Kingdom of God. He sees the Kingdom of God existing in two realities. Firstly the Kingdom of God exists eschatologically. This means it is a synonym in God's word for an

age to come, an age still to be seen. "The coming of God's Kingdom will mean the final and total destruction of the devil and his angels...the formation of a redeemed society unmixed with evil...perfected fellowship with God at the messianic feast...In this sense the kingdom of God is a synonym for the Age to Come" (Ladd 1974: 64). Clearly, this description of the effects of God's Kingdom is not a reality today. The church is filled with imperfect fellowship; Satan and his minions still react powerfully with God's creation and God's society on earth is a mixture of good and evil, very often displayed in the same people.

The Kingdom of God is also present. "The whole mission of Jesus, including his words, deeds, death, and resurrection, constituted an initial defeat of satanic power that makes the final outcome and triumph of God's Kingdom certain" (1974: 66). Simply put, the Kingdom of God is here, and it is here to stay. However, the Kingdom of God exists in the world now in a specific form – the church. The Kingdom of God creates the church. As the Kingdom of God invades the world a community of people emerges that are changed. They are not perfect. They are not completely sanctified, but they are still changed. They are emerging into the Kingdom of God. They are the church. The church therefore witness to the Kingdom of God. The changed community becomes a visible witness of the Kingdom of God in the world. The world is able to see God's Kingdom in the lives and the institution of the church. This obviously makes the church an instrument of the Kingdom of God. God uses the church for His glory and to fulfil his will. The responsibility for the church lies in its custodianship of the Kingdom of God. If the church witnesses to the Kingdom of God, and is an instrument of the Kingdom of God, it becomes its custodian. This is a positive and negative. People looking on will see the benefits of God's Kingdom in the lives of his people, but they will also see the failures of the people in attaining the ideals of the Kingdom of God (1974:111-119).

In a broad scope these four theologians show specific route markers in the discussion of the relationship of the kingdom of God and the church. If we were to plot these theologians on a scale from seeing the church as separate from the kingdom to seeing the church as the kingdom they would all fall in between these extremes. Moving from the former to the latter we would find Heyns first, followed by Moltmann, then Dulles and finally Ladd.

However, all four theologians are guilty of one single theory. Although this will not be included in their definitions, it is apparent in their discussion and theorem concerning the church. All four theologians discuss the church as an already established organization or institution. The debate for them revolves around the specific placement of the church as an established organization with the other organizations of the world. While they use different words (processes, modes or institutions), they still picture the church in its present structural capacity. There debate is whether the church, as an organization, a set institution or process is under, alongside or over other processes. Again, they are all fall on a scale in this thinking, but now their positioning is changed. On a scale from seeing the church not as an institution or organization, to seeing the church as an established unchanging institution or organization we find the following development. First comes Moltmann, and then comes Dulles, followed by Heyns and finally Ladd. Moltmann begins in his work to describe the relationships not on the basis of church, but Christianity. While this often lapses into just another word for church, he is very clear in the relationship of Christianity with the processes of the world that this begins on the basis of individual Christians. He alludes to a different approach to the relationship of the Kingdom of God and the church by referring to the role of individuals. It is this different viewpoint that we turn to.

Instead of seeing the church as alongside, under or over these other processes in the world, and instead of seeing the church as partnering with these other modes of God's Kingdom, if indeed they are, lets look at the

church as being within these processes. In a previous paper I referred to these theologians above as being either in favour of the church as a micropart of God's Kingdom or a microcosm of God's Kingdom.⁹ Originally I argued that the church was a microcosm of God's Kingdom, but I was still guilty of viewing the church as a set institution or organization. In light of recent stances taken by churches around the world and the wide viewpoints of the word church¹⁰ we need to move away from this particular beginning point. For this reason I feel that each of these theologians teaches us something, and when placed within the context of a new approach to "church" we discover something different and unique.

Previously in this section we discussed the attempts to translate the word *ecclesia*. In all cases it was found that the word referred to an assembly of people summoned for a particular reason. The reasons are numerous, from political to social. When Christians adopted this word it took on a religious reason. The survey of writers showed that the New Testament usage of the word *ecclesia* showed that they were summoned by a common belief, and that it was God assembling them. In this sense, the *ecclesia* became a fellowship of Christ. These three factors, a common belief, the act of God summoning them and their fellowship with Christ constituted an assembly of and for worship. The Septuagint translations agree. To remind ourselves we draw on chapter four as a reference.

"Colin Brown confirms this sentiment by looking closely at the use of the term *ecclesia* in the Old Testament.

"'Ecclesia' is only used where it is a question of the people as God's assembly; characterized by having answered Yahweh's call. Admittedly it is used especially where the historic greatness of Israel is implied

⁹ This was an Ecclesiology paper entitled The Church: A Microcosm or Micropart? A Look at the relationship between the Church and the Kingdom (Reign) of God.

¹⁰ I am referring here to the American Episcopal churches stance on homosexuality, the growth of the word church in non-Christian circles, and the general belief that church is a religious term.

and avoided where it could perhaps suggest to the Greek reader merely a political claim on the part of the contemporary Jewish leader - ('qahal' is translated as 'synagogue' in these cases.)" (Brown 1971:296).

Earlier Brown says

"...Where '*ecclesia*' is used in the Septuagint for 'qahal' it indicates the assembly of the people or a judicial assembly, it also indicates the assembly of the people for worship (2 Chr. 6:3; 30:2, 4, 13, 17; Joel 2:16 and several times in the Psalms.)" (1971:295).

Ecclesia was used in the New Testament, and by translators of the Old Testament to depict a community with a common belief, which was called by God and had fellowship with Christ. This is worship.

Kittel asked the fundamental question about the word *ecclesia*. Why was this word chosen by the early church? Earlier we ventured an opinion based on numerous writers (Kittel, Liddell, Scott, Louw, Nida, and Brown). This opinion showed the *ecclesia* as a fellowship in Christ as standing in contrast and opposition to other forms of society in anticipating and bringing forth the Kingdom of God. To this group we can now add, Ladd and Dulles.

But this opinion still views the *ecclesia* as a church, an established institution or organization in society alongside, under or over other forms of society. In addition, it does not answer the question, why did they choose a political term and not a cultic term? Moltmann provides us with an answer. The use of the word *ecclesia* was to show a rejection of the law as the guiding power of this fellowship of Christ (it was rather constituted by grace), and to show a separation from the temple cult of Jerusalem (1993:142). This first occurred in Antioch, also credited with the first use of the term Christian. Up till this time the followers of Christ were called followers of the Way (*hodos*), meeting

in the temple, participating in the community, and living out a different life. The transition in the New Testament from *hodos* to *ecclesia* did not change the impact of the community; it merely changed the members of that community. The fellowship of Christ ceased to be Jewish only, and became universal. In the New Testament, the *ecclesia* remained the *hodos*.

What has happened over time is that the *ecclesia* has become the church, a religious body, tied in with cultural elements, bound by traditional beliefs and practises. We have seen the *ecclesia* become the church and have attempted to explain the discrepancy by using the term invisible and visible church.

The time has come for a revolution in our viewpoint back to the *hodos* of Christianity. We must forgo the word church; rediscover the *hodos* of being a follower of Jesus Christ. One of the first communities to do this is Mosaic. A brief look at their website finds no reference to the word church or Christian, as these now have cultural connotations. They talk about being followers of Jesus Christ, who forms them in a community committed to faith, hope and love. Their name is representative of their community within and the community within which they live.¹¹

The word *ecclesia* needs either liberation or burial. No matter which step you take, the conclusion is still the same. The *ecclesia* must return to the *hodos*. The *ecclesia* must become a community of the *Hodos* within the forms of society it finds itself. It must become a community that is characterised by a different lifestyle, lived for a different Lord, and hoping for a different eternity. We now discover the following in defining the relationship of the Kingdom of God and the church and the Kingdom of God and the *ecclesia*. There is no relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church. They are not the same and they have no connection. However, the relationship of the Kingdom of God and *ecclesia* is close. The *ecclesia* is a specific community of the *Hodos*, visible in a geographical locality, called for a specific

¹¹ More can be found at www.mosaic.org

purpose, determined by the needs of that geographical locality. All the *ecclesiae* together form the *Hodos*. The *Hodos* is the Kingdom of God in the present. There is still The Kingdom of God to come, but we do not know what that will look like.

The *Hodos* no longer needs to partner with other forms or processes as an institution, nor does it work under them, or over them, instead the *Hodos* live within the other forms of society and the processes of society. As they live out their claims they will naturally impact society, and cause changes within it. These changes may be persecution or they may be adoption. The impact of the *Hodos* on Ephesus was a loss in trade. The result was not acceptance of the poverty in worshipping idols, but a riot over the impending poverty from loss in trade. The riot resulted in little effect, but the followers of the *Hodos* were credited because of their behaviour.

"The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: 'Men of Ephesus, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, *though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess*. If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.' After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly" (Acts 19:35-41 – emphasis mine)

This is a powerful illustration of the followers of Christ living amongst other forms of society. They did not discredit or defame the religion of Artemis.

They simply lived out their lives. This is an outworking of what Peter writes about with regards to suffering for doing good and for being prepared to tell others why we have this hope.

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:15-16)

There is a big drive amongst churches to becoming Acts 2 churches, or the New Testament church. This is current, but not new. The mistake we make in this drive is that there is no Acts 2 church. There are followers of the *Hodos* in Acts 2 and Acts 4, and beyond to Acts 19. A drive towards the New Testament church must be a drive towards becoming a community of Christ, a community of the *Hodos*.

The discovery now that the *Hodos* is the Kingdom of God present, and the *ecclesia* form the *Hodos* now helps us to make steps towards fixing the problem we find ourselves in. In other words, what form should this revolution take?

Firstly, there must be a breaking down of the traditions that bind the *ecclesia*. Both Dulles views of the models and Moltmann's relationships offer ample advice for the direction the *ecclesia* is to take.

Secondly, we must rework our definition of what it means to be a community of Christ. The followers of the *Hodos* were to be found in every aspect of society. One of the lessons to be learnt from the book of Acts is that the believers were constantly challenged as to their own limitations of God's Kingdom. This is exactly the point of Acts 8 and Acts 10. God's Kingdom broke through the barriers that had been established. Our current definition

of *ecclesia* as church is a barrier that the Kingdom of God is breaking through. The *ecclesia* is to be acknowledged wherever it is found – in a home, in a business, in a church, at a private function, in a school. The *ecclesia* is any community summoned by Christ, to be in fellowship with him and each other, around a common belief of him as Lord. It does not need a formal constitution, nor does it need a numbering system (a membership roll) or even a place to worship. The followers of the *Hodos* worshipped in the temple. What would happen if we, as followers of the *Hodos*, worshipped God in the religious sanctuaries of the communities in which we lived? This would be a powerful witness, especially if done with humility and acceptance. Included in these sanctuaries would be the world religions, but also Christian churches that we avoid, discredit or isolate for whatever reason. What would happen if we, as followers of the *Hodos*, worshipped God in the secular sanctuaries of the communities in which we lived? By this I mean schools, businesses, technological advancements (internet church?) and more. Heyns and Moltmann offer much advice for us here.

Thirdly, we must reinterpret our role within the society that we live. What is the work that we are to do now as the *ecclesia*? We have already alluded to this work in chapter six. The three holes in our tapestry point to the work we are to do as the *ecclesia*. In order to be a community of Christ summoned by him, into fellowship around the common belief that he is Lord, we must worship him as such. This worship takes on three tasks or works: the work of evangelism, the work of discipleship and the work of reconciliation.

So our definition of *ecclesia* can now be formulated, although it includes an unforeseen step. The *Hodos* is the present community of the Kingdom of God. The *ecclesia* is the visible community of the Kingdom of God. It is visible because it has a specific geographical locality. The *Hodos* is all of the communities that exist in the present. The *ecclesia* is any specific community that displays the nature of the Kingdom of God. This nature is to worship the

Triune God through the works of evangelism, discipleship and reconciliation.

It is to these three works that we now turn.

Section Three: The Work

Chapter 7: Re-hanging the Tapestry: Revolution

The steps towards revolution have already been given: the breaking down of traditions; reworking our definition and reinterpreting our role. If we are to be the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* then we, the representation of God's reign in a present, visible location, must engage in redefining what the work of evangelism, discipleship and reconciliation mean.

The first two steps of the revolution have already been suggested. The breaking down of traditions has already been covered in the previous section by our references to Dulles and Moltmann. However, one item needs to be highlighted here. The members of modern day churches must make every effort to separate the *hodos* from the church. By this I mean that modern day churches must move away from actions and activities that are bound in the past. They must make every effort to bring alive the principles of the early church operations by bringing the *hodos* alive. This might mean forgoing typical church names, typical church activities like fairs, auctions, harvest festivals, and allow the church to become riskier, more relevant, and more missionary in its operations. A simple illustration will prove this point. Many churches around the world send out short term mission teams, either to do some sort of physical work or actual evangelistic activity. American churches are very motivated by this mission team activity. Every summer thousands of teams can be seen moving around various airports as they travel to mission fields around the world. The preparation for these teams is intense, focused and excellent. People are taught to be culturally relevant and especially culturally sensitive so as not to offend people in their home country. Those same churches when doing local evangelism do not engage in the same preparation and teaching. They do not teach people to be culturally relevant to the culture in which they live (they in fact actively discourage cultural relevance). Furthermore, they do not teach people to be culturally

sensitive to the culture in which they live (they in fact are known to be culturally critical and offensive)¹²

The breaking down of traditions is merely a matter of courageous decision and action for a community to move away from the holds of tradition and to redefine who they are as a community. Already a few, but not many, "churches" have done this. Durbanville Assemblies of God Church has renamed themselves Urban Edge¹³. Again, like Mosaic, discussed in the previous chapter, they have moved away from traditional roles of defining a church, its members and what they do.

Churches also need to rework their definition of what being a church means. This again was discussed in the previous section. One of the best ways for this reworking to begin is through numerous congregation discussions. Early in 1990 I had the privilege of attending a church that was seeking to be non-racial in the emerging New South Africa. The church was begun by a group of white people and black people who had got together with the intention of forming a church in the poorer areas of Port Elizabeth. Each week the church would engage in some liturgical worship, and in place of a sermon, a congregation discussion would take place around one of the churches doctrines or practises. The following week their discussion would be crystallized into an increasingly condensed statement of confession. This same discussion format would be good for churches to engage in to redefine their concept of what a church in the new millennium should be.

While these first two steps are a discovery of this paper, they are not the scope of this paper. The thesis of this paper is to discuss the role of the local

¹² In many discussions with non-Christians in America, evangelical Christians were seen to be invasive, critical and judgmental. To quote one such person when I shared that I would fit the evangelical mold more than any other "Are you one of these people who trap you on airplanes and try to persuade you to agree with them about God?" My reply to this was of course "No," because that is incredibly invasive and offensive.

¹³ Private discussion with a member of Urban Edge – surprisingly this young person (about 19 years of age) did not like this change, but it did not cause them to leave the community.

church in extending the Kingdom of God. We would now write this thesis as *"The Role of the Ecclesia of the Hodos in extending the Basileia tou Theou."* Therefore, we will move to the third step of this revolution by reinterpreting our role. We will discuss the actual work that needs to take place. At all times, we will seek to keep the work grounded in a specific geographic region, sometimes as wide as the country of South Africa, at other times as specific as a city. It is to those works that we now turn.

Chapter 8: Displaying the Tapestry: The Work of Evangelism

The work of evangelism is unarguably a fundamental work of the *ecclesia*. At its very inception the *ecclesia* was a community that found expression in inviting others to join it. In fact this expression of evangelism was the direct result of worshipping God. We know this experience as the Day of Pentecost. That day, and the days following it are often referred to as the Acts 2 Church or more commonly the Early Church. The call around the world in churches is to return to the New Testament Church, the Acts 2 Church, or the Early Church¹⁴. While we all know the verses in Acts 2 very well, it is Acts 1:14 that holds the key.

After Jesus was taken up into heaven, and the angel visitation declaring the manner of Jesus return was given, the disciples returned to Jerusalem. Instead of disbanding this new community, Acts 1:14 tells us that:

"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."

This verse simply tells us that they met regularly to pray together. Revelation 5:8 and 8:4 depicts prayer as an offering to God – in other words worship. The disciples, along with Jesus' family, met together to worship God. This is exactly what Jesus asked them to do in Acts 1:4:

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised which you have heard me speak about."

They were the *ecclesia!* Jesus had summoned them to a specific locality with a specific work to do. They did exactly what Jesus had commanded them to do. The "Acts 1 Church" is the foundation of the "Acts 2 Church". Even

¹⁴ The wide spread usage of these terms is seen in just about every book on the church currently written this and last century. Most, if not all, of the books listed in my bibliography that relate to the church spoken with fondness of one of these three terms.

before the "Acts 2 Church" existed, the *ecclesia* in the form of the *hodos* was present. The Basileia tou Theou was present. Common day writing on the church focuses closely on Acts 2 and expounds from Acts 2 workable principles for the modern day church to employ in order to grow. What many of these writers fail to notice or study is the Acts 1 church. Acts 2 was a result of the obedience and discipline of Acts 1.

One church that has structured itself on the Acts 1:14 principle is Brooklyn Tabernacle. Early on in Jim Cymbala's ministry at Brooklyn Tabernacle he made a strategic choice to grow the church on prayer. During a time of immense stress which led to some illness Jim Cymbala found himself trying to recuperate in Florida. During this time he writes:

"Then quietly but forcefully, in words heard not with my ear but deep within my spirit, I sensed God speaking: *If you and your wife will lead my people to pray and call upon my name, you will never lack for something fresh to preach. I will supply all the money that's needed, both for the church and for your family, and you will never have a building large enough to contain the crowds I will send in response*"
 (Cymbala 1997:25 - emphasis his).

He later writes, upon his return to the church, what he said during his first service:

"Brothers and Sisters, I really feel that I've heard from God about the future of our church. While I was away, I was calling out to God to help us – to help *me* – understand what he wants most from us. And I believe I've heard an answer. It's not fancy or profound or spectacular. But I want to say to you today with all the seriousness I can muster: *From this day on, the prayer meeting will be the barometer of our church. What happens on Tuesday night will be the*

gauge by which we will judge success or failure because that will be the measure by which God blesses us" (1997:27 – emphasis his)

The temperature of the church was not based on Sunday attendance, on number of visitors or confirmees. Neither was it based on the style of singing, the impact of sermons or its effective vision and strategy. The church's barometer was the prayer meeting, held midweek on a Tuesday night. This prayer meeting has developed and grown to truly become the barometer of this church. It is a place where the effects of Pentecost can be seen each week as people come expecting to meet God, knowing that he will answer their prayers and teach them more about him. Brooklyn Tabernacle is an *ecclesia* of the *hodos* and it is extending the *Basileia tou Theou*. As almost a by-product, but a biblical one at that, Brooklyn Tabernacle that started in the inner city with 15-18 people at their first prayer meeting now has over 4000 regular attendees at their prayer meeting¹⁵

The work at Pentecost is well known, but it is now seen as a result of the obedience of the *ecclesia* in Acts 1. As they waited on God, the Triune Godhead worked together to develop this community. All three persons are seen working in "complete mutuality and equality" (Bilezikian 1997:18). The direct result of this *ecclesia* working in partnership with the Triune Godhead is the work of evangelism.

Evangelism is a well known term but surprisingly there are few books that adequately define what evangelism is. In a survey of authors¹⁶ only two authors were found to actually define evangelism. Millard Erickson is one.

In his section on evangelism Erickson talks about the fact that evangelism is a command. The *ecclesia* is commanded to "Go...and make disciples of all

¹⁵ Recently the worship pastor of our church attended this prayer meeting and was part of a group about 4000-4500 in size.

¹⁶ These authors include Oswald Chambers, Paul Borthwick, Roger Hedlund, Stephen Neill, Robert N. Nash, Rick Warren and Lynne and Bill Hybels.

nations" (Matthew 28:19), and in Acts 1:8 the *ecclesia* is told to "...be my witnesses..." In his summation of this section he concludes "...if the church is to be faithful to its Lord and bring joy to his heart, it must be engaged in bringing the gospel to all people" (Erickson 1985:1054). However saying something is a command is not to define what that thing is, it only intimates that it must be done. It is only upon examination of what "the gospel" is later in this same chapter that we discover what evangelism is. The gospel is often called the Good News. It finds its root in the Hebrew word *basar* which, according to Erickson "...has the general sense of 'proclaiming good news'" (1985:1060). However, this is not widely accepted as some uses of this word certainly do not denote good news, for example in 1 Samuel 4:17 a messenger announces the defeat of Israel and the death of Eli's sons. Therefore, some scholars, according to Erickson, translate *basar* as "to deliver a message" (1985:1061). There are rebuttals and proofs on both sides but neither side denies that the word *basar* is a reference to communicating a message, whether it is good or bad.

In a similar sense the Greek words from which evangelism comes are *evaggelisomai* and *evaggelion*. Unlike *basar* these two words are terms used for good news. Erickson quoting Gerhard Friedrich says, it "...is a technical term for 'news of victory'" (1985:1061). Paul's writings highlight a reader's understanding of the term "gospel". For his readers they understood the term gospel in two senses: "The word has two basic senses: active proclamation of the message and the content proclaimed" (1985:1062)

As we can see the same concept is carried through the Old and New Testament - evangelism is first and foremost a delivering of a message, but more specifically the communicating or delivering of a message of good news of victory. It includes not only the work of proclaiming the message, but also includes what the message is. Erickson gives a good summation of what the content of the gospel is:

"To summarize: Paul viewed the gospel as centring upon Jesus Christ and what God has done through him. The essential points of the gospel are Jesus Christ's status as the Son of God, his genuine humanity, his death for our sins, his burial, resurrection, subsequent appearances and future coming in judgment. It may well be said that in Paul's view, Jesus Christ is the gospel" (1985:1063)

However, the gospel is not just doctrinal truths, but rather contains a personal dimension in that Jesus did these things for me. As Erickson states, "...he died 'for our sins'" (1985:1063), his resurrection shows the future resurrection of us all, his judgment is a coming judgment for us all.

To summarize Erickson evangelism is therefore the delivering or proclaiming of the gospel, which is a personal understanding of Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and future return, to those we love, those we don't love and those we don't even know; in other words, all people. It is in the true sense of the word, a witness of what Jesus has done to all we meet.

The second author David J. Hesselgrave does not give a succinct definition as Erickson does, but rather argues strongly for persuasion evangelism. Hesselgrave does not give the content of the message to be communicated, but does argue from a communication theory position that evangelism is not social work, or a general viewpoint of raising living standards, but rather the act of proclaiming the message and persuading the hearer with our communication - "The missionary has been given the message of reconciliation and is God' appointed representative" (Hesselgrave 1978:55). In fact, he goes on to state:

"Persuasion evangelism seems objectionable only if, on the one side, the idea of conversion is rejected or if, on the other side, the human activity in any way renders the work of the Holy Spirit ineffective or unimportant" (1978:56).

While I cannot agree with Hesselgrave's position about persuasion evangelism being acceptable, he does argue strongly that evangelism is clearly a proclamation activity. It involves and requires communication. Yes, there are many types of communication, verbal and non-verbal, but essentially "communication is the transfer of meaning through the use of symbols" (1978:38). Therefore, communicating Christ cross-culturally (the title of the book) requires the delivery of a message, although in this case with the specific intent of persuading (changing) the receiver's worldview.

From these two authors we discover that evangelism is the conveying or communicating the message of the good news of Jesus Christ, his life, work, death, burial, resurrection and future coming. We must agree that the hope of all evangelism is to persuade or change the receiver's worldview. The wealth of books written on evangelism, outreach, witnessing or missions are all written to help followers of Christ share the gospel with those who have not yet made a decision to follow Jesus. They are written to inspire and encourage the hope that such sharing will bring about a change in worldview.

In the same survey of authors listed above a mixture of the words like outreach, witness, evangelism and mission is used. One such example is Paul Borthwick. In his book *How to be a World Class Christian* he describes a world class Christian as having "...a world class commitment...to the ends of the earth" (Borthwick 2002:31). This commitment is expressed in passion (chapters 1-3 of Borthwick's book), education (chapter 4), giving to organizations and simple living (chapter 7-8), following a call to be a missionary (chapters 10-12) and accepting the challenge to be world class (chapter 13). He does not differentiate between evangelizing locally, and witnessing globally. These same sentiments are experienced his book *Stop Witnessing and Start Loving*. Throughout the book he talks about world missions, witnessing, personal evangelism and local outreach. He uses them to define different aspects of the broad topic of sharing the gospel of Jesus.

Each of the authors reviewed uses these terms with their own connotation, often arguing against or for one of them. What is common to all of the authors as far as definition goes is that not one of the authors reviewed suggests or even comes close to suggesting that evangelism is not a work of the *ecclesia*. They all assume that it is the work of the *ecclesia*. The many books reviewed on evangelism do not attempt to legitimate whether this is a worthwhile practise or not, rather they argue for how to do it better, what needs to be changed, what needs to be worked on, and what needs to be avoided.

Earlier we argued for the churches of today to become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* by searching again for the "Acts 1 church". When we look at Acts 1:8 we discover the simplest and clearest description of what the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* are called to do with regards this work, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". Much has been written on the second half of this verse and its implications. Witnessing refers to the evangelising work as described by Erickson and others in this chapter. The geographical regions are key as they describe the historical progression of the early church, but also metaphorically describe the progression of evangelism for a church as well, beginning with those most like us, moving on to those similar, but still different from us, and finally moving on to those the most different to us. However, Paul Borthwick argues strongly that the key to this verse, and often overlooked aspect of this verse is the first part. Power from the Holy Spirit is what led to the outpouring of witnessing and so, in contrast to Hesselgrave, but still in support of the sentiment of all authors surveyed, evangelism is the result of the power of the Holy Spirit when he comes on those who wait for Him. It is not the result of persuasive communication and is always the result of the Holy Spirit at work. It is done wherever the Holy Spirit directs us to share and is done from right next door to the other side of the world. This is what the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* was doing, and this is what the *ecclesia* of today must do. Evangelism by

definition is therefore the supernatural result of the Holy Spirit working amongst those waiting on God. The Holy Spirit leads them to share the story to all people of what Jesus has done for them through his birth, life, death, resurrection and the promise of his future coming.

While some argue for witnessing and others for outreach, and yet others for missions and still a fourth for evangelism the work is similar enough to be common. All call for the group of people who are committed to Christ to share why they have made that commitment and how others can make that commitment with those who have not yet made such a commitment. The community of the *ecclesia* is called to engage those not in the community and invite them to join the community. The community of the *ecclesia* are called to do the work of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. They are called to do the work of evangelism as defined above. This is what Pentecost included. Not only was it the coming of the Holy Spirit on all people, but it was done for an express reason. Each person heard a follower of Jesus speaking in their own language. Specifically, Acts 2:11 tells us "...they heard the wonders of God in our own tongues." Each person, from a wealth of nations, was hearing the good news of God. This is the evangel – the good news. Good news that God desires to be in community with each person. The promise of community is a promise to "...all whom the Lord will call" (Acts 2:39). Once again we encounter the simple fact that the *ecclesia* is a group summoned by God. Acts 2:42-47, an oft quoted passage concerning the New Testament Church or "Acts 2 Church", is now the work of this new community, this *ecclesia* that is the result of the summoning or calling from God. They worshipped God, and engaged in the work of evangelism (verse 47), the work of discipleship (verse 42) and the work of reconciliation (verse 44).

It is interesting to note that this building of community is an antonym of Genesis 11. We are told that the whole world had one speech. Instead of glorifying God, the people of Babel decided to build a tower to make a name

for themselves. God confused their language to stop their work. Particularly, Genesis 11:6 shows the power behind a united people with one language:

"The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.'

So God confused their language and scattered them throughout the earth. Now at Pentecost instead of confusion there is clarity, as each hears the wonders of God in his or her own tongue. By implication, nothing this new community plans to do will be impossible for them. Therefore it is no surprise that Jesus declares he will build his *ecclesia* and even the gates of hell will not overcome it (Matthew 16:18).

These two chapters from Acts, when seen in light of the commands of Matthew 28:19 to "...go and make disciples..." and the call of Peter to "...Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have..." (1 Peter 3:15) concisely and clearly inform us that part of the worship of the *ecclesia* is to fulfil the work of evangelism.

However, what is this work in this present time, and in this specific locality. The churches of South Africa have much work to do in the realm of evangelism. While exact figures and attendance numbers of various churches are not known around South Africa it is common knowledge that major denominations are struggling. The reason I say that exact figures and numbers are not known is because many of these statistics are based on membership rolls, many of which are woefully out of date and are not reflective of actual weekly attendance. These numbers are further distorted by confirmation and baptism additions that do not reflect actual attendance or involvement in a church but rather reflect at best the community work of the church and at worst the cultural desires of the people.

For example, in 2002 I attended the Synod of the Western Cape Methodist Church circuits. During the Bishop's opening address he lamented that in his 9 years of service the church's membership had never strayed either far above or far below the number of 50 000 active members. He enjoined the church to commit to focusing on the lack of growth. That particular year the membership of the church had seen about an 8% decline (documents made available to delegates). The statistical secretary reported that confirmations were up, but membership was down (documents made available to delegates). However, despite these facts not one single item on the agenda for those three days dealt with this issue.

The South African Church (the many independent churches, the denominations both in their local form and on larger geographical divisions) needs to engage in revolutionary behaviour. They must take seriously the lack of growth in their numbers. In fact they need to go beyond taking it seriously and question all of their growth to find out if it is in fact growth of new people coming to faith in Christ or whether it is merely transfer growth of people leaving one church and moving to another, whether for legitimate¹⁷ or illegitimate¹⁸ reasons. Once they admit that they are not growing they must then make plans to address how to better reach the people who are not a part of their community. This will mean different things for churches in different areas. Churches should be spending more resources, in time, money and people to discover better methods to reach outside of their community to those not in the community. While the use of proven methods of the past can still be used people must engage in experimentation and research, or even better dialogue with non-Christians, to discover how best to reach and call those not in the *ecclesia*.

¹⁷ Legitimate and illegitimate refer to matters of Scriptural principle. For example, a person leaving one church and moving to another because of a change in work status or location – a transfer to another town or city – is a legitimate reason, but a person leaving one church and joining another because they just don't like the pastor or disagree with a correct doctrinal stance of a church would be an illegitimate reason.

¹⁸ As above

What follows are some suggestions based on research, study and experience that the South African Church should engage in to become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* and fulfil the work of evangelism.

Firstly the church needs to wait on God. Another way to say this is the church needs to pray, but not the stilted, boring, heartless prayers that so often define the prayer meetings in these churches, but a real sense of pouring out our hearts to God, filled often with the silence that comes from listening to God speak. This sort of prayer is filled with the knowledge of God's Word, as people believe and hope in the promises of God. The *hodos* were waiting on God, driven perhaps by fear, definitely by grief, but there in that small room Acts 1:14 tells us they joined together constantly in prayer. No order of service, no hymns, no liturgy, no meetings, no evangelism strategy nor any vision statement or value system. They were alone, without Jesus physically; grieving, hurting and following the last words of their master: Wait here! It could be argued, but not with any sense of real proof, that many churches in South Africa are in just such a situation. They are grieving, hurting; they have no vision, no strategy; they just like those first meetings of the *hodos* show no evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence. However, the increased attendance at church growth conferences, the increased number of books being written and bought about vision, leadership, values and the increased stress about order of services and styles of singing point to the fact that instead of waiting on God the churches are grasping at activities, ideas or programs. The first and most important step is waiting on God. How much of the actual meeting time of the leadership of the churches is taken up with prayer, reading God's word, and simply waiting on Him? How much emphasis is given to the prayer meetings of the churches? How much of the daily lifestyle of the members is filled with prayer? How much time is given over in the services of the churches?

The beginning of Saddleback Community Church, and its pastor who is better known for his book *The Purpose Driven Life*, was with prayer. Rick Warren

was commissioned through prayer (Warren 1995:26) and he chose where to go in prayer. "This is the first step anyone should take in planting a new church: Pray for guidance" (1995:32). If it is the first step for planting a church, then it should definitely be the first step in revolutionizing a church.

Similarly, Bill Hybels, founding pastor of Willow Creek Community Church saw the youth group he first worked in revolutionized through prayer. Lynn Hybels reflects in their book *Rediscovering Church* about the growth of Son City, the church's youth group. She writes:

"I remember prayer meetings in the church basement in which kids would literally weep for the lost. Perhaps there was a Son Company concert coming up, and their parents or their best friend had agreed to come for the first time. There would be little groups of four or five kids on their knees on a cement floor, pleading that God would draw their loved ones to Himself. The kids carried that same intensity and spirit of prayer onstage with them when they put on concerts or led team meetings or sat through Bill's messages with their unsaved friends beside them" (Hybels 1995:35).

We have already heard above about Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York. These are of course all American examples. However, the same principle is true. South Africans need to call on God and be moved to prayer, especially praying for the lost. This does not need to be coupled with American glamour and expense. That is uniquely American, and certainly not a part of the Acts 1 account. Prayer is the beginning step for any revolution amongst South African churches if they are to become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*.

Secondly, the church needs to listen. This might sound trite and pathetic but it is the single most powerful activity that the church can engage in after prayer. We firstly need to listen to God. That we have covered above. Secondly they need to listen to those who are not a part of the Christian

community. The church needs to listen to those in the world at large. The church needs to listen to the struggle of the people; their hopes, dreams, pains and frustrations. This is precisely what Lynne Hybels relates about the start and subsequent growth of Son Life – a youth ministry led by her now husband Bill Hybels.

During a meeting with some of the key students Bill shared his idea of being intentional in sharing the gospel, by creating specific non-Christian focused events. This is what has become commonly known as “seeker services”, a term used by many today. One student commented on the seating, another on the music, yet a third on the lack of drama, and still a fourth on multimedia. These students had listened to their friends and knew what they liked and did not like. They knew what would capture their attention and what would cause them to drift away. In the same way, churches need to have key people who are listening to their non-Christian friends, understanding what captures their attention and what draws them away, what works for them and what does not work for them (Hybels 1995:29-30)

Rick Warren went through the same listening process as he met regularly with people who were alienated from the church and together they discussed what the needs of people who were not in the church was.

“In order to understand the mind-set of unchurched southern Californians, I spent the first twelve weeks after moving to the Saddleback Valley going door-to-door talking to people. Even though I knew what these people *really* needed most was a relationship to Christ, I wanted to listen first to what *they* thought their most pressing needs were. That’s not marketing; it’s just being polite” (Warren 1995:40 – emphasis his).

Paul Borthwick encourages the same focus on understanding non-Christians. In a chapter entitled *Research Your Audience* he says, “...we must always be

on the lookout for ways to increase our understanding of he people we're trying to reach – with the goal of communicating the love of Christ to them in the most effective, understandable ways" (Borthwick 2003:87). He goes on to list ten characteristics of secular people (as he calls them), basing these on George Hunter's book *How to Reach Secular People*. The ten are listed here for reference rather than accuracy:

1. Secular people are essentially ignorant of Christianity.
2. Secular people are seeking life before death.
3. Secular people are conscious of doubt more than guilt.
4. Secular people have a negative image of the church.
5. Secular people have multiple alienations.
6. Secular people are untrusting.
7. Secular people have low self-esteem.
8. Secular people experience forces in history as "out of control".
9. Secular people experience forces in personality as "out of control".
10. Secular people can't find the door (2003:88-93)

What South African churches need to do is engage in some listening to those who are not in the church and a similar list describing the characteristics of non-Christians in South Africa should be drawn up. There needs to be open discussion and research with the hope that better and more effective ways can be found for sharing the gospel. I do not believe that the church in South Africa has a true picture of what non-Christians feel, think and experience in life. I believe that number two on the list above is becoming truer around the world. People are less interested in life beyond death and are more interested in the quality of life to be gained now. Therefore, their decisions about values, careers and morality, not to mention beliefs will be governed by the direct effect on their lives now. This causes a major impact on the church in its preaching, operating and programming. Preaching about eternal life loses significance and programming that causes people to have a lower quality of life now will be unsuccessful.

Mark Mittelberg argues the same concept in his book *Building a Contagious Church*. While listing seven different values that all people seek he focuses in on the need people have for cultural relevance. This is not a new concept, and is in fact commonly known as contextualization in missiology. However, it gains fresh meaning when applied to the role of a local church reaching those in its own suburb, town or province. Surprisingly, people in churches make the assumption that because they have grown up in the same country and community they therefore know the culture; that they know what the people need to hear; that they even know what questions the people are asking. Sadly, this is not true. The strongest evidence for this can be seen in the lack of impact that many churches are having in their immediate neighbourhood. Churches have failed to engage in the work of contextualizing the gospel for those who live near, in and around the church building itself. In using the well known "bridge diagram" Mittelberg adds a new chasm – "the cultural chasm" (Mittelberg 2000:48). This chasm is one that the cross is not designed to fill. Jesus did not come to move people across a cultural divide from one people culture to another people culture. He came to move them from sinful people to forgiven people. The work of the church begins much earlier than just asking people to cross the sin chasm. The work of the church in evangelism begins by addressing the cultural chasm, discovering the cultural differences between the church and the people. It begins to fill in the cultural chasm by attempting to work out the cultural code. Mittelberg, quoting Bill Hybels, enjoins us to "...crack the cultural code where we live" (2000:51). This involves examining issues of language, dress, music, motivation, points of reference, routines and habits, degree of openness to the gospel, styles of learning and traditions. Just using the styles of learning as an example will show that the church needs to discover what works in their area. In a vastly illiterate area the use of pictures, dramas, and actions are far better than studies, written covenants and learning based on reading and writing. In a highly literate, wealthy society using poorly acted dramas, low technology, and simplistic lecturing

would be less effective than open dialogue, high technology base and professional presentations and dramas (2000:51-58).

Keep in mind that we are talking about the church working in evangelism reaching those outside its own community. We will see in the work of discipleship that working within the community requires the people to undergo self examination and to move from the culture they are in to the counter-culture of the gospel.

The third step for the church is to assess its own belief structure. Instead of mindless acceptance of liturgies, practises and doctrines from the past the church should examine for itself what it believes. The church should re-examine doctrinal statements in light of this praying and listening. The church should re-examine God's Word and ruthlessly discard illogical and unbiblical practises. The church should honestly assess whether it believes what it says it believes. This assessment should not be done on the basis of intellectual assent but on the basis of actual practise and commitment.

For example, what is the place of homosexuals in the church? What is the church's standpoint on sexual ethics and its impact on its own practise and belief? A church can no longer turn a blind eye to adulterous relationships and at the same time judge homosexual relationships. Neither can the church accept homosexual relationships but hold relationships outside of marriage between a man and a woman as wrong. Worst of all, the church cannot remain silent on world issues like the homosexual debate. It must take a stand; it must, through listening, praying and researching, come to a standpoint.

James Collins, the author referred to in section 2, highlights that companies and organizations that last are those that have a definable core ideology that all within the company know and adopt, even to the extent that they develop a cult-like culture within them. It does not matter what an organization

believes, he says, rather it matters that they believe it. Secondly, it must be an ideology that shapes and drives the organization in its work. He writes:

"Our research indicates that the *authenticity* of the ideology and the extent to which a company attains consistent alignment with the ideology counts more than the *content* of the ideology" (Collins 2002:87 – emphasis his).

He says further:

"We concluded that the critical issue is not whether a company has the 'right' core ideology or a 'likable' core ideology but rather whether it *has* a core ideology – likable or not – that gives guidance and inspiration to the people *inside that company*" (2000:88 – emphasis his)

I believe, sadly, that many South African churches today do not believe their own core ideology. For example, they do not believe that prayer really works, they do not believe in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture. True, they do have it in their statement of beliefs, but the people, the leaders, and the pastors do not actively put their life on the line for these beliefs, therefore they do not really believe them. Secondly, these doctrinal statements do not guide the church in its thinking, planning, programming and execution. For this reason, a non-Christian who begins to ask the question about how to improve their life now, gets simplistic answers about just having faith and looking to the next life from a people who don't actually believe their own words. The church needs to re-examine its beliefs and make concrete stands about what it actually believes, being willing to put body, mind and soul behind those beliefs

The final step in this revolutionary process in the work of evangelism is for the church – that is the people, the programs and the organization – to begin

the revolutionary process by making its voice heard. The church must proclaim its truly held beliefs loudly, in as many mechanisms as possible. The church must begin to speak to non-Christians, and to its members who are pseudo-Christians, about the position they need to be in and the method by which they can move from where they are to where they should be. The church must begin to answer the questions it discovers that non-Christians are asking. The best mechanism for this to happen is through the context of relationships. The church – that is the people, the programs and the organization – must begin to develop friendships that are not dependant on belief. In the context of these friendships beliefs can be shared, Jesus can be encountered, and either accepted or rejected without the future of the relationship being in doubt.

As Mittelberg shows, the church must begin to fill in the cultural divide. The church must move from its walls to within the walls of the homes, theatres, malls, hospitals and temples of those it is trying to reach. The important factor to glean here is that *the church must speak and move not the non-Christian*. The Great Commission is clear, "Therefore, go and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19). Andrew, after being with Jesus went and called his brother. He did not shout to his brother from a distance to come, he went to him and brought him to Jesus (John 1:35-42). Churches too often create wonderful events for non-Christians to come to, they place some handouts in letter boxes, even put a commercial in the newspaper, and then all the Christians gather and keep a look out for the non-Christians to arrive. While they do think and talk about personally inviting someone most times they have not done so. The sad factor about this sort of evangelism is that it is the non-Christian who must leave the comfort of their cultural norm and move into the uncomfortable and scary place of the other. It should be the other way around.

This is the revolutionary process: pray, listen, research and act. As South African Churches do this they will cease to be a church and will become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*.

Chapter 9: Displaying the Tapestry: The Work of Discipleship

Having begun the important and vastly avoided work of evangelism the church needs to re-examine, re-educate and re-begin the work of discipleship. I talk about beginning again because the work of discipleship is a work that the church in South Africa is doing, albeit incorrectly. Sermons, Sunday school, membership classes, special events and retreats are all focused on discipleship. They are all guided by the call to move people from being far from God to near to him. They are all guided by the need to make people Christ-like.

A great example of one such program is the Alpha program. Nicky Gumbel writes in the Alpha handbook for directors and leaders: "...the Alpha Course – a ten-week practical introduction to the Christian faith designed primarily for non-churchgoers and those who have recently become Christians" (Gumbel 1997:11). Later on he repeats the same sentiment that it has actually evolved from an introduction course to focus "...primarily at those who are outside the church" (1997:11). Ostensibly an outreach program created by Holy Trinity Brompton, it was soon taken up by churches around South Africa as a member revitalization program with many churches making Alpha mandatory for new members (this does not necessarily mean new believers as it may well include people who have been believers for many years but are just changing their church). This is in contradiction to its primary purpose. Instead of being the outreach program it was designed to be, it was quickly consumed by the discipleship agenda. It is for this reason that the discipleship work must be rethought. It must be rethought because nearly everything the church in South Africa does today is stuck in a discipleship quagmire. There is obviously more to the church than just growing believers. We must be careful to avoid the misguided belief that everything, from evangelizing the lost to serving the poor is part of discipleship. While philosophically this may be correct, it is practically used to focus the churches resources heavily on those already in the church and avoid reaching those

who need to be evangelized or on those needing to be served by the church. Therefore, the work of discipleship needs to be rethought.

Once again we encounter the first problem in this work – what does discipleship mean. Unlike evangelism where there was an assumed definition, discipleship carries instead a plethora of definitions. However, all drive at a similar concept – discipleship involves growing, becoming or changing. The basis for all definitions comes from the Great Commission. There is no doubt as to the command from Jesus and the call of Scripture that we are to become disciples. Matthew 28:19 says "...go and make disciples..." Sadly, the church today has taken the concept of discipleship and watered it down. In the words of Bonhoeffer the church has to fight for costly grace instead of accepting cheap grace. Bonhoeffer shares the contrast between cheap grace and costly grace in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*. Cheap grace is the equivalent of having principles with no commitment, doctrine with no life change, preaching without a call to action. Cheap grace is not discipleship at all. It is the very crime of the Israelite nation throughout the book of Amos. Here was a people who worshipped God, proclaimed God's mercy, greatness, might and justice, yet never practised it themselves. They were guilty of oppressing the poor, denying justice, performing sexual immorality and misusing the temple for personal gain. And so instead of glorifying God they profaned his name (Amos 2:6-8). Costly grace in contrast is the constant challenge of changing and developing one's lifestyle to be conformed to the commands of Jesus. Costly grace is the actual life change that comes from following Jesus. As Bonhoeffer says,

"Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace*, because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price.' And what has cost God much cannot be cheap

for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God. Costly grace is the sanctuary of God" (Bonhoeffer 1959:45 – emphasis his)

Today in the church, discipleship has become watered down - a matter of attending church. No church actually says this, but they allow it by not creating systems of discipleship that bring people to costly grace. They allow it when they fail to encourage lifestyles that will cause Christians to be seen as significantly different from the culture in which they live. They allow it when they do not discipline members who systematically destroy the church body through inappropriate behaviour. They allow it when they do not address the visible sins that have infiltrated the church – sins of materialism and wealth masqueraded as blessing and prosperity. The church needs to rediscover the concept of costly grace. The church needs to rediscover what it means to be the incarnated presence of God in the world. The church needs to rediscover the work of discipleship.

The call to discipleship is about obedience. It is not about faith but obedience. Of course faith plays an important and integral role, but discipleship involves the wilful submission of one's will to the will of God. Throughout the gospels Jesus calls people to follow him, and his final words to his followers is that they call others to follow him. This is the sum total of discipleship. It is not about knowledge or about attendance but about loyalty.

"Discipleship means adherence to Christ...An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ...Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity

without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ" (1959:59).

True discipleship then requires the ongoing process of submitting to the will of Christ. Bonhoeffer argues that the first step of discipleship is obedience to the call of Jesus which leads to faith. This first step of obeying the call of Christ places one in the position "...where faith is possible" (1959:62). However, the act of obedience remains a dead work and cannot lead to salvation, only God's grace can do that, and a disciple participates in that grace through faith. It would seem that this first step then falls into the work of evangelism for us. The first step of obedience to the call of Jesus requires the church to make space for the call of Jesus to be heard and for people to be challenged to respond to that call. We are dealing with the work of discipleship as it pertains following this first step of obedience to the call of Jesus. Faith becomes possible because the act of obedience, the act of following Jesus leads one to discover a relationship with Jesus that will bring eternal life and that will bring holiness and perfection. The call offered by Jesus and their obedient response breaks them from their previous lifestyle and frees them for the lifestyle of a follower. They dispose of the old man and put on the new man in the words of Paul. "The gracious call of Jesus now becomes a stern command..." (1959:67). These are then the subsequent steps of discipleship – obeying the commands of Jesus which is exactly how Matthew continues the final words of Jesus.

The command in Matthew 28 goes on to describe two elements of that disciple making procedure: the element of baptism and the element of teaching obedience. Some argue that these are separate issues, while other authors argue that they are a part of discipleship. I believe that they are a part of the discipleship process. Baptism is the end of the work of evangelism and the beginning of the work of discipleship. Obedience is the ongoing work of discipleship which includes the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, a regular reminder of our call to avoid cheap grace and commit to costly grace.

The element of baptism as described here is clearly a reference to the sacrament of baptism as experienced by Jesus and as practised by the early church for all new believers. It is not our scope to debate what style of baptism is appropriate, but rather for us to affirm that baptism within the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* is an essential component of practise and belief. New members of the *ecclesia* must undergo the rite of baptism – a public declaration of their belief in God made within the context of the community. Baptism is the first step of discipleship as we speak about it here. In agreement with Bonhoeffer, we see baptism as the first step of discipleship. While the obedience to the call of Jesus is a part of the work of evangelism, it finds its conclusion in baptism. Therefore it is possible for there to be a time gap between obeying the call of Jesus and fulfilling that call with the act of baptism. As Bonhoeffer contests, baptism is not something we give to God but something he gives to us. In the gospels we see no sign of baptism other than what John the Baptist offers. But we do see Christ calling men to follow him. Their decision to follow Christ is at first not a statement of faith. Bonhoeffer calls it their response "...an act of obedience..." (1959:57). In response to baptism Bonhoeffer continues this same train of thought,

"Where the Synoptic Gospels speak of Christ calling men and their following him, St Paul speaks of *Baptism*. Baptism is not an offer made by man to God, but an offer made by Christ to man. It is grounded solely on the will of Christ, as expressed in his gracious call. Baptism is essentially passive...In baptism man becomes Christ's own possession" (1959:230-231).

Baptism does more than just conclude the work of evangelism and begin the work of discipleship. It declares entrance into the body of Christ, membership of the church. This is how the individual begins to participate in the body of Christ. It begins with baptism and continues with communion. "To be baptized...means to become a member of the Church" (1959:241). This

participation places the new disciple in a relationship of mutual accountability and mutual equality. All members realise their common need for the grace of God and the common call to become like Christ in their lives. All commit to working together to achieve that goal. It is for this reason that baptism is never a solitary act but an act made in covenant, an act done in community, an act done in the presence of others.

Warren agrees in his book, *The Purpose Drive Church*, that baptism of new believers is an important step in making them feel special (Warren 1995:320-323). Baptism is part of the first stage of discussion for members in the membership class (1995:318). Two words stand out in his description of baptism: new and first. Baptism is for those who are new to the faith and therefore by implication should be done early on. The fact that they discuss it in the first stages of their membership class indicates its prominence too. In his book *The Purpose Driven Life* Warren says that baptism "...signifies your inclusion into God's family..." (Warren 2002:120). By implication until that has been done your public inclusion is in question. It is therefore a necessary and important first step. Erickson talks about baptism as the "...Initiatory rite of the church..." (Erickson 1985:1089). Baptism is the beginning step for disciples.

The second step is teaching. Members of the *ecclesia* are to be taught obedience. This is an important distinction. They are not to be taught knowledge, although that is important in the step. They are not even to be taught acknowledgement, although that, too, is important. The final product is obedience – changed lives. Jesus also speaks clearly, about what they are to be taught. The new disciples are to be taught obedience to "everything I have commanded..." (Matthew 28:20). Members of the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* are called to become disciples who are initiated into the community through the public proclamation of baptism, and then are taught comprehensively everything that Jesus commanded until they obey it. The focus of the work of discipleship is changed lives that model the truth and power of God's Word.

This work is not about attendance at lectures or classes nor is it about the development of programs. It is about people making life changing commitments to become the people of the way, it is about people making lifestyle choices that depict in an undeniable way the truth of God's Word. I will be even bolder to say that no discipleship program is worth doing if it does not lead people to change their lifestyle or cause them to obey Jesus' teachings more correctly.

The rest of Scripture takes this concept further. In Genesis the Triune Godhead speaks clearly about the intention of humanity's creation. In Genesis 1:26a God says. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." The best image of God can be found in the incarnated image of Jesus Christ. As Bonhoeffer says,

"Those who follow Christ are destined to bear his image, and to be the brethren of the first-born Son of God. Their goal is to become 'as Christ'. Christ's followers always have his image before their eyes, and in its light all other images are screened from their sight. It penetrates into the depths of their being, fills them, and makes them more and more like their Master. The image of Jesus Christ impresses itself in daily communion on the image of the disciple...that image has the power to transform our lives, and if we surrender ourselves utterly to him, we cannot help bearing his image ourselves" (Bonhoeffer 1959:298).

To bear God's image is not something that we do. Rather it is something that God does for us. He does it first by taking on human form, by totally identifying himself with humanity through his Son. This identification we see beginning in the baptism of Jesus, continuing in the teaching of Jesus and his command to remember his image in the sacrament of the Last Supper of Jesus and finally culminating in the death of Jesus. The image of the incarnate Son becomes the image of the Church and the image of the Church

is the image of its members. "The Church in the first place is his image, and through the Church all her members have been refashioned in his image too. In the Body of Christ we are 'become like Christ'" (1959:303). What is this image of Jesus that becomes the image of the church and the image of its members? This image is the image of perfect relationship, perfect community, and a relationship of mutual submission, mutual equality and mutual reciprocity. The best picture of this can be found in the words of Bonhoeffer, "the image of God is the image of Christ crucified" (1959:302). In Christ crucified we see mutual submission in perfection, we see mutual equality in the Godhead, we see perfection in community as the greatest love is displayed and we see the loudest call uttered to all of humanity to follow Jesus, to become his followers. The church remembers this through the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a constant reminder to the church of the cost of grace and the call to discipleship. It is a reminder of the image of God in Christ crucified. It is a reminder of the call to community, the call to the church to be the kingdom of God and to become that very image of God in Jesus. It is a reminder to the individuals to continually replace the old man, the sinful past, with the new man, the glorified future. The Lord's Supper is a call to fulfil the work of discipleship. The Lord's Supper is a commitment to the ongoing process of discipleship. The Lord's Supper also calls the church and its individual members to the third work of the church – the work of reconciliation.

However, the work of discipleship is a work of continual obedience to the commands and teachings of Jesus. As Rick Warren writes, "God's ultimate goal for your life on earth is not comfort, but character development. He wants you to grow up spiritually and become like Christ" (Warren 2002:173). Another way of saying character development biblically is to say that we must be obedient to Jesus' commands. Warren defines discipleship for a member of the church as helping one "...fortify your faith by learning the truth of God's

Word and applying biblical principles to your lifestyle" (1995:314). Both Hunter and Johnson affirm this goal for the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*. They write, "The most important 'product' to come out of the church is the person in his or her healing, wholeness and redemption" (Hunter and Johnson 1985:5). This only adds to the importance of the definition for discipleship to include life-change. It is not about knowledge, or the accumulation of credits for a degree.

Robert Nash in his argument for the church to move from modernism to postmodernism argues that a new church must be born. This new born church understands its role as disciples. The discipleship of members of God's *ecclesia* must be done to impact life now because that is where so many non-Christians draw the line of comparison. It is not about life in the eternal that concerns people, but life now, and seeing how Christians ought to live their lives now is a matter of concern for non-Christians, and therefore should be a matter of concern for us. Nash writes:

"God's future church must live out of the Grand Christian Story that is centred in Jesus Christ. This is the reason for its existence. It does not exist to enforce moral laws that are already obeyed by many non-Christian people in the world. It exists to live its life under the Lordship of Christ" (Nash 1997:121)

Living life under the Lordship of Christ implies obedience. If Christ is Lord then I am not lord. If he commands then my role is to obey. It truly is a sense of if Jesus says, "Jump," I reply with "How high?" Furthermore, the lordship of Christ implies that my life exists to serve Jesus and all aspects of my life must be made available for Jesus to use. There can be no hiding or compartmentalizing of lordship in this sense. The word *kurios* does not allow it. Jesus is absolute Lord and I am absolute servant. This, too, implies life change.

Discipleship begins to be defined as the work of the church that causes lifestyle change within a believer. It begins with baptism and continues on until total obedience to everything Jesus commanded has been reached. The Lord's Supper serves as a constant reminder of our past and our future. Discipleship is about life change, life development and lifestyle obedience. It cannot be overemphasised enough that what we are called to obey is Jesus' commands. We are called to obey the Word made flesh. Jesus left us with the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit who would teach us and remind us of everything that Jesus has said (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit speaks to us most clearly through Scripture, but also through events, circumstances, people and supernatural means. The dividing line in all this speaking is that we are drawn back to Jesus' commands and words. Matthew is not the only one who argues for obedience to Jesus' commands. Indeed, John records Jesus words to his disciples in John 14 and 15. In these chapters the relationship between loving Jesus and obeying his commands is seen as a close and bonded relationship. John 14:15 says, "If you love me you will obey what I command." Later on Jesus says, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me," and carries on to say, "...If anyone loves me he will obey my teaching...He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (John 14:21 and 23). It is the Word we are called to obey.

What does this work mean for the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* in the specific region of South Africa and its local communities? I believe the work of discipleship calls churches in South Africa to address five things specifically. If the work of discipleship is the work that brings about life change in the members of the *ecclesia* and it includes baptism and teaching for life change then that is where the *ecclesia* must begin.

As churches in South Africa were called back to pray in evangelism, so they must be called back to God's Word in discipleship. This is the first step in achieving this work of discipleship. How many members of the churches in

South Africa actually read God's Word? How many actually know, memorize and internalize God's Word in such a way that it causes them to change their lifestyle? What is the content of sermons and lectures, talks and discussions in the churches? Far too many sermons, talks and lectures begin with circumstances and current social issues, and brush up against God's Word as back up texts. There is little exegetical work, little contextual work and little biblical application. Far too often modern day books, authors and programs are advocated as truth to be applied rather than returning to the source of truth for our faith and life – God's Word.

Churches in South Africa must return to God's Word as a base. On the grassroots this means exhorting and pointing people to read their bibles regularly (daily), study their bibles, memorize verses, engage in discussion and dialogue to improve their knowledge *so that they can apply it better*. On a higher level preachers (from lay to professional) should be examined closely for proficiency in their applied knowledge of God's Word. Many churches in South Africa have lay preaching programs. What used to be the strength of these churches has become its biggest liability with these preachers having little applied knowledge and indeed a great lack of skill. Many of the preachers lack basic hermeneutical training and skill and instead of lay preaching being a great benefit to the church it has become a matter of adherence to an old custom that no longer brings much benefit. On a more practical level churches need to examine the manner in which they choose what to preach and teach. In essence they need to examine what their curriculum is and how they choose their curriculum. One of the greatest dangers in churches today is that they are reactionary. Churches are constantly reacting to what is happening in the world, often fighting battles that have long been decided. Abortion is one such debate. The church now fights the cause against abortion but philosophically it has already lost this debate because of the decision about in vitro fertilization. People who are anti-abortion must answer the problem of allowing in vitro fertilization which at a basic oversimplified state allows for first trimester abortions (either inside

or outside the womb). As the discussion in the world continues the church must cease to react and begin to plan and think ahead. The church as revolutionary does not react to what is happening in the world, but is in the forefront of activity and discussion causing the world to react to its stances and assertions. A great example of this forethought can be seen in the area of marriage. The church is reacting right now to the call for legalization of homosexual marriage. This battle is still being fought and the church must think ahead to plan its debates and discussions so that the right fight is fought in the right arena. Churches in South Africa, and the world, should be calling groups of thinkers together to think through the ramifications of changing the traditional Christian view of marriage being between one man and one woman. If that definition changes and a civil status is attached to unions that do not fit that definition, what other unions would fight for legitimacy. Could paedophiles sue for legitimacy? Could familial relationships between mother and son, or brother and sister be legitimized? Are we as the church prepared to address those issues? All of this is to say that our curriculum in sermons, classes and studies should be preparing us to answer all these questions – both current debates and possible future debates. The best method to be prepared is for Christians to have a complete picture and understanding of God's Word. God's Word needs to be taught systematically and comprehensively. Messages need to be drawn from all parts of God's Word regularly. The key here is regularly. The Church has its favourite passages and texts. It also has its avoided or rare passages that are not, or seldom are, preached on or taught. This must be addressed and the entire meta-narrative must be taught often and regularly. For the church to begin doing the work of discipleship it must begin with the Word of God.

Secondly, it must go further and plan a systematic process of growing people into disciples. This is where vision, values and strategy (the catchphrases of church conferences today) are most helpful. A systematic process of encountering those outside the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*, inviting them to join the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*, and growing them to, what Paul in Ephesians calls,

"...all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13). We already touched on this process concept when we spoke about curriculum above. Now, however, we go further and ask the church to look at all it does and make everything it does aid the process of what it wants to achieve. At the same time it must cease doing what prevents or hinders the process from being achieved. There are plenty of examples of this process of development. Ralph Neighbour, in his book *Where Do We Go From Here?*, details the process for a cell church, beginning with the detail of how a cell church begins, how it draws outsiders in, how it develops its leadership, expands, multiplies and begins the process again. There is a clear process of development on both the micro level (development of the individual), and the macro level (development of the community). Rick Warren details the progression of individuals as they grow through his five purposes in *The Purpose Driven Life*, while he details a similar process for the church in *The Purpose Driven Church*. Willow Creek highlight their process with the five "G's" at all their conferences. In fact they even use the business concept called the critical path to describe this process. Whatever the process, our discussion of the definition of discipleship above commands us to include in the process the call to be baptized and the ongoing call to take part in the Lord's Supper. We must allow the church and its people to join the community and continually proclaim to the community within and without their call to die to the past and commit to the future. The process must allow the image of Jesus Christ crucified to be born in the church and the individuals. This is a work of God and only he can bring his image out of his people, the church must not allow anything to hinder or cloud that process. Churches in South Africa need to develop a clear process of discipleship.

Thirdly churches in South Africa need to work with intentionality. Not only do they need to focus in on the Word of God, not only do they need to develop a process, but it needs to be done with clear intention. This is implied above when we speak about doing only what helps the process and avoiding what

hinders the process. The best way to do this is when churches work with intention. Jim Collins book is most helpful here as he details how businesses choose carefully what they do. In the mad rush to control the internet market drugstore companies rushed to capitalize on this new technology. He details the quick rise of a company called drugstore.com. In the first nine months of its public life it had a market valuation of over \$3.5 billion dollars.

"Not bad for an enterprise that had sold products for less than nine months, had fewer than 500 employees, offered no hope of investor dividends for years (if not decades), and deliberately planned to lose hundreds of millions of dollars before turning a single dollar of profit"

(Collins 2001:144)

Drugstore.com challenged Walgreen for its dominance in the drugstore market. Walgreen, which initially lost "...over 40% of its price in the months leading up to the drugstore.com public offering" (2001:145), responded to this attack with a seemingly lack of interest. This is where intention comes to the fore, and this is what churches in South Africa must take notice of. Jim Collins writes:

"Walgreens executives did something quite unusual for the times. They decided to pause and reflect. They decided to use their brains. They decided to think!" (2001:145)

Walgreens knew what they were trying to do; they also knew what they were not trying to do. They were aware of technology and knew clearly what impact the internet would have, but wanted to use it to better its goals and plans as a company and not let the internet dictate what the company should be. Little over a year after the attack of drugstore.com, Walgreens had experimented and planned a strategy with regards the internet. Instead of just launching a public company they launched an online drugstore that rivalled most dotcoms in its design and continued to grow the company in its

goal of being a drugstore accessible to every neighbourhood in America. Drugstore.com in contrast continued to lose money and saw its stock trading at a price twenty six times lower than at its highpoint a year before (2001:146). Walgreens used technology with intention, drugstore.com let technology use it.

Churches must learn to work with intention. Especially in the area of discipleship the church must work with intention. There are many discipleship programs out there. There are many opportunities with technology to aid the church in the work of discipleship. Sadly many churches are like drugstore.com grabbing at the next best thing, trying to latch on to the one thing that will grow them into bigger and better churches. This is especially prevalent in the attempts to turn South African churches into American church replicas. Having worked in America now for some time I am beginning to understand how much of what they do is related to cultural expression rather than any sort of Scriptural command. This does not mean what they do is wrong or right; rather it is merely their way of expressing themselves. As South African churches engage in this work they must find the South African cultural expression, understanding their process and working with intention. Churches in South Africa must be more like Walgreen, taking time to pause and reflect, taking time to think, taking time to use their brains and examine and test technology, programs and ideas to see how they will help the church achieve its goals, not allow the technology, programs and ideas to use them. This is a call to think differently about technology looking at how programs and technology can be used by churches to achieve their plans and goals, not invent plans and goals of their own. In the work of discipleship the church must work with intention, examining everything it does from the viewpoint of God's Word, and then its vision, values and goals.

Obviously churches in South Africa must answer the community question. This is the fourth area needing specific addressing in the work of discipleship. As the boomers become older and the new generations of busters, Gen Xers,

millenials, and more join the church we must answer the question of community for them. The community question is a big question for the church in South Africa to ask and answer. One of the premises of this paper is that the church is called into community, and that community must represent the kingdom of God, and more specifically the king of the kingdom. The king of the kingdom, as we have shown, exists in the Trinitarian Godhead partially to teach us about community and how we are to relate to each other. Churches must work to discover how to bring that theological reality into a practical reality. On a macro scale it means that the church as community must engage in the three works of evangelism, discipleship and reconciliation. On a micro scale, however, the church still needs to answer the question of what its community will look like. Is it merely a Sunday community? What form does that Sunday community take? Does it exist only in large group format, everyone together, or does it exist in only a small group format, people in groups in homes, or perhaps both? If there is a small group format, what is the shape and design of those small groups, and what do those small groups do? For South African churches community must reflect the nature and ethos of South Africa. Some specific examples serve to underline this point. There must be poor in the community of South African churches, not just a work to the poor, but they must actually exist as viable participating members in the community. Churches should seek to include the poor in their community in its many forms. There must be racial integration, not racial separation, something I believe South African churches are getting right and getting better at, unlike churches in the rest of the world which are largely blind to this issue. For example, churches in South Africa are allowing for communities to come together and discover more about each other. They must resist the urge to create homogenous units amongst the people of South Africa. While this was an accepted practise in the missionary movement of years past, it is not a good practise for churches to engage in now. While from a missionary practise it allowed for focused missionary work, it had the side effect of creating broken or estranged communities. South Africa must continue to move away from brokenness towards unity and

community. This is the product that South Africa has to offer the world, nothing short of the unity of the church, a fulfilment of the prayer of Jesus in John 17. The South African church must find ways for the full Body of Christ in South Africa to come together and express through their lives the image of God in Jesus Christ crucified. A shining example of this I experienced during my time in Cape Town. The churches of the northern suburbs of Cape Town came together to celebrate as the Body of Christ each year. During this time of worship each church was represented and took part. The culmination of the service came when everyone present took part in a combined communion service. It is hard to express in words the sense of community and oneness that each person felt at this time. Yet, in some mystical sense each person felt at one with the persons around them. This was felt a little during the worship, but the full impact of being united came as we all reminded ourselves of the image of Jesus crucified. We portrayed the image of God that day. The integration of the poor was felt in the offering when the proceeds were given to a local work to the poor. The ongoing call of God was felt in the unanimous desire of all to work harder at including more churches and more individuals especially those with limited means. These sorts of efforts must continue to be made so that the church of God can be brought together. There must also be language representation in the services to reflect the diversity and culture of South Africa. As the church reaches out to those in its community, their language should be represented in the church. This may take more time, may take more work, but the benefits of unity and community are worth the effort.

One final aspect of this work of discipleship that needs to be addressed is the realm of accountability or church discipline. I firmly believe that churches in South Africa, or more specifically every church except one that I have personally encountered, have a poor approach to discipline. This is not to say that these churches don't speak of disciplining those within its community, or of holding them accountable to the work and call of discipleship. The poor approach is seen in the actual follow through of holding people accountable,

enacting church discipline correctly and appropriately. The actual events of someone being called to account for their lifestyle, being taught and guided through a process of recovery, and then released back into the community are rare. We must remind ourselves that this is one of the examples of cheap grace that Bonhoeffer offers, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline" (Bonhoeffer 1959:44). Similarly, the events of someone who rejects the rebuke, counselling and correction being expelled from the community are just as, if not more, rare. If a church calls the members of its community to commit to the work of discipleship they must be held accountable to that work or lose their place in the community. If this is not done then the result is a sliding scale of acceptance. The only outcome of this is a watered down community that fails to achieve the power and vibrancy evident in God's Word. It is no surprise that this vibrancy and power is exactly what is lacking in so many churches today. The result truly is "lukewarmness" (Revelation 3:16).

One of most specific areas of application for this concept of the work of discipleship can be found in the "membership course". The church must cease to be seen as another membership organization where you pay your dues, attend the regular meetings and continue on with your life. The church must reclaim its place as the people of God, filling their lives, their thoughts, their hopes, their dreams, their prayers, their work and their passion with the call to disciples. Church membership is probably the most controversial topic in churches. The number of members seldom reflects the attendance, usually showing more members on the membership roll than ever in church at any meeting of the year. Often members are irregular attendees, and may have been on the membership roll without a single attendance on a Sunday for a number of years. At other times members who are clearly living a life contrary to that of a disciple continue to have a say in the life and growth of a church, even though they have disqualified themselves by their own life choices. Seldom are members stricken off the roll, but they are continually added exaggerating the problem of numbers still further. The need for a

clear process that exists and works with intention, coupled with the call to community and regulated by discipline and accountability require the membership issue to be resolved. In fact they may well lead to its resolution. Keeping in mind that the work of discipleship is about changed lives, members are only members of the *ecclesia* by virtue of their continued service and obedience.

Membership of a church can therefore follow two roads. Either people are required to attend a set amount of classes in order to be taught correctly, come to an understanding of what they are being asked to commit to and agree to, make that commitment – and by implication of that commitment make life changes – and then join that community, and be held accountable to that community or no official or required membership course should be offered. People only belong to a community therefore when they are actively involved in the life of that community, serving within and without, inviting others to join this community and growing with and through the other members, finding themselves verbally agreeing that this is their spiritual home. Churches need to move in one of the two directions, but cannot offer the same rights and responsibilities to those who are official members and those who are mere attendees. The two cannot enjoy the same benefits in the same community. This makes a mockery of the process and clouds the intention of the process. It in turn infects the community with confusion, a sense of favouritism and in a worst case scenario bitterness, envy and strife. It further complicates the issue of accountability and discipline leaving the church powerless to address the very issues that need to be addressed – that being life change. The work of discipleship implies a total, all encompassing, life long commitment to fulfil the call of God on the individual participants to become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*.

The revolution of the church in the work of discipleship requires a return to God's Word, the discovery of a process of discipleship coupled with a clear intention that brings people into that community where they are accountable

to each other. In this way the churches of South Africa become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*.

Chapter 10: Displaying the Tapestry: The Work of Reconciliation

The church in South Africa, having begun the work of evangelism and redefined the work of discipleship, must at the same time focus on the work of reconciliation. This is a vastly overlooked work of the church, often sidelined to be a part of the wider work of evangelism or merely looked at from the context of social reform. However, it is a much wider work, worthy of being considered one of the three primary works of worship for the church. It is more than just evangelism; it goes beyond just a result of discipleship and truly is its own work in and of itself.

The clearest description of the command to do this work comes from 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Paul talks about being given the ministry of reconciliation and at the same time issues a command to the church of Corinth to be reconciled to God. It is appropriate that Paul writes this message to this church. Paul, who has had a long history with the Corinthian church, writes to them in this his gentler letter to exhort and encourage the Corinthian church to unity amongst themselves and unity with the rest of the believers.

Corinth was a well known city in its time. Known long before the time of Paul as a well-to-do city with a wide range of beliefs, a mixture of cultures and races, filled with the civilized and uncivilized, the rich and the poor. Corinth boasted plays, art, culture as well as hosting the greatest sporting event after the Ancient Olympics. The city of Corinth was eventually destroyed in 146 BC by the Roman advance in to Greece. Over a century later, Julius Caesar rebuilt the city realizing its strategic importance as a seaport, in about 44 BC. It quickly became wealthy again. Known by Horace as "double-sea Corinth" (Martin 1986: xxviii) because of it having two harbours it was able to capitalize on two trade routes, the north-south and the east-west. It was initially filled with poor settlers, mostly freedmen from Rome, little more than slaves themselves. However, soon in its early colonial life military veterans, other lower class people fleeing an overpopulated Rome, Orientals (including Jews), and local Grecians began filling out the new Corinth. In a few decades Corinth was once again a powerful city with significant influence, a range of high, middle and low class people, as well as becoming the capital of the province of Achaia. This bestowed the honour of being the home of a Roman Proconsul on Corinth. It soon rose to be the "...third most important city of the empire, behind only Rome and Alexandria in status" (Hafemann 2000:23). It was filled with many different races, all bringing their own religious beliefs into the city. Corinth was a city filled with diversity and multiculturalism. It truly was a melting pot of the East and West. The new Corinth unfortunately developed no higher moral standing than Ancient Corinth. Ancient Corinth was known as a city of sexual perversion and immorality. Filled with temple prostitution and debauchery its very nature influenced the writers of the day. To corinthianize became widely known as a phrase for fornication, while one famous play in the fourth century BC was known as *Korinthiastes* (The Harlot). Plato even spoke of a prostitute as a Corinthian girl (Martin 1986: xxix). Some modern commentators argue that this sexual perversion and immorality was due to bad press from Athens, however, Paul's letters to Corinth highlight the depth of immorality that existed in Corinth. There is no doubt that Corinth was a sexually promiscuous city, but it may well not be as

widespread or legitimized as Ancient Corinth. Into this thriving and growing city Paul arrived and began to build a church.¹⁹

Acts 18 tells us that he began his work in Corinth when he encountered Aquila; "a Jew...a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome" (Acts 18:2). While he enjoyed little success with the Jewish population he soon planted a church next door at the house of Titus Justus. The church grew and Paul remained there for a year and half. On his departure another teacher arrived by the name of Apollos. This developed, at no fault to Apollos, into one of several disputes in the church. The church began to take sides, some believing Apollos a better preacher than Paul, others holding onto the teaching and leading of Paul. After Paul's first letter where he addressed these dissensions, as well as the problems of marriage, sexual immorality, lawsuits and more, he wrote another letter that is lost to us now. After this he wrote what we now call 2 Corinthians. This makes up at least three letters. There is evidence of a fourth letter, earlier than canonical 1 Corinthians. This is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:9, although some argue that this is simply a reference to his current letter that he is writing.

His purpose in writing 2 Corinthians is twofold. Firstly, he wanted to write a more encouraging and less rebuking letter that would bring the church and himself closer together. Secondly he wanted to defend his apostolic calling and ministry which had come under attack from new opponents that came from outside Corinth. Hafemann writes the following about these opponents:

"Paul's opponents promised them (the Corinthian Church) deliverance from suffering and a steady diet of spiritual experiences. Instead of demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit in their own lives, they supported

¹⁹ This short synopsis comes from a survey of commentaries: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*; *The NIV Application Commentary*; *Word Biblical Commentary*; *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series*, and *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*.

their claims to be true apostles with letters of recommendation from other churches (cf 3:1), by trumpeting their ethnic heritage as Jews (3:4-18; 11:21-22), by displaying professional rhetorical flash (10:10; 11:6), and by boasting in their spiritual experiences and supernatural signs (10:12 11:12,18; 12:12)" (Hafemann 2000:30).

The history of the church, along with its new challenges and struggles prompts Paul to defend his ministry and in the midst of this challenge he writes these verses about reconciliation. Paul's challenge to the church is for them to live their lives as the new creations they are. Paul reminds the church that his new creation is the result of God's work, and so is their new creation. The start of 2 Corinthians 5:18 refers directly to the new creation phrase. The removal of the old and the coming of the new is a work of God. The act of becoming a new creation is the work of God reconciling his creation to himself. In turn God gives the ministry of reconciliation to those who have been reconciled to him. Paul describes this ministry of reconciliation in verse 19: "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them." The progression is clear.

Firstly, Paul, when referring to us, speaks of himself and his team, those called by God to do the work they are doing. He is defending his call as an apostle. He speaks specifically of his own coming to faith. More than this he speaks directly to the work that he is called to do: the work of reconciliation. He reiterates that he, as an apostle, and his team are to do the work of reconciliation. More than just do the work, it is in fact committed, entrusted to his care. This leads Paul to his conclusion. He is Christ's ambassador, sent to deliver a message from the king to an excluded party. His message is simple in its directness, but profound in its application – be reconciled to God. Barnett sees this phrase in the passive allowing God to be the initiator and director again – be reconciled means be reconciled by God rather than to God as though the church could do this on their own.

Having personally been reconciled to God he must now fulfil a mission – bringing the ministry of reconciliation to the world telling them that God is at work bringing the world back to himself, not counting their sins against them. This is the work of evangelism that so many refer to. It is the next step in the progression. Personal reconciliation leads to a global awareness of the need for reconciliation. Paul is now being hindered in that work and he is reminding the Corinthian church that this is what he must do.

However, his entreaty, his imploring at the end of the passage to them reminds us all that there is a step in between personal and global reconciliation, this step is communal reconciliation. The church must be reconciled by God to each other, back to Paul so that they too can fulfil their call to be Christ's ambassadors. Remember, he writes to the church, not to non-Christians or lost people. He is writing to people that he earlier describes as reflecting the glory of the Lord as they are transformed into his likeness.

This profound statement of being reconciled by God is not just a statement out of context, thrown into the mix without thought or consideration. Paul has described a clear progression from personal faith and reconciliation to the unifying of the body of Christ to a reaching out to the world with the same message of reconciliation – that God wants to be with his people, not counting their sins against them.

Barnett sees in this passage Paul speaking like a prophet of God from the Old Testament. "Paul's is a momentous assertion, analogous to the declaration of the Old Testament prophet, 'Thus says Yahweh'" (Barnett 1997:311). It is not to be taken lightly. Barnett reminds us that to be an ambassador in those days was to be seen as one speaking on behalf of another. Barnett jogs our memory that "...in that period, to reject the representative of an envoy was to reject the one who sent him" (1997:310). Therefore, the Corinthian church, with all of its culture and progression, with its well developed political system, was being reminded in the strongest possible terms that Paul spoke to them

as though Christ were speaking to them. To ignore him was to ignore Jesus and so ignore the call to be reconciled to God. However, should they respond to the call of God through his apostle, Paul reminds them of the glory that is theirs, that through the reconciling work of Christ "...God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the church at its best, when people realize their personal need for reconciliation; they work together as a reconciled body to tell the world of its need to be reconciled to God. It is so much more than just evangelism; it is more than discipleship, because it is the work of reconciliation that teaches the world about oneness, about unity, about how to work as people to hear, see and follow God's leading in reconciling us all to him through Christ.

What does this work mean for the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* in the specific region of South Africa and its local communities? The work of reconciliation as detailed here by Paul calls the South African church to work on reconciliation in three areas: personal; communal and global. From the outset I must say that South Africa as a country, and the churches in their small role are world leaders in this work. South Africa, like Corinth, is a country with two histories, one that has been destroyed, another that is being rebuilt. South Africa's challenge is to not let the sins of the past become the sins of the present. If South Africa, and the churches, can understand and grasp the great miracle of what they have lived through they can truly begin to realize the dream of so many African leaders, the dream that Africa would rise to lead and guide the world, not as Europe or America does, with power and might, but with understanding, dialogue and listening. How can South Africa then engage this work in the areas of personal, communal and global reconciliation?

Firstly the South African church must work in the area of personal reconciliation. Primary to this area of reconciliation is the role of confession and repentance. The work of reconciliation goes hand in hand with forgiveness. As Barnett puts it, "...the relational blessing ('reconciliation with

God') rests on forensic forgiveness ('righteousness')" (Barnett 1997:302). Forensic forgiveness would imply a forgiveness that is so apparent that it would stand up in the court of law. Forensic forgiveness implies a forgiveness that is a legal transaction between two parties, one aggrieved and one the aggressor. God is the aggrieved and we are the aggressors. In order to be reconciled to God, our sins must be forgiven, or to use the Corinthian phrase, our sins must not be counted against us. This is principally God's work enacted upon us through Christ. However, our role of confessing our sins brings out of us our own willing acceptance and submission to God's work. There must be space within the churches in South Africa for times of confession, specifically personal confession so that people are able to speak out the hidden secrets that will allow them to be free. This can begin in the realms of times of silence so that we can confess our own sins, but should go further to become times when we confess our sins one to another and then together go to God so that we are accountable to each other. For too long we have turned confession into a private matter, and so we are surrounded by Christians who talk to walls seeking forgiveness but never experience the joy of hearing the words, "Your sins are forgiven" and never experience the joy of feeling forgiven. Christo Thesnaar sees the same need for this confession in his article on *Facilitating Healing and Reconciliation with Young People. Living in the Aftermath of Political and Cultural Conflict: The Challenge to the Church and its Youth Ministry*. This can be determined from the primacy of story telling in his process for overcoming brokenness. "The church and its youth ministry need to facilitate the healing, reconciliation and forgiveness process...For this reason, the church and its youth ministry have to create opportunities for young people to formulate and tell their stories" (Lambert 2003:40-41). Story telling is more than just sharing what has happened to you in your life; it involves sharing the pain of the past, the failures of the past, the dreams and hopes for the future. In my own experiences of these story-telling times I have seen them always lead into times of confession and repentance both to God and each other. This is the implicit hope of Thesnaar in his article.

Peter Fink in his introduction to a volume on reconciliation as it relates to worship makes the same point,

"The sacrament of reconciliation and forgiveness is that activity of the Church set in motion in obedience to the Word of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit, which seeks to respond to the reality of sin with the healing grace of Jesus Christ. The primary sacrament of reconciliation after Christ himself is, of course, the Church in all the ways it seeks to counter the forces of sin in the world" (Fink 1987:13)

In the same section he talks about the work of reconciliation being called "...humble confession where sin is a hardness of heart which demands open and sincere acknowledgement of the truth of one's actions before God and before others" (1987:13). This is key to the discussion of reconciliation for South African churches. Reconciliation is not just personal confession and repentance. This is precisely the opposite of what many white South African churches were saying needed to happen in the old apartheid South Africa. When confronted with the pain and suffering of black people in South Africa there response, at best, was one of calling for endurance on the part of the black person and understanding for the white person. They went further and insisted that personal repentance was all that was needed on both sides for reconciliation to happen. It is against this form of reconciliation and theology, amongst others, that the Kairos Document was written. In an examination of the statements made by these churches the authors of the Kairos Document wanted to push them further declaring that reconciliation is not just a matter of repentance and confession. It goes further into actual action. "There can be no doubt that our Christian faith commits us to work for *true* reconciliation and *genuine* peace. But...there can be no true reconciliation and no genuine peace *without justice*" (Nurnberger, Tooke 1988:12). Clearly this is a call to action. The Document went on to challenge the church further and evoked a significant reaction. In response a group of evangelicals, calling themselves

"Concerned Evangelicals" wrote the Evangelical Witness. In this declaration they clarified and addressed the issue of repentance.

"It is a maxim that to be an evangelical means to believe in repentance of one's sin(s) and conversion...It is equally true that in our proclamation of the Gospel, we condemn sin in all its forms: personal, collective and structural. We then, also, call people to repentance, with the hope of forgiveness of sin, and restoration of relationship with God and with people...It should, however, be clear that this does not mean that the fact of sin is undermined or underplayed. Rather sin is exposed and condemned. The aim being to see a totally changed life" (1988:28)

This is an effective clarification. As evangelicals we must affirm that the beginning of all reconciliation is to be found in reconciling with God. Central to reconciling with God is the concept of confession and repentance. The Evangelical Witness did not just declare repentance and confession as the important beginning step; they went on to confess their own sins and shortcomings.

"The problem with us (evangelicals) is that we became very radical and uncompromising against a well selected set of sins and ignore the rest for a reason that is not clear to many...It is clear, therefore, that our radicalism is selective radicalism...We as evangelicals need to repent from this selective radicalism and biased morality" (1988:28-29).

It is helpful to remind ourselves that these documents (The Kairos Document and the Evangelical Witness) were written in the midst of apartheid's height, and the book that these are reviewed in is the first reader of the National Initiative for Reconciliation, printed to help further the cause of reconciliation towards the end of the apartheid struggle (arguably at its most volatile). These words were powerful words, and began at the right place, with

individuals coming before God to declare their own need of him. This same beginning point is emphasised by Hizkias Assefa. In his examination of Christian thought, "...it is possible to discern four dimensions (Burkhardt, 1974): reconciliation with God, reconciliation with the self, reconciliation with neighbours and the human community, and reconciliation with nature" (Assefa, Wachira 1996:47). Central to the concept of reconciliation with God, Assefa sees "...confession and repentance of misdeeds and request for forgiveness..." (1996:47). All of the other reconciliations are related to and reliant on the first reconciliation – reconciliation with God.

Therefore, at the heart of personal reconciliation lies our own individual reconciliation to God, the creator and owner of all. He forgives us, but we must hear it and experience it, regularly. This can be through individual accountability partners, or through smaller groups, and even in worship services. Without this first step of reconciliation all other reconciliation is incomplete and lacking in substance. This beginning makes the work of reconciliation the clear work of the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*. There needs to be a rediscovery of confession and repentance, especially amongst Protestant South African churches.

One of the traps of the removal of confession from Protestant churches is the growth of personal guilt within Christians. People no longer feel forgiven, they no longer experience forgiveness, they question whether they are forgiven, and they fail to forgive themselves. Churches in South Africa must teach about how to break the power of guilt in the lives of its listeners. When we understand that personal reconciliation, the forgiveness of our sins, is the result of God working through Jesus we begin to learn that we are free in Christ, free from sin, free from the penalty of sin, and free from the power of sin which is guilt. We are not fully followers of the Way, when we continually reflect on our own guilt over past sins and hidden problems.

We must also overcome the power of fear. The inability of victims and victimizers of sin to speak out for fear of rejection and punishment is a powerful ally against reconciliation. Without confession there is no experience of forgiveness is the essence of 1 John 1:9. Voices that are silenced by fear, but that desire to confess, are a great enemy of reconciliation. The church must become a place where these voices are given the ability, the power, and the mechanism to speak, sometimes to shout. This is the essence of the miracle of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as it took South Africa through a time of potential violence and bloodshed and instead allowed there to be confession, a speaking out of the evils done by individuals and an opportunity for the victims to confront their abusers and in some cases forgive them. One such example of this overcoming of fear from both victim and victimizer is described in Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's book *A Human Being Died That Night*²⁰. In this book she chronicles her interviews with Eugene de Kock. Gobodo-Madikizela, a black woman who is sent by the TRC, to de Kock, a white man, the commanding officer of the apartheid death squads who is seeking amnesty from the TRC. One of her accounts is about the meeting between de Kock and two widows. She writes:

"I am thinking of the meeting between de Kock and the widows of the two policemen murdered in the Motherwell bombing. Pearly Faku responded to de Kock's apology with the fullness of her humanity, saying, 'I hope that when he sees our tears, he knows that they are not only tears for our husbands, but tears for him as well...I would like to hold him by the hand, and show him that there is a future, and that he can still change.' Her statement of forgiveness was profound. As an invitation to de Kock to turn the page, to come onto the path toward the road of peace, it had no equal that I was aware of on the TRC, nor was I aware of any such gestures made by victims in the

²⁰ This book is a powerful book and has been suggested by others as required reading for South Africans. I can only agree. After reading this book I was confronted with my own duplicity and contribution to the apartheid regime and sought to confess my sins with the best representative of the "other side".

history of atrocities in the twentieth century. Her response surpasses much of what we know about people who have been victimized when their victimizers ask forgiveness. It is hard to resist the conclusion that there must be something divine about forgiveness expressed in the context of tragedy. How else can we understand how such words can flow from the lips of one wronged so irreparably? Archbishop Tutu, whenever we were witnesses to such inexplicable human responses at a public hearing of the TRC, would be driven to call for silence 'because we are on holy ground.' There seems to be something spiritual, even sacramental, about forgiveness – a sign that moves and touches those who are witnesses to its enactment" (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003:94-95)

She is right. There is something divine about forgiveness, and we are on holy ground during these times of confession, repentance and forgiveness. The illustration of fear being overcome and reconciliation happening points directly to the power of personal reconciliation. The spiritual, even sacramental thing about forgiveness is seen in God's power being evident in the life of the individual. This power is available through confession and repentance. Taken to its extreme as an illustration, God is the victim of our sin, our sin abuses God through Jesus Christ. God in turn holds his own TRC meeting, which he presides over, confronts us through, and calls us to explain our actions. God then offers forgiveness to us, again through the same victim of Jesus Christ. When we, as the churches of South Africa, fail to allow people to confess their sins, we silence God as the victim, and make God powerless to work. The church must continue to encourage people to confess their sins, not just privately, but publicly, so that we all can see the power of forgiveness to overcome guilt and fear and to restore the divine with the human.

Paramount to the starting work of reconciliation is the recognition of the individual, and his or her own development. Paul Roy writes in Fink's volume on reconciliation this response to the individual's development in reconciliation, "...we must learn to be independent, autonomous and

interdependent all at the same time. When these three are not real and harmonious in our lives, we experience division and separation, conflict and violence. It is at this point psychologically that we stand in need of reconciliation" (1987:17). We become independent when we allow God to remove the burden of sin from our lives. We become autonomous when we hold ourselves accountable to a better standard that does not allow the same sins to burden us again. We become interdependent when we realize that all this is the work of God done through Jesus Christ for us, and that we in turn become the righteousness of God.

The second step in the work of reconciliation is communal reconciliation. Personal reconciliation is a step towards communal reconciliation. When we have grown up as individuals and have become independent, autonomous and interdependent we are able to focus on communal reconciliation. Hizkias Assefa gives us a clearer understanding of why interdependence leads people to communal reconciliation. "Adulthood is the stage...characterised by interdependence, which develops out of a broader concept of the self and self-interest that is capable of accommodating others. The sense of interdependence is derived from the realisation that life is a process that requires people to coordinate their efforts and work together because individuals can succeed only if others also succeed, and vice-versa" (Assefa, Wachira 1996:45). This is the created purpose for humanity, but sin disrupts this purpose and conflict arises. Reconciliation is the attempt to rectify this situation; reconciliation is the attempt to rediscover the purpose of interdependence. It can be seen as a catch twenty two that one must be interdependent in order to achieve communal reconciliation which develops interdependence. However, one becomes interdependent initially as a desire. This is the result of personal reconciliation with God. This desire results in action which becomes true interdependence – communal reconciliation. Therefore, communal reconciliation is about the reconciliation of groups, either two individuals, but more accurately two or more groups of individuals. Denis Woods, in writing a section in *Alternative Futures for Worship* (Editor

Peter Fink), sees three kinds of group divisions. There are distributive divisions, ideological divisions and structural divisions. Labour strikes and negotiations with management would be an example of distributive division, the abortion debate would be an example of ideological division and slavery would be an example of a structural division (1987:34-35).

Woods argues that distributive division can be reconciled, while ideological and structural division are largely impossible. Distributive division still has common ground where the two parties can talk together. But for ideological divisions "...reconciliation is thought to mean compromise, and there can be no compromise of basic values" (1987:37). Structural division often hides the very fact that there is division by virtue of the structure itself, so the poor in the world do not know of the resources of the rich, but the rich likewise do not even see the plight of the poor. Woods writes, "Not only is there no space where the groups might meet to be reconciled; the mist is so thick that often there is not even a recognition that reconciliation is needed" (1987:37).

While we acknowledge that these divisions do exist the call of the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* is to work for reconciliation in all three areas of division. The churches of South Africa must be working to redistribute the resources in South Africa and the world so that groups have equity. The churches of South Africa must be working to overcome ideological division by administering and sharing the truth of God in those situations. The churches of South Africa must overcome structural division by prophetically pointing out, and where able, breaking down those structures that cause division.

Overcoming distributive division sees the church in a peacemaker role. The church can and should become a mediator for peace. It is a powerful statement to the world and to the church when a church member is given the honour of guiding negotiation talks between disparate parties. This might be as small as a business dispute and a Christian colleague is approached to head up the talks, but it could be as big as two nations arguing over a

boundary line or resource division. The church needs to work hard to gain respect as a just body. This will involve vulnerability and honesty from us in addressing our own divisions, some of which are distributive, but other of which are ideological and structural. Once those divisions are dealt with we can step on to the world stage without guilt or fear and offer a proven road to peace and reconciliation. This is not an easy road to walk. "That we as Christians have to be peacemakers here is very clear (Matt 5:9). But how we make this peace is a serious problem especially when we are part of the problem. It is here that the most bedevilling concept, that of reconciliation, arises" (Nurnberger, Tooke 1988:24). In order for the church to move into the peacemaker role effectively it will need to become leaders in the fields of the social, political and financial fields. Looking back at apartheid South Africa, the church needed to be leaders in the field of social justice and human rights so that it could effectively negotiate peace between those who are oppressed. Sound financial and political thinkers are needed to credibly and successfully redistribute the various resources in South Africa. The church in South Africa can become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* by calling, commissioning and sending people as missionaries into the world to learn these fields. I can draw one such specific example. While working in Johannesburg at a small Methodist Church I was involved in routine hospital visitation. One of the hospital staff was both a qualified psychiatrist and an ordained minister. While not serving in a local church as a minister, the person was set aside by the Methodist Church to serve those in the church in the medical field. Imagine the impact the church would have if it set aside numerous people, whether ordained or not, who would see it as their calling to become leaders in their fields in order to do the work of the church. Sadly, these same people when a part of the church are relegated to positions of helps in the church. Strong business men and women, leaders in the business world, as well as powerful politicians, medical professionals, financial advisors, psychiatrists, psychologists and more are not engaged by the church. I do not mean that the church now uses them to create some volunteer movement (although this is good and worthwhile), but rather that

the church sees the work they are doing as doing the work of the kingdom. The church needs to teach these people the value of their contribution, affirm their contribution and allow for their contribution to be celebrated in the courts and services of the church. As they progress as people in their respective fields the church will become known because of its people, and when conflict arises, these would be the people called upon to bring about reconciliation. The character of these people would quickly come to the fore, as their own personal reconciliation with God, their growth into citizens of the kingdom, and their professionalism in their respective fields shined through the work that they did.

Overcoming ideological division requires the church to allow the truth of God's Word to be tested again and again by the world. Sadly, one of the greatest divisions in the world today is along the ideology of religion, more specifically the Islam-Christian division. We see in regions of the world Christians killing Muslims because of religious differences and Muslims killing Christians because of religious differences. The church is not in a position at first to reconcile these groups. Compromise for these groups truly does mean a compromising of basic values and reconciliation does seem impossible. However, it is only impossible when absolute truth is left out of the picture. God's truth must be allowed to speak, and it must speak in the context of changed lives. As God's Spirit moves among people in the world, the church must look for opportunities to change people's lives. The church must adopt its servant role. Instead of fighting for religious freedom it must seek to serve those it comes in contact with, even if that means serving in the context of a once Christian country becoming a Muslim country. The church must serve even in the context of that service becoming martyrdom. We do not need to fight to preserve any countries boundaries or any political ideology. God's church is not a part of any country or any political ideology, even if that political ideology becomes Christian for a period of time. The saddest fact of Christian history is that when we were "legitimized" by Constantine we put aside the weapons we had fought with and took up the weapons of the

superpower of the day, fighting with swords and spears. Today we continue to fight in the same way, using modern day weapons of warfare. The *ecclesia* of God's Word fought with words of truth, and the challenge of lives so irrevocably changed that they were prepared to die from persecution. The *ecclesia* of God's Word lived with powerful demonstrations of the Holy Spirit that are largely absent today. In God's Word the only sword ever to be raised in defence of the Lordship of Christ was Peter's sword before Jesus' arrest. Jesus says to him in Matthew 26:52-54, "Put your sword back in its place...for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on my Father and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" The *ecclesia* of the *hodos* is called to servanthood. This servanthood will involve death, but it does not involve our using our own strength to win the battle. The message of the Old Testament account of Israel capturing the Promised Land and the message of 2 Corinthians 5 is that God is the initiator, the doer and the completer. It is God who does the work and it is God who uses us. The church today in South Africa must reclaim its servant role. Note that this servant role is not a passive role, neither is it an active avoidance of a struggle for reconciliation. The church fights for truth, the church fights against injustice, the church fights for reconciliation and peace. A country or political ideology may align with the truth, or with the peace of God or with the church's work of reconciliation but in this instance the ideology or country is siding with the work of the church, not the other way around. When the country or ideology moves on the church continues to fight for truth, peace and reconciliation. It does not move on with the ideology or country. This premise is affirmed by Nurnberger and Tooke as they detail out the process for reconciliation. In ten affirmations on the process of reconciliation they develop the methodology of the church. To summarize these ten affirmations the church is affirmed to do the following:

1. The church is compelled to act by God's love

2. The church is to love all people even when taking sides against sin and evil.
3. The church must lead the movement in crossing boundaries to be reconciled at first to other Christians in the disparate groups.
4. The church must seek to listen in order to understand.
5. The church must engage in social action for justice which is therefore a part of reconciliation. Any reconciliation apart from social action for justice is not true reconciliation.
6. The church must stand on the side of the oppressed.
7. The church must not give absolute loyalty to any side but must always stand against sin in any form.
8. The church hopes that God will use it in this way to open the road to peace.
9. The church must pay the costly price for reconciliation.
10. The church must endure in this process for reconciliation.²¹

We can see that affirmation two; three and seven show the call of the church to stand for truth, peace and reconciliation and not for an ideology or country. Affirmation seven is the strongest in proving this point.

"This does not mean that Christians automatically have the right to become instigators of war against the system. They refuse to give their absolute loyalty to any side because it belongs to Christ and his body. Essentially they are not warmakers but peacemakers, and therefore they are very critical against the powers of hostility building up on both sides. It is very clear that all will have to refuse co-optation by the oppressive forces but our solidarity with the poor will

²¹ These ten affirmations are summaries of the National Initiative for Reconciliation taken from Nurnberger and Tooke. The actual affirmations take three pages and rather than recording them word for word here, I have summarized them in my own words. They are however, not my ideas or thoughts and stand here as their suggestions for the process of reconciliation. Details can be found in *The Cost of Reconciliation in South Africa* by Klaus Nurnberger and John Tooke on pages 87-89, 1988.

also have to be critical as their struggle is also not free from sin"
(1988:88).

The church must side with the poor in the struggle but remain objective in its deliverance of the truth. Amos, and indeed many of the prophets, is a good example of this servant role. While speaking out against injustice, Amos himself comes under fire. But his words from the Lord are not biased against any one nation. All nations come under fire and all nations are criticised for their sin. This is the church's role here to. The church works like a servant, teaching the world how to set right ideological conflict in the world. This servant role is costly, and one might argue that it is the natural result of the work of discipleship for the church. John Lamola writing on Peacemaking and Social Change in South Africa: The Challenge of the Church presents the six codified affirmations of the South African Council of Churches. These affirmations were the developments of two conferences held in 1991 and 1992 in South Africa. As a part of these affirmations the...

"...SACC ministers to all and, within a context of political debate and competition, it should proclaim the truth of the gospel without currying favour with any political organisation, party or opinion. While remaining impartial, SACC would actively take sides with justice"
(Lamola 1988:189 – Assefa, Wachira editors).

The church in South Africa must become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* by leading the world in this area of ideological division. The challenge is for the church in South Africa to continue to grow in this area. It must move further to share and teach what it has learnt in the process of the ending of apartheid with the world. This can be done through the key people writing about their experiences. It can go further with key people coming together to develop a strategy for bringing reconciliation in parts of the world where there is significant conflict. This can only happen when the church in South Africa is seen to be a leader in this area. They are indeed leaders in this area. John W. de Gruchy details the role that the church played in the apartheid struggle.

While he details the side of the church in support of liberation, he does not speak about the side of the church that supported apartheid. This causes his historical review to be slightly romanticised, but nonetheless it is a valid account of the church's role, and one that must be emphasised and shared. Firstly, the church was involved in the struggle against apartheid in its early days, including "...the banning of the Christian Institute and its prophetic leader, Beyers Naude..." shortly after the Soweto Riots. This led to a struggle within the South African Council of Churches to discover its role in the apartheid struggle. The SACC sort to achieve two purposes: "...to spearhead the struggle against apartheid and, at the same time, to care for and assist the victims of apartheid" (de Gruchy 1997:20 – Baum and Wells editors). This commitment caused the SACC and other churches to lend support to the resistance movement, to come under persecution from the state and right wing movements including the church. Furthermore, where individuals could not work within the church institution, they became the church through the launching of outside formal bodies like the National Initiative for Reconciliation, African Enterprise and Youth for Christ. The speaking out of various groups through documents like the Kairos Document and the Evangelical Witness was a natural response to the attempts to silence their voices. "Some churches and church activists also played an indispensable role in the various national and regional peace structures, assisted by international ecumenical monitors" (1997:23). They became mediators and monitors. The church moved from its servant role into a prophetic role as it was called to speak the truth both within and without. This is how the church moves into the realm of structural reconciliation.

Overcoming structural division sees the church in its prophetic role. The church must speak out and act against forms of division where any are oppressed. This again involves the church listening to the Holy Spirit as they are guided to see the oppressed and downtrodden. The powerful refrain of the fatherless, alien and widow is our motivating force here. These were the groups highlighted in the Old Testament as deserving of special attention and

deserving special privileges. This is because these were the groups with no power or voice. Deuteronomy 10:17-18 says, "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing." God is their defender, and the *ecclesia* who seek to be like him, must be their defender too. Following on from the steps outlined by de Gruchy above we find that the church must "...remain true and faithful to its prophetic vocation..." (1997:24). De Gruchy suggests that the church must remain true through the use of critical solidarity. In a sense this brings the church back to its challenge above to stand for truth, peace and reconciliation no matter where it finds these values oppressed and broken. It means having solidarity with those seeking justice without being sucked into the new nationalism or ideology of the unity that is forming. The church stands apart speaking God's word wherever it is not being followed. Central to this concept is the need for the church to fight for justice within the reconciliation struggle. Every author reviewed, without exception, argued that justice was central to reconciliation. Any reconciliation that did not examine, call for and work for justice was considered false reconciliation, or cheap reconciliation. This is exactly like Bonhoeffer's call for costly grace. If reconciliation with God was something that was costly, then our reconciliation with others can be no cheaper because the price is the same. We can be reconciled communally only because we are reconciled to God personally first.

South African churches are world leaders in the area of communal reconciliation because they have not just lived through one or two of these divisions above, rather they have lived through a long and arduous division that was distributive, ideological and structural. Not only has the church lived through it, but the church was involved both in destroying this division and in attempting to uphold the division. The church in South Africa has seen both sides of the struggle and they are the best group to understand the cost of

reconciling all these differences. There are many areas of need for this light to shine. This moves us into the area of global reconciliation.

The third step in reconciliation is global reconciliation. We are talking here of common topics of world news, like the war on terror, HIV/AIDS, global conflicts and national struggles. The church in South Africa must begin to speak out in as strong a voice as possible and share the miracle of South Africa. This miracle cannot be emphasised enough. The political handover from an abusive government to a new democratic government without any significant violence *during the handover* is something to be celebrated. More than that, the powerful demonstration of the TRC is a workable and transferable solution to major divisions in the world. The incredible healing of the TRC must be proclaimed in greater ways. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela in writing her book, *A Human Being Died That Night*, heralds with a trumpet the success of this process. However, it must be trumpeted more and more. This is the voice of the South African Church. This is the contribution the South African church can make and this is the work that we can offer the wider church. As we can learn the work of evangelism and discipleship from other churches in other geographical regions, so we can teach the work of reconciliation to these same churches and the world at large.

The Palestine-Israel conflict is one such area where the South African church can shine. This conflict is becoming exactly like the apartheid struggle. It is the church in South Africa that can talk to this struggle the best, not political leaders from the West. These leaders do not come with understanding of both sides and with a view to justice; rather they come with a predetermined point of view and a predefined process towards democracy. Hizkias Assefa gives us a good understanding of why this is doomed to failure. In an article, entitled Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications for Conflict, Governance and Economic Growth in Africa, he shows the dark side of multiparty politics as a solution for democracy in Africa. The high focus on win and lose is okay in "...societies characterised by

a strong measure of social consensus in which the issues of contention are relatively marginal" (Assefa 1996:54). Instead of multiparty processes being seen as a part of peace, "...in societies that have experienced civil war or political violence, multiparty processes such as political campaigns and elections become alternate avenues for conducting war," (1996:55). This is a death knell to any form of political cease fire in this conflict. Instead Assefa suggests a different approach to this political system in his discussion on reconciliation politics. He calls for the community spirit of previously divided societies to be nurtured back to health. "Consensus building and a quest for common ground" (1996:57) must be sought. Utilising "interest negotiation" (1996:57) the parties dialogue with each other. Reconciliation politics sees social healing as of primacy over elections (something that America should heed in its rush to hold elections in Iraq). "...National conventions could be useful instruments..." (1996:57) and a spirit of co-operation rather than competition is sought. South Africa can share their struggle, with both its successes and failures, in an effort to bring these two sides together. The goal is not elections of course, but the goal is something that can be a part of the discussion. Now is a great time for this to happen because of the political hole left by Arafat's death. The South African church must accept this call to lead the world in the arena of reconciliation, not because they have perfected it but because they are called to it. The role of Israelites and Palestinians listening to each others stories, like the TRC process, and seeing the devastations of both of their actions would be a powerful catalyst to peace talks. The growing racial tension in America amongst the Hispanic and African-American minorities and the White Majority need such a process so that this tension can become reconciliation rather than a future catastrophic division. The church speaking out in this way causes it to become a missionary church. South African churches should be training up missionaries for reconciliation within its ranks so that they can be sent out into the world, the political, financial, social, medical, business world to declare the great work of God. In this way, as reconciliation is worked towards, the truth of all three reconciliations becomes clear. These forms of reconciliation become

evangelism. We have said much on evangelism already, but suffice it to say that reconciliation is not a work unto itself. The three works are not logical steps moving the church to complete one and then move to the next, but rather they are messily intertwined each building on the last and supporting the next. Reconciliation in its final stages, whether personal, communal or global, leads the church back to evangelism. So in personal reconciliation the gospel to the individual can be given as a means to dealing with sin, while in communal reconciliation the gospel can be shared not as a starting point but as a conclusion and global reconciliation calls the world back to the reality of sin and its consequences for humanity. Jesus no longer is seen as a personal Saviour but now becomes the Saviour of the world.

The revolution of the church in the work of reconciliation requires a commitment to become confessors in personal reconciliation, peacemakers, servants and prophets in communal reconciliation and missionaries in global reconciliation. In this way the churches of South Africa become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*.

Conclusion: The Role of the Ecclesia of the Hodos in extending the Basileia tou Theou."

We can now come to our thesis and answer it conclusively. What is the role of the local church in extending the kingdom of God?

We have discussed and proven that the *basileia tou Theou* exists wherever the Triune God is worshipped as Lord. This existence spans both time and space but is seen in the worship of the lives of the citizens of the *basileia tou Theou* and as such can be found wherever the citizens of the *basileia tou Theou* are to be found. The *basileia tou Theou* spans both time and space but also has a specific locale. This locale is the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*. The *hodos* is the present aspect of the *basileia tou Theou* and the *ecclesia* is the visible aspect of the *basileia tou Theou*.

As God summons the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* to fulfil a specific work we discover that the nature of worshipping the Triune God is to fulfil three main works, the work of evangelism, the work of discipleship and the work of reconciliation. This is revolutionary work for the church in order for it to become the *ecclesia* of the *hodos*. This work is how it extends the *basileia tou Theou*. This work is how the church becomes the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* and so also becomes and extends the *basileia tou Theou*.

For South African churches to become *ecclesia* of the *hodos* they should first fulfil the actions of prayer, listening, researching and acting in the work of evangelism. Secondly, they should return to God's Word, implement a clear, intentional process of discipleship that includes accountability in the work of discipleship. Finally, they should commit to acting out personal, communal and global reconciliation in the work of reconciliation.

In this way, South African churches fulfil a revolutionary process that takes them from being churches to being the *ecclesia* of the *hodos* extending the *Basileia tou Theou*."