ETHNICITY AND MISSIONAL STRATEGIES WITHIN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NIGERIA

By

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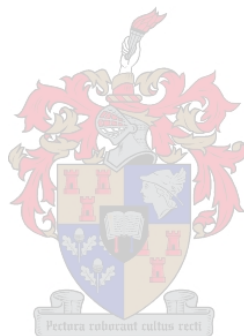
Promoter:

Professor H. J. Hendriks

December 2006

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: ………………………………

Date: ………………………………..

ABSTRACT

This study and dissertation examines "Ethnicity and missional strategies within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria." A historical study of the mission methods and an empirical study of current missionary practices in the church point to the need for a new missional identity of the church. This missional identity requires a reversal of and a change to missionary strategies that should result into reconciliatory missiology.

In the process of making this assessment of the Presbyterian mission in Nigeria, it was necessary to re-visit the missionary ecclesiologies that shaped and contributed to the present identity. Thus, the research focused on the missionary impact of the Church of Scotland, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC). Insights from these historical excursions helped in determining not only the blessings that these ecclesiologies brought to bear on Nigerian Presbyterianism but also in discovering the burdens they brought on their trails, especially, regarding the seed of racism which was a precursor to the present ethnocentrism in the PCN.

The second segment of this research was the empirical study of the current mission and work of the PCN. Using a *focus group* approach, sixteen leaders (8 Nigerians, 7 Canadians and 1 American) were interviewed through a structured questionnaire. The responses from these leaders were analysed in this paper and details of the analysis applied in chapter 4. The assumption in the hypothesis that the bane of contemporary PCN mission is ethnocentrism was affirmed. This problem as the research showed, was compounded by lack of adequate theological response both in the educational training and the liturgical activities of the church.

Combining the historical data and the empirical research carried out, it was determined that the PCN needs a new theological orientation that can move it from the present institutionalized mode to a missonal frame. It was shown that this process would require a new definition of mission and a rediscovery of missional biblical metaphors that suit a conflict-ridden context of the Church as we have it in Nigeria. Three important metaphors were selected: community, servant and messenger. These metaphors formed the theological foundation for subsequent discussions on a missional frame which is the focus of chapter five.

Chapter six outlines the meaning of conflicts and the causes of conflicts in Nigeria arguing for a reconciliatory missiology with a theologically-driven dialogue as its strategy. A theologically –driven dialogue is a strategy that, as is presented, enables the church to be God's counter-cultural agent in the world, holding in tension the four cardinal points of obedience, critical contextualization, discernment and the anticipation of Christ's return. It is argued that dialogue is a credible theological option through which the PCN can engage in the process of true reconciliation in the Nigerian society – a reconciliation which is based on the biblical cornerstones of truth, justice, peace and mercy. It is a task and a challenge for reconciliatory missiology - a momentous task the PCN is called upon to pursue in the 21st century.
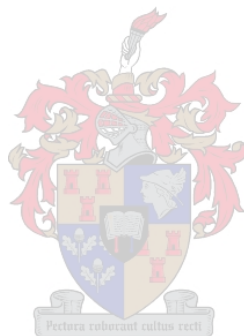
OPSOMMING

Hierdie proefskrif ondersoek "Etnisiteit en missionale strategieë van die Presbiteriaanse Kerk in Nigerië". 'n Historiese blik op die sending metodes en 'n studie van huidige missionêre praktyke binne die kerk dui daarop dat die kerk 'n nuwe missionale identiteit benodig. 'n Nuwe missionale identiteit vereis 'n transformasieproses in die huidige benadering van die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië sodat die weg tot 'n versoenende benadering gevind kan word.

Om die huidige situasie te kan evalueer moes die missionêre ekklesiologie wat vorm gegee en bygedra het tot die huidige identiteit geëvalueer word. Gevolglik is die missionêre impak van die Kerk van Skotland, die Presbiteriaanse Kerke van Kanada en Amerika en die Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk nagegaan. Hulle het in baie opsigte help vorm aan die huidige identiteit van die Presbiteriaanse kerk in Nigerië. Die positiewe maar ook negatiewe gevolge van hulle werk is beskryf. Een aspek van hul werk was die invloed van die stille rassisme wat destyds geheers het en wat die voorloper was van die huidige etnosentrisme in die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië.

Die tweede deel van die navorsing ondersoek die huidige missionêre bediening en ingesteldheid van die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië. Deur middel van 'n fokus groep benadering en 'n vraelys, is onderhoude gevoer met 16 kerkleiers (8 Nigeriërs, 7 Kanadese en 1 Amerikaner). Die antwoorde van hierdie kerkleiers is geanaliseer en in hoofstuk 4 bespreek. Die voorveronderstelling in die hipotese dat die PKN etnosentrisme openbaar, is bevestig. Hierdie probleem, soos aangetoon in die navorsing, is versterk deur 'n gebrek aan voldoende teologiese refleksie in die teologiese onderrig en in die liturgiese aktiwiteite van die kerk.

Die historiese data en die empiriese navorsing toon aan dat die PKN 'n nuwe teologiese oriëntasie benodig en dat dit slegs kan geskied as daar wegbeweeg word vanaf die huidige geïnstitusionaliseerde bedieningspraktyk na 'n missionale raamwerk. Verder het dit duidelik geword dat 'n nuwe verstaan van sending en 'n herontdekking van missionale bybelse metafore nodig is om te spreek tot die konflik geteisterde konteks van die kerk in Nigerië. Drie belangrike metafore is voorgestel: gemeenskap, dienaar en boodskapper. Hierdie metafore voorsien die teologiese fundering vir die bespreking van 'n missionale verwysingsraamwerk vir die kerk se bediening.

Hoofstuk 6 lig die betekenis van konflik asook die oorsake van konflik in Nigerië uit en argumenteer vir 'n versoenende missiologie met 'n teologies-gemotiveerde dialoog as strategie. 'n Teologies-gemotiveerde dialoog is 'n strategie wat, soos voorgelê in die navorsing, die kerk bemagtig om te reageer op die heersende kultuur, waar die vier kardinale aspekte van gehoorsaamheid, kritiese kontekstualisasie, onderskeiding en die afwagting van Christus se wederkoms byeen gebring word. Daar word geargumenteer dat dialoog 'n waardige teologiese opsie is waardeur die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië binne die Nigeriese samelewing kan opereer in 'n proses van ware versoening – 'n versoening wat gebaseer is op die bybelse hoekstene van waarheid, geregtigheid, vrede en genade. Die uitdaging van 'n versoenende missiologie is die uitdaging waartoe die Presbiteriaanse Kerk van Nigerië in die 21ste eeu geroepe is.
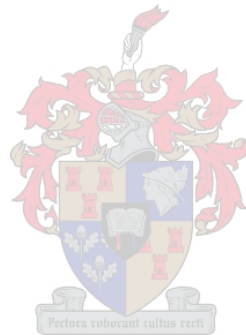
DEDICATION

This dissertation is posthumously dedicated to the loving memory of
my grandmother- late Madam Hannah Omu Osonwa Eke (*nee* Acha)
who taught me that
"To be is to be human and to be human is to be humane!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To start with, I thank the Almighty God for giving me the undying determination, priceless health and the immeasurable grace to undertake and complete this work. Secondly, I would like to register my profound gratitude to the following officers of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria: The Very Rev. Dr. Mba Idika (immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly with whom I spent my last four years in office as the Principal Clerk), the Rev. Dr. Benebo Fubara Fubara-Manuel (my successor in office), and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Ubon B Usung (incumbent Moderator of the Church) for their interest and encouragement which made this study a realised dream.

My profound gratitude also goes to the mission partners of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria: The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC), Presbyterian Church (USA), and Church of Scotland for providing the scholarship and funding for the Masters and Doctoral programmes at the University of Stellenbosch from September 2002 to December 2006. I want to thank particularly The Rev. Richard W. Fee and Ron Wallace of the PCC who consistently gave me unwavering support and constantly renewed my confidence in a process that at times tested me. To the archivists, (Kim Arnold and Bob Anger) and all the staff in the General Assembly Office in Toronto, I say thank you and God bless you all!

Professor H. Jurgens Hendriks, Chair: Department of Practical Theology and Missiology who supervised this dissertation deserves thanks that words cannot adequately express. He was more of a senior brother than an academic supervisor to me during the course of the study. His astute academic mind, unreserved commitment to scholarship as a vocation coupled with his extravagant compliments when the academic journey got tougher, all helped in guiding, shaping and inspiring me to this point. All I can say is a big THANK YOU!

The Faculty of Theology was an environment conducive for my studies because there were people there to provide the necessary leadership. In this connection, I salute the immediate past Dean (Prof. Daniel Louw) and the incumbent (Prof. Elna Mouton) for their sterling leadership qualities that have made the Faculty a challenging and an exciting academic community. I am also grateful to all the tutorial and non-tutorial staff of the Faculty of Theology for the various ways they supported me in this academic journey. Together with them is the team of workers in the International Office who, under the

leadership of Mr. Robert Kotze, immensely encouraged my entire family during our academic sojourn here in Stellenbosch.

I also wish to name a few people who have been essential in my overall intellectual development throughout the past 20 years. Their work and thinking are, in many ways, reflected in the pages of this dissertation. The interpretation of their works nevertheless remains my exclusive responsibility. They are: Rev Prof E M Uka, Prof. Ogbu U Kalu, and Prof Kwame Bediako. I consider myself highly privileged to have known this exceptional generation of intellectuals who, while keeping the necessary distance between theory and practice, are committed to both understanding the mission and the changing face of the Church in the African continent.

I want to thank my family, the main source of my social and moral strength. First, thank you to my wife, Ijeoma Esther Onwunta, for her support, love, intelligence and patience in the midst of strenuous periods for both of us. She always encouraged me to focus on the task at hand despite discouragements. I really want to reiterate my personal debt to her, for putting up with this demanding work on my doctorate, being at the same time a wife, mother and student throughout the period of studies in Stellenbosch. Our children: Chinomso, Chima and Kelechi, who coped exceptionally with all the pressures during these years to support me while pursuing their studies under the cold winter and hot summer of Stellenbosch. Also very supportive, was my youngest brother, Akwum, who never stopped being my critical consciousness with his passion for mathematical sciences. And last, but not the least, my late grandmother to whom this work is posthumously dedicated and from whom I learnt that 'to be is to be human and to be human is to be humane!'

Finally, I wish to express my deep and genuine joy at the interest generated by this academic endeavour in Nigeria and beyond, not only in the church circles but among people in the larger society. I know this is particularly so because of the critical importance of the issues I have tried to engage: we are in a new generation, and we need a new understanding of who we are and ought to be. To be able to contribute, in all modesty, to the process of developing such understanding is my only ambition. And as long as God gives me the strength, this will remain the real motivation of all my intellectual or academic pursuits in the future.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria
CUSO	Canadian University Students Overseas
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
GNB	Good News Bible
LXX	The Septuagint - the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures
MAMSER	Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic and Recovery.
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
NASV	New American Standard Version
NDVF	Niger Delta Volunteer Force
NRC	Netherlands Reformed Church
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
OPC	Oodua Peoples' Congress
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Canada
PCN	The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church (USA)
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WARC	World Alliance of Reformed Churches
WCC	World Council of Churches

MAPS

Fig.1 Map of the Federal Republic of Nigeria showing the 36 States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (taken from the Website of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).
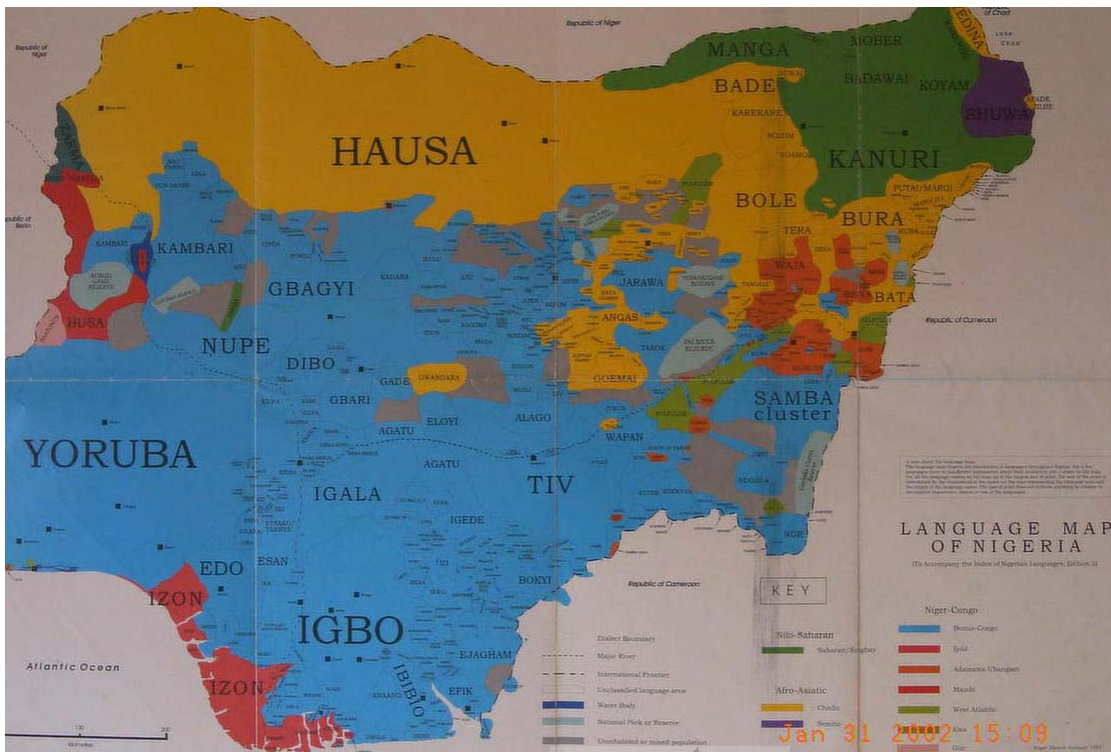
Fig. 2. Language Map of Nigeria (Blench 1993)

The three main national languages as spoken in the regions of Nigeria – Hausa/Fulani in the North, Yoruba in the West and (South-West), and Igbo in the East (and South-East) – are geo-linguistically represented in the map above.

CHAPTER ONE   RESEARCH FOCUS AND OUTLINE
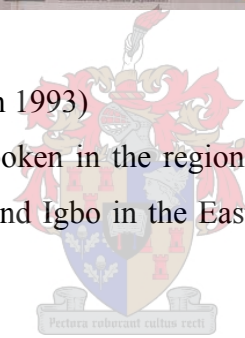
1.1   THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

"Ethnicity and missional strategies within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria."

1.1.1   Introduction

On April 10 1846**,** the Scottish missionaries landed on the shores of Old Calabar to sow the seed of Presbyterianism in Nigeria**.** The mission was concentrated on two ethnic groups – the Efik/Ibibio and the Ibo who have continued to see themselves as rivals in the Church. The rivalry which is often fuelled by ethnic sentiments and loyalty, has dominated the life of the Church producing a false sense of Christian identity among the membership. The situation till today is that many of us (Nigerian Presbyterians) have forgotten that "the basis of a Christian's self-identity is essentially religious, not national, social, or cultural in the narrow sense" (Bediako 2001:4). Yet, we tend to have allowed ethnicism or ethnic conceit to become the most dreadful virus to threaten the entire life of this Christian community in Nigeria. Evidently, its attack has been so pervasive and the effect so corrosive that there is now a clear correlation between it and lack of true progress even in the nation. In a 1999 article for *Nigeriaworld,* Dr. Femi Ajayi maintains that "lack of national cohesion or unity and the slow pace of development in Nigeria are reflections of the impact of ethnicity and religion on the political division in the country."[1] As if there is a conspiracy of silence on the overwhelming impact of the problem in our ecclesiastical polity, Enyi Ben Udoh in *Guest Christology* acutely observes that "we seldom call it by its name in our meetings except to justify a decision or a certain course of action which is itself ethnic in nature" (Udoh 1988:272). For instance, we had long felt the need to have one strong and viable theological institution − not only for sound theological and ministerial training but also for prudent economic reasons. But we are unwilling to allow this sound judgment to prevail because none of the two ethnic groups would want to "sacrifice" the institution located within its own area. So we continue running two unviable institutions under stressful human and financial conditions. We prefer sacrificing truth and sound judgment on the altar of ethnic interests. And never has the problem been so glaring in and threatening to the corporate existence of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria as in the election of

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[1] See Femi Ajayi, "Sharia Law and Nigeria Unity," *Nigeriaworld,* 23 October 1999, http://www.nigeriaworld.com/feature/publication/ajayi/sharia.html (accessed 22/06/2006).

the incumbent Principal Clerk of the General Assembly in August, 2002[2]. This was an election that heightened the ethnic temperature of the Church to the point where it took more than six hours for the Assembly to regain its cool for the normal business proceedings to run. Ethnic hostility even in so-called Presbyterian communities is a common feature today. Church members take up arms against fellow church members and even kill one another over land and chieftaincy issues. We brazenly negate the testimony of the Scripture that "He himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility… And His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity…, thus making peace, and in this body to reconcile both of them to God through the Cross by which He put to death their hostility (Ephesians 2:14-16)". Thus, in the country with more than 250 ethnic groups, our ethnicism has fanned the embers of our national disunity, hindering the mission of the Church and making the Church a countersign rather than a sign of the kingdom of God. Fundamentally, this questions the contextual relevance of our theology of mission. The penetrating comment and question of the Dutch missiologist, Johannes Verkuyl (1978:277), about African theology can be applied to the Nigerian situation:

> African theology does all the things which theology in general does, but in African theology all these other functions are embraced in the missionary or communicative function. It is not primarily an intra-ecclesiastical exercise, but a discipline whose practitioners keep one question central: How can we best do our theology so that the gospel will touch Africans (in this case, Nigerians) most deeply?
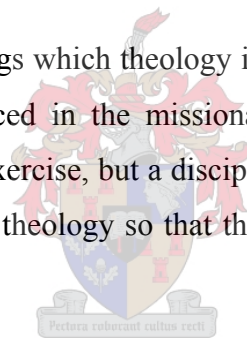
To do justice to Verkuyl's probing question will definitely require a new missiological thinking and a paradigm shift from that inherited from the 19th century Enlightenment–infested worldview. In this respect, we would echo Robert Schreiter's (1992:64, 69) crucial and fundamental reflective question for mission and theology posed in the book *Reconciliation*:

> Can the Church be a Minister of Reconciliation?...Under what circumstances may the church exercise such a ministry? …Just what concrete forms does the ministry of reconciliation take?

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[2] Prior to this time, all the Principal Clerks (or Synod Clerks as they were formerly called) had either been Efik/Ibibio or Ibo members. This was the first time a member from outside the dominant groups was being elected to this highest administrative office in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. It was indeed a paradigm shift from the status quo and an historical landmark in the annals of Nigerian Presbyterianism.

1.1.2   Problem Identification

In the light of the above introduction, the following questions help to focus the research programme:

a) What is the correlation between ethnicity and the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria?

b) Considering the violent tensions and destructive conflicts among the various ethnic groups even in the Church, how can the PCN witness to the gospel in ways that incarnate the life and love of Christ in the Nigerian society?

c) How can a theologically-driven dialogue[3] become an intentional practical theological strategy for a new missional praxis[4], particularly, of reconciliatory missiology in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

1.2   HYPOTHESIS

In order for the Presbyterian Church to recover its missional identity[5] and be a truly reconciling agent among the various ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, there is a need for a theologically-driven and hermeneutically sensitive dialogue as a strategy for mission. In other words, if the Church can faithfully and courageously engage in this process – drawing from the rich resources of Scripture, tradition, the wider ecumenical and academic faith-based institutions – the PCN can be an instrument of truth, justice, peace and mercy. Again, if the PCN can discover the value of a theologically-driven dialogue and use it in mission, it will make the Church perform its social function as the metaphorical

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[3] This process, as Stanley J. Samartha (1981) has also observed, is a call to overcome "the fear of losing one's identity, of being shaken in one's comfortable beliefs, of being confronted with and perhaps compelled to acknowledge the truth in another camp, of recognizing that the stranger at the gate might turn out to be a fellow pilgrim".

[4] Praxis" has often been confused with "practice" which simply is action. According to Kritzinger (2002:149) praxis here refers to "action which is collective, transformative, and that integrates thinking and acting, praying and working". This is well explained by his five-point "praxis cycle" of involvement, context analysis, theological reflection, spirituality and planning.

[5] Henk de Roest in the book, *Communicative Identity* (1998) proposes a practical theology approach in which the issue of common identity can be considered as a process where each of the members of a collective should be involved and in which matters are settled by arguments (discourse). In this regard, he has identified three types of discourse, namely, theoretical, normative-practical, and translational which should center on what he calls "communicative rationality" to form "a communicative identity". The dialogical nature of his argument is considered to be relevant in developing a new missional identity in the context of the PCN.

"salt of the earth" and also be a sign of the kingdom of God in Nigeria. David Tracey (1990:95), echoed this when he opined that

> even my willingness to enter *into dialogue* (italics mine) is, for me, a result of two-fold commitment: a faith commitment to love of God and neighbour – the heart of Christianity in that command and empowerment of God decisively manifested in Jesus Christ; and an ethical commitment to the honorable meaning of what genuine dialogue is.

And if one may ask: what is the meaning of genuine dialogue if not living in community? Also, is it not because of this fact that we speak of community and communion in the Trinity [6] – two experiences we cannot escape from if we truly bear the *imago Dei*?

1.3   THE GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

The goal in this research is to investigate the impact of ethnicity on the overall mission of the PCN and to establish as a strategy, the use of dialogue in a theologically-driven process that enables the Church (the PCN) to address the endemic ethnic conflicts within her membership in particular and among other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. In this regard, African perspectives and reflection will play a decisive role so that genuine reconciliation and community that bear the marks of truth, justice, peace and mercy may become manifest in her witness to the gospel.

1.4   MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

The story of my life and experiences as a **Nigerian Presbyterian** of Ibo extraction is part of my motivation for this research. Born to Presbyterian parents, I grew up as a Presbyterian and have remained so till now. But I also discover that part of my history is that while my maternal grandparents lived and died as avowed Presbyterians, my paternal grandparents were traditional religionists who never belonged to any strand of the Christian faith. My paternal grandfather was a famous traditional healer who, at death, bequeathed the ancestral professional legacy to my kinsmen some of whom have

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[6] This idea is explained in chapter six of the dissertation where dialogue is treated as an essential part of the Triune God.

remained active practitioners to this day . It has therefore been a very challenging but rewarding learning process living out my Christian life between the people of these two traditions.

Furthermore, when I received the call to the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, I was privileged to train in an ecumenical seminary that had been jointly owned and administered by the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians from 1948 till 2001 (when the Anglicans chose to oust their partners in a very unchristian manner). Being in this school was really a formative experience / a learning curve for me, not only in terms of the sound theological training it offered but also because of the privilege of knowing and interacting with Presbyterians and Christians other than those of Ibo origin. These interactions, though, were never devoid of ethnic biases and colorations. I still remember how, after settling our inter-denominational conflicts with others, we would come back to have our own intra-denominational conflicts as Efik and Ibo Presbyterians in the seminary. The memories of the seminary days are still too fresh for me to forget especially as I reminiscence on many of the confidence-destroying conflicts in the college community. It is also heartwarming to recollect that my modest reconciliatory efforts as a student leader did yield some social dividends in the seminary community. In the end, those experiences became great eye-openers as I was then able to discover not only the *power* of dialogue but also the *promise* it holds for the larger contexts of the Church and society.
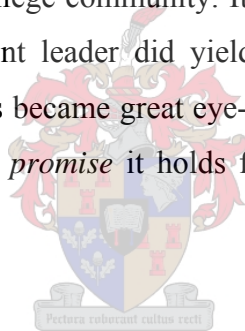
Another motivation for this research came from my two years of participation in the peacemaking itineration under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (USA). This contributed immensely to my exposure to the daunting challenge of mission as reconciliation. Furthermore, the exposure strengthened my commitment to the use of dialogue as a hermeneutical process in communicating the gospel today. Through the process of dialogue, I have experimented and experienced the efficacy of Scriptures in reconciliation in many conflictive moments − especially when I was the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and a representative of other ecumenical bodies in the country.

The theological supposition of this study therefore is that God is a reconciling God. The introduction of such a theological principle is connected to a very specific God-image: God's initiative in reconciling the world through the cross of Christ. Mission should therefore proceed from a thorough understanding of a

theologia crucis. Furthermore, mission should be an instrument of and a vehicle for conveying truth, justice, peace and mercy within a context where division, disunity and brokenness reign. Missional theology which operates from an eschatological perspective should foster reconciliation, which was the core of Old Testament prophetic vision and the heart of the New Testament proclamation!

This research, as it were, is part of the quest for authentic selfhood of all persons. In a true sense, I cannot really discover my personhood unless through others, for the concern of others is at the same time my own. I am because others are. The Ibo would say "*umunna wu ike*", which literally means, "one's strength derives from the strength of the kinsmen." The fact that I am and yet I am not sets up a dialectic for me. It is so because other lives have become the underlying means by which I can fully understand myself. This is a fundamental motivational factor in this research.

This project also derives motivation from the fact that mission is God's main business and mission is both relevant and possible today. It is common knowledge that the Church is the only institution in the world that does business with God as the Principal Partner. Our argument in this dissertation is to help the Church to know how to realise this mission in every given context. It is in a way making mission, which is God's heartbeat, audible and credible − especially in our contemporary Nigerian context which is complicatedly diverse in language, religion, politics, culture and ideology. Effective mission, therefore, means cooperation with people from within and outside the Church's membership. This also means building bridges of dynamic relationships through dialogue.

The fact that dialogue in recent decades has already helped all three branches of Christianity − Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant - break down walls of fear and prejudice and move closer to one another, provides great motivation for this work. Dialogues between Protestants of different persuasions have led to church mergers and to the creation of interdenominational councils. Through dialogue, both the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (Protestant and Orthodox) have developed a more positive attitude toward people of other religious traditions. Even recently, the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World have been able to bury old hatchets and reopen relationships because of dialogue[7]. It is possible that through creative dialogue, a new global family

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[7] The document, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* issued in 1999 by the Roman Catholic Church and Lutheran World Federation after many years of acrimony and bitterness, attests not only to the power and promise of dialogue but also indicates a new vista in the 21st century mission and ecclesiology.

can emerge. And through dialogue, the PCN can experiment, experience and have a foretaste of what is a global dream!

1.5   PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

Ethnicity and ethnic diversity are issues not only in Nigeria but also virtually everywhere in the world. While such issues are more pronounced in the political arena, the Church is not exempt. Differences could be cause for a celebration of our diversity within a common humanity. On the contrary, however, the bane of our situation, in Nigeria especially, is that ethnicity has been manipulated to produce enduring envy and hatred, and a monumental backwardness in the Church's mission and body politic.. This is why dialogue is being proposed as a more creative and productive way of solving the problem.

In this regard, the product of this research is expected to be a resource for the leadership and membership of the Church and many other individuals and groups who are concerned about ethnicity in the Church and other institutions in Nigeria. It is expected to help Nigerian Presbyterians to learn from their history and tradition, change from being local ethnic champions to humble servants of Christ, and be better positioned to deal with the reality, problems and challenges of ethnicity using dialogue in ways that are both Scripture-rooted and mission-enhancing.

Furthermore, the research will help us to explore and recover the socio-ethical value of the Igbo concept of *Umunna wu ike (*meaning a person's strength derives from that of the kinsmen) or the South African equivalent, *umunthu ngumunthu ngabanthu*[8] (a person is a person because of people, or, a person is a person through other persons) as a missiological motif in the Church's task of inculturating the gospel in Africa. Additionally, by revisiting the concept of community, we would both be affirming that which is core to the Christian concept of the Trinity and also recapturing a dialogical category for conflict resolution and communal harmony in traditional African society. The concept of community can help today's Church in realizing the basic elements of the kingdom of God on earth particularly in a nation like Nigeria – a nation that is in dire need of corporate self-understanding and peaceful co-existence.

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[8] This is a socio-ethical and religious belief in Africa which holds that life is not primarily for the individual but for the community of which the individual is a part. Being human therefore, implies participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, and the festivals of the community which is itself a religious entity.

Finally, I hope that this work will contribute to the modest effort of the Faculty of Theology in forging a new social framework for creative interactions and dynamic relationships among people of different colours, languages and intellectual persuasions at Stellenbosch University, the nascent democratic South Africa, and beyond.

1.6   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Any serious examination of the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria must pay close attention to, and also take into account the historical context in which it has developed and is still developing. In addition, the method of critical reflection and analysis must be employed to understand the dynamics of ethnicity in the life and mission of the church and to argue the hypothesis in this research.

- In this project, a **practical-theological** method of research will draw from available **relevant literature**, **interviews and cognate experiences**. There are ample literature materials on mission, ethnicity and dialogue to facilitate the research process.

- Furthermore, the interaction of *theory* and *praxis* which makes a **practical theological approach** to mission a hermeneutical approach will be explored. The research follows this method in order to show that a theologically-driven dialogue is an imperative for contextual mission and theology in Nigeria. Hendriks (2004:19) has described this approach as "a hermeneutical concern that does exegesis of both the Word and the world and discerns how the Word should be proclaimed in word and deed in the world". He expatiates on this approach by saying theology is about:

❖ "The missional praxis of the triune **God**, Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and

❖ About God's body, an apostolic faith community (**the Church**)

❖ At a specific time and place within globalized world (**a wider contextual situation**),

❖ Where members of this community are involved in a vocationally based, critical and constructive interpretation of their present reality (**local analysis**)

❖ Drawing upon an interpretation of the normative sources of **Scripture and tradition**,

❖ Struggling to **discern God's will** for their present situation (a critical

 correlational hermeneutic),

- ❖ To be a sign of God's kingdom on earth while moving forward with an eschatological faith-based reality in view (that will lead to **a vision** and **a mission** statement)
- ❖ While obediently participating in transformative action at different levels: personal, ecclesial, societal, ecological and scientific (a doing, liberating, transformative theology that leads to **a strategy**, **implementation** and an **evaluation** of progress)."

By way of summary, we can say that:

The first two points deal with identity.

The third and fourth points are dealing with the local context.

The fifth point summarizes our heritage - Scripture, tradition, and our systematic theology and church history.

The sixth point describes the research process, the course of listening to God and to one another: dialogue! It is where all the points mentioned are brought to the equation of discernment.

The seventh point is the goal towards which we are heading: the Kingdom of God.

The eighth point describes the process and strategy through which the goals are to be reached.

It needs to be pointed out here that only relevant aspects of this methodology are applied in the ensuing chapters of this research where the issues are given in-depth treatment.
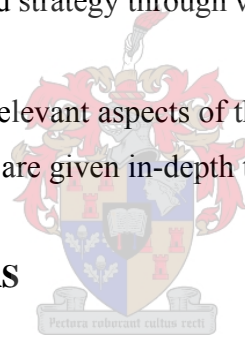
1.7   OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 2: Presbyterianism in Nigeria

This chapter tells the story of the founding of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Through a missiological narrative, the DNA structure of the church will surface. The chapter proceeds under the following subheadings:

- The soil,
- The source,
- The streams,
- The successes and the struggles.

Chapter 3: Ethnicity as experienced in Church and Nigerian society

The chapter analyzes the concept of ethnicity. It also overviews the anthropological and theological discourses on the subject and brings them to bear on the Nigerian context. In terms of our theological methodology, it falls under **identity**. We believe that the identity of the church is missional in its very

nature and being. When a church loses that sense of mission in its nature and identity, it becomes captive to the socio-cultural trappings (e.g. ethnocentrism) of its environment. Only a radical misssional ecclesiology marked by a theologically-driven dialogue can reverse this trend. This is what is proposed and developed in chapter five.

The discussion and analysis of ethnicity in this chapter three will be dealt with under the following provisional subheadings:

➢ The concepts of ethnicity and identity
➢ Anthropological and theological reflections
➢ The Bible and ethnicity
➢ Ethnicity and the Reformers
➢ Ethnic groups in Nigeria– theoretical reflections
➢ Ethnic consciousness and tensions in Nigeria
➢ Ethnic stereotyping/prejudice in Nigeria
➢ Preliminary conclusion

Chapter 4: **Ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria: the results of the empirical research**

This chapter identifies the issues from the research findings, summarizes them and raises the question as to how the PCN could develop appropriate missional theology to address the problem of ethnocentrism in its life and mission in Nigeria.

Chapter 5: The interplay between missiology and ecclesiology with a focus on developing a missional ecclesiology in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria

Today, "Mission" has become public property requiring a discussion much wider than the ecclesial communities. The chapter will take a cursory look at this situation, and the research will explore the ecclesial nature of mission and the missional mandate in ecclesiology. It is common knowledge that the interplay between mission and ecclesiology raises a number of issues and questions in terms of mission history. In this chapter, the theory and praxis of Mission will therefore be analyzed and discussed. An effort will be made to identify the implications of the whole scenario for mission in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Our methodology deals with systematic theology and draws from **Scripture** and **Tradition**.

This chapter is examined under the following subheadings:

- ➢ The understanding of Church within a practical theological ecclesiology
- ➢ Praxis and practice- a practical theological approach
- ➢ Ecclesiology and missiology
- ➢ Four concepts in mission
- ➢ Motives for and motifs of mission
- ➢ Historical models of the church
- ➢ Church, mission, and the kingdom of God
- ➢ The metaphors of community, servant and messenger
- ➢ Preliminary conclusion.

Chapter 6: A definition and examination of dialogue as a strategy in conflict resolution and reconciliatory missiology in Nigeria

The main task in this chapter is to show that any serious ecclesiology in contemporary missionary enterprise should be able to understand the nature of conflicts and the indispensability of dialogue as a correlational hermeneutic[9] for contextualization and inculturation − especially in Africa. To this end, the research has considered various perspectives of conflict theories including the theological assessment of the phenomenon of conflict. Using the resources of Scripture, this chapter will critically evaluate the contributions to this subject of the ecumenical bodies like the World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and other faith-based institutions.

According to our theological method, this chapter falls under **discerning God's will for our present situation.** Dialogue as a missional strategy unfolds in this chapter. Examining different perspectives on conflict and dialogue in mission, it discusses the following:

- ➢ Conflict perspectives
- ➢ Theological understanding of conflict
- ➢ Causes of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria
- ➢ Dialogue: a definition
- ➢ Different Christian approaches to dialogue
- ➢ Why the PCN needs intercultural dialogue in its missional praxis
- ➢ Motivations for dialogue
- ➢ Forms of dialogue
- ➢ PCN as a model of a missional church in dialogue

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[9] A correlational-hermeneutic is an approach to theology and mission that correlates or compares various perspectives and initiates a dialogue between them. See Hendriks (2004:21).

➤ Preliminary conclusion

Chapter 7: Summary of arguments, findings and recommendations

The chapter presents the summary of the arguments, the findings and the recommendations of the study. It shows that a theologically-driven dialogue should lead to peaceful coexistence in human society with manifest evidence of reconciliation[10], taking us from where we were to a new place of **truth**, **justice**, **peace** and **mercy.** The Church as a faith community thereby becomes *a sign of the kingdom of God on earth, while moving forward with an eschatological faith-based reality in view (that will lead to a vision statement) and obediently participating in transformative action at different levels: personal, ecclesial, societal, ecological and scientific (a doing, liberating, transformative theology that leads to strategy, implementation and evaluation of progress)* (Hendriks 2004:19).

The chapter will be considered under the following:
➤ Summary of arguments and findings
➤ The Christian message of reconciliation
➤ The Church and the ministry of reconciliation
  ▪ PCN as a listening Church
  ▪ PCN as a thinking Church
  ▪ PCN as a doing Church
➤ The Church's resources for reconciliation and guidelines for reconciliatory missiology.

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[10] The term has become a heavily loaded idea today with different nuances. The research will be looking mainly at Schreiter (1992), Bosch (1991) and Uzukwu (1996) because of the relevance of their works in the process of inculturating the gospel in Africa.

CHAPTER TWO   PRESBYTERIANISM IN NIGERIA –THE SOIL, SOURCE, STREAMS AND STRUGGLES

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Before any meaningful discussion on the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria can take place, it is necessary to provide a brief historical background of the PCN, focusing on the past heritage which has shaped its present identity. Thus, the soil (context), source (Scotland), streams (other partner churches), and the struggles that have been part of the missionary enterprise will be discussed in this chapter so as to formulate a point of departure for addressing the problem presented in this dissertation.

The chapter heading is based on the following four principles: First, every mission and theology is done in context; the context is the soil into which the seed is planted. In this case, Nigeria is the soil in which Presbyterianism was planted in the nineteenth century.

Secondly, Presbyterian ministry in Nigeria, like any other mission, has its source − an origin traceable to the dream and vision of some African Diaspora who, by the cruelty and social upheaval of slavery in human history, had become tenants in the plantations of Jamaica[11]. Having received the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the plantation chaplains, they pleaded that this message be extended to Africa − the stone from which they had been hewn. But the chaplains were only representatives of the slave-masters to whom this call must go, and without their approval no concrete action could take place. Scotland, being the proverbial 'hand that had the mission yam and knife giving a share to whoever it wills', eventually became the source and originator of the Nigerian Presbyterian mission in 1846. Since then, the flow has flourished.

Thirdly, this chapter proceeds from the assumption that the story of Nigerian Presbyterianism does not stop with Scotland. There are other countries that could be described as streams whose flow into Nigeria has augmented immensely the supply from the Scottish source. Let me say that it is to "underscore [the flourishing and] the replenishing fruit of the gospel which allows not only for

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[11] The British used slaves from Africa – many of them of Nigerian descent – to work in their plantations in Jamaica which is an island in the Caribbean sea. Though the inspiration for the establishment of the mission in Nigeria came from the African slaves in this island, not much is celebrated about this in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Rather, almost everybody seems to be talking about Scotland with little being said about the Jamaican connection. I am concerned about this because most of the younger generation in the Church do not know about this important aspect of our ecclesiastical history. I believe it is time to tell the full story especially as much 'noise' is now being made about an African Renaissance. Unfortunately, I was unable to visit Jamaica in the course of this research due mainly to financial constraints.

celebration but also for reflection and commitment to keep the faith" (Udo 1996:29), that the image of "streams" has been chosen here. Of course, rivers and streams are very familiar natural phenomena with us because they always 'put into focus the importance of the ecosystem in understanding the fortunes of Christianity in the Cross River culture theatre where Presbyterianism was born in Nigeria' (Kalu 1996:50). Hence, the streams here represent the other mission partnerships with their brands of Presbyterianism which have over the years blended the first missionary efforts in producing the present Nigerian Presbyterianism (or, Presbyterianism in Nigeria). What this means is that our understanding of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria is impossible unless we take into account the impact of the partner churches in the mission history.

Fourthly, this chapter shows that Presbyterianism in Nigeria is, altogether, a long tale of a struggle. Indeed, the story of the Presbyterian Church may be described as a telling tale. It is "a tale of romance because from the start it has remained an exciting story of adventures; it is a tale of love because there is no greater love than that a person should lay down his/her life for others; it is a tale of people seeking their Maker and also of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Aye 1987:78). Just as the early church was born in struggle, so was the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

In what follows, I intend to revisit the soil (context), source (Scotland), streams (other partner churches), and the struggles in order to understand the factors that formed Presbyterianism in Nigeria and shaped its present identity.

2.2   THE SOIL: NIGERIAN CONTEXT BEFORE THE ADVENT OF PRESBYTERIANISM

We want to proceed from here by describing the contextual situation in Nigeria before the arrival of the Scottish missionaries. In doing this, it may be helpful to look first at the history of Nigeria within which the Presbyterian Church has been located since 1846. This brief excursion is important because this history has played and still plays a significant role in shaping the life of what we now know as the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. But Nigeria's story may not be well appreciated unless it is placed in the larger context of the history of the continent of Africa. This history, of course, is a long one and will be engaged only to the extent that it throws some missiological light on the subject being discussed here. Consequently, our engagement with this continental history now will be brief.

To start with, it is important to state that the continent of Africa is divided into two clearly defined regions, North Africa and the Sub-Saharan Africa, otherwise known as Black Africa (Kane 1978:137). North of the Sahara Desert, the people are Arab and Berber by race and Muslim by religion. For this reason, the five states in the north (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia) have more in common with the Middle East than with the rest of Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has about fifty-three independent countries most of which are small and have a population of fewer than 10 million (Kane 1978:137). After the Berlin Conference of 1884, the continent was parceled out among the European countries. Germany lost her colonies after World War 1 leaving Britain and France as the two colonial giants, each with a dozen or more colonies. Belgium had the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi; Portugal had Mozambique and Angola. While all French colonies received their independence in 1960, Britain chose to grant independence to her colonies one by one over the span of a decade, beginning with Ghana in 1957. Nigeria received her political independence from Britain on October 1 1960, after being under colonial rule for more than five decades.

Nigeria is the most populous country in the continent of Africa with over 120 million people (Okafor 1997:1). The population constitutes more than 240 ethnic groups, which have different languages, cultural identities and religious perceptions (Okafor 1997:1). Nigeria was consolidated into one nation by the British at the beginning of the 20th century; in 1914, Lord Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator under the colonial office in London, amalgamated the then northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria. "On this date, the Nigerian nation was created. Before then, there was no entity known as Nigeria (Okafor 1997:1)". Nigeria became thus an amalgam of many ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups are: the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the West, and the Ibo in the East. The more prominent among the minority ethnic groups are the Tiv, the Edo, the Efik, the Ibibio and the Ijaw.

The Efik are found mainly in Calabar, which is located along the Lower Guinea Coast in the Bight of Biafra, and separated from the Bight of Benin by the Niger River Delta. It was among these people and in this area that the Scottish missionaries arrived in 1846 to plant the Church that later came to be known as the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Though the Ibibio share geographical proximity and cultural affinity with the Efik, "it is worth noting that the establishment of Presbyterianism among the Ibibio did not take place until about fifty years from 1846" (Udo 1996:29). Meanwhile, in 1888, the Scottish Mission carried the gospel into Unwana, which is a neighbouring Ibo area, thus making it the second ethnic group to welcome the Scottish mission into Nigeria. For more than one and a half

centuries, the PCN has been confined within these two ethnic enclaves of the Cross River region. Consequently, the gospel has been domesticated, the church institutionalized, and the Christian message preserved with such cultural idioms and ideologies that make it hardly translatable to the people and cultures of the other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Indisputably, this has continued to be a stumbling block to the cross-cultural mission of the church – an issue that is dealt with in Chapter four of this dissertation.

Before we return to this issue, let us look at what life was like − especially among the Efik − prior to the landing of the missionaries on the shores of Nigeria in the 19th century.

2.3 LIFE IN THE CROSS RIVER AREA BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE SCOTTISH MISSION

Before the advent of the missionaries, Efik people lived and worked together in a society that was different from Europe in social, political, economic and religious terms. The following paragraphs attempt to explain these distinctives:

2.3.1 The Social Life

Efik people were known for having a well-organized social system which was even too complicated for any visitor to understand. Livingstone (1917:26-27) made the point when he observed that

> the Negroes … were not destitute of religious beliefs: their 'theology,' indeed, seemed somewhat too complicated for comprehension. Nor were their lives unregulated by principles and laws; they were ruled by canons and conventions as powerful as those of Europe; their social life was rooted in a tangle of relationships and customs as intricate as any in the world.

The basis of the community was the 'house', which consisted mainly of a cluster of mud-huts in the bush, at the head of which was a master or chief, independent within his own domain. In this yard compound, or "town" as it was sometimes called, lived connected families. Each chief had numerous wives and slaves, over whom he exercised absolute control. Efik communities were based on kinship and lineage groups and were organized at the lowest level into family households; these included small

numbers of domestic slaves even before the arrival of the Europeans. The households were then organized into larger units known as houses (*ufok*) consisting of the male descendants of an ancestor.

According to Sparks (2002:2), "the establishment of new houses and towns was accompanied by the introduction of a powerful secret society, known as "*Ekpe*" ("*Egbo*" to Europeans)." Membership of this society was open to all men, including slaves, though only free men could advance beyond the fifth of the nine grades. Entry into each grade had to be bought, so that membership in the upper grades was confined to wealthy merchants. The *Ekpe* society served several socio-economic purposes, among which were: to help to integrate the new wards; promote the expansion of the slave trade; enforce the payment of debts; together with levying fines, impounding property and imposing of trade boycotts on individuals who violated its code. There is an argument among the Efik Presbyterians today about the place of *Ekpe* in the Church because of the claim that the Kings used it to welcome the missionaries and the Gospel into Nigeria. "Over time, *Ekpe* has spread beyond old Calabar to include those peoples with whom they had close economic relations especially, the Ibo of the interior" (Spark 2002:3).

Originally, the Efik were divided into two lineage groups, but as the slave trade expanded, the two subdivided into seven wards or city-states. Today, twelve clans make up the Efik ethnic nationality. Many members of the Efik nationality are Presbyterians, and there are hardly any of their clans or towns without a Presbyterian congregation.
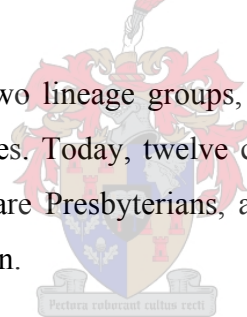
2.3.2 The Economic Life

The Efik people were known for their enterprising spirit. From their different towns, they exchanged coastal products, particularly fish and salt with other neighbours. The river played a central role in the economy. Fish was marketed to their neighbors – particularly the Ibo people in the interior, who in turn brought agricultural products especially, yams and palm oil. The commercial transaction, it would seem, soon paved way for gospel transaction; hence, the Ibo later joined the Efik in receiving the Christian message from the Scottish missionaries. Brought together by commerce and Christianity, the Ibo and the Efik people seemed to have entered into an enduring marriage. This will either make or mar the mission of the church whose membership they have come to dominate.

In addition to the economic activities in the river, there were also plantations in which slaves, who had been sold and brought down for transportation to Europe, had to work. Slaves played a vital role in Efik

society and economy. Describing the deep entrenchment of slave trade among the Efik, Nair (1972:48) says:

> Among the Efik, there were more slaves than free men and the situation was not unlike that of the Roman Empire. The slaves constantly threatened to overthrow their masters. In Calabar they formed a society of "Bloodmen" (*Nka Iyip*) and defied their masters and the *Ekpe* society, which usually arranged the burial ceremonies in which slaves were killed.

It is said that merchants from Bristol and Liverpool dominated the slave trade in Old Calabar and approximately 85% of the slaves exported from the area left on English ships. At least, 1.2 million slaves were transported from the Cross and Niger Rivers in the 18th century (Sparks 2002:2).

In the 19th century, the British established a center in Calabar for the Royal Niger Company which took over the palm oil trade; until then it had been handled by native merchants. This company was the British version of the East India Trading Company in Asia floated by the Dutch. Calabar was the headquarters of the southern protectorate from where the British carried out most of their commercial transactions. Today, Calabar is a seaport and has also been declared an Export Processing Zone (EPZ) by the Nigerian government. The beautiful scenery is a popular tourist attraction. The inhabitants call it the Canaan City − the Promised Land − for its abundant hospitality. Perhaps, this may be why the ousted Liberian president, Charles Taylor, was offered asylum there by the Nigerian government.

2.3.3   The Political Life

As stated earlier, the Efik people had a well-organized political system before the arrival of the Europeans. Their communities were ruled by chiefs who wielded enormous influence over their subjects. There was no central native government. Sparks (2000: 3) tells us that "before the expansion of the slave trade, the oldest member of the family was head of the house (*Etubom*, meaning "father of the canoe" as opposed to *Ete Ufok*, "father of the house")." The new title highlighted the importance canoes played in the lives of the traders, who could sometimes send out large flotillas. Thus political might was to a great extent determined by economic power. So houses that grew rich enough established themselves as new lineage groups, though they still acknowledged their descent from the original lineage founders. Again Sparks (2000:2), narrates:

By the 1760s, the most important of these wards were Old Town, led by the Robin family and which became the most commercially successful town up to the mid-eighteenth century, and Duke Town (or New Town), led by the Duke family. The Dukes built their settlements down stream from Old Town to try and wrest control of the lucrative slave trade away from their upstream rivals, and the two houses became bitter adversaries.

The rivalry continued until the missionaries arrived on April 10, 1846. The scenario was such that the political power was in the hands of King Eyamba of Duke Town and King Eyo Honesty of Creek Town. It is important to note that in addition to its political influence over the other houses, Duke Town had gained a religious primacy too − a primacy that came through its contact with the Scottish missionaries. This scenario has remained an intricate element in the life and history of the PCN as we will see in the later discussion on the politics of the administrative headquarters of the Church (Chapter four).

Let us have a brief digression. It is noteworthy that part of the ethnic problem of the PCN is attributable to this primacy of Duke Town, because the Efiks have always insisted that Duke Town (and indeed Calabar) must be considered in all of the decisions of the Church to honour its historicity in the mission of the Church. This explains why so many policies are being implemented by the Church to honour Calabar even at a very high economic cost. For instance, while the Principal Clerk of the Church resides and runs the administration from Aba, which is in Abia State and also in Ibo area, the Treasurer and the incumbent General Assembly Moderator live and work in Calabar, Cross River State – Efik land. Furthermore, every General Assembly meeting is now held every alternate year in the 'Canaan city', as if Presbyterians are on religious "pilgrimage" to Calabar. While it may be worthwhile to honour historical places, the Church would need to rethink whether the exercise enhances or hinders its mission. This is an assignment for the leadership of the Church.

Now back to the Efik political life. For effective control of the people, the British colonial powers later introduced British consular jurisdiction in the Efik society. Compared to the native government, this move proved to be most shadowy in character (Livingstone 1917:27). Nonetheless, it was implemented as the British consul was given the mandate, together with the missionaries, to ensure that the people were submissive to the new masters – the colonialists and the Church. As E.B. Udoh (1988: 63) says, "…the naval force injected irresistible authority into all of the missionary schemes combined to place the Church in a position of superiority". Part of this scheme was the coronation of the kings by the new

powers. Hugh Goldie (1901) captures the event: "On 25 February 1874, British Consul George Hartley crowned Ensa (Nsa) Okoho as king Eyo Honesty VII of Creek Town. The impressive ceremony took place in the Presbyterian Church; …"

From the time the mission began in 1846, Creek Town was considered part of the Scottish Presbyterian mission work in Calabar. It is interesting to know, however, that while the mission was fighting to separate the Church from the state in Scotland, it was, on the other hand, nurturing a new State-Church marriage in Nigeria.

To this day, the King of Calabar (now known as *Obong* of Calabar) is still a strong political force and wields a lot of influence as a traditional ruler. His enthronement is always marked by a church service conducted by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Duke Town Presbyterian Church, Calabar. Could it be that the PCN is thereby still wearing the old garment of the Christendom era? I would leave the debate for the Church historians and theologians!

2.3.4 Religious Life

It is common knowledge that Africans are notoriously religious. Yet, it is hard to understand, except for reason of ignorance, how many of the early foreign writers derided the African people and despised their intellectual ingenuity especially on the issue of religion. Sir Samuel Baker, one of the early explorers, has been reported by D. A. Dopamu (1991:20) as saying that,

> without any exception, the people of Southern Sudan are without a belief in the Supreme Being, neither have they any worship or idolatory nor is the darkness of their minds enlightened by even a ray of superstition. Their mind is as stagnant as the morass which forms its puny world.

Yet, this contradicts the testimony of Livingstone (1917) quoted earlier in this chapter. However, one should not be surprised at Baker's account; it was typical of the racial and intellectual pride that most of the early European explorers and anthropologists displayed when they came to Africa.

But things have really changed and many Africans have researched and written some internationally accepted accounts of the pervasiveness of religion in Africa. In his book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, J. S. Mbiti (1969:2) has revealed that:

> wherever the African is, there is his religion: he carries it to the fields where he is sowing seeds or harvesting a new crop; and he takes it with him to the beer party or to attend a funeral ceremony; and if he is educated at school or in the university; if he is a politician, he takes it to the House of Parliament.

Although the practice of this religion takes varied forms among the African people, there is a commonality that strikes a note in the whole religious system. Idowu (1962:6ff) pointed to this remarkable homogeneity:

> The real keynote of the life of the Yoruba (*and indeed other groups like the Efik of Nigeria*) is neither in their noble ancestry nor in the past deeds of their heroes. The keynote of their life is their religion. In all things, they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and all-governing principle of life for them. As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of all the affairs of life belongs to the Deity…. Through all the circumstances of life, through all its changing scenes, its troubles, it is the Deity who is in control.

So, God as the Ground of Being was no stranger to the Cross River people of Calabar and their neighbours. This is why it has been argued that the missionaries did not meet a religionless society but a theocratic state (Okafor 1997:189) among the people of Calabar. The name *Abasi Ibom* or God was already there before the Scottish missionaries arrived (Udoh 1988:76). The Yoruba know Him as *Olodumare* (Idowu 1962:6ff) and the Ibo call Him *Chineke,* that is, the Creator, or *Chukwu* the Great God. It is interesting to observe that the idea of a great God presupposes that there are other smaller deities that cannot equate with, but through whom humans may approach, the Deity.

African theologians and scholars speak of the transcendence of God, the Supreme Being, and they claim that the space between God and human beings is filled with a hierarchy of gods, divinities and spirits who are sometimes called intermediaries (Turaki 2006:61). These beings give human aid and guidance in the mundane matters of everyday life. Some divinities are "self-sufficient and act independently of the Supreme Being"; some have "the same attributes as the Supreme Being"; and

some are assigned territories or "special spheres of concern" (Steyne 1990:75). This point now leads us to the issue of ancestors and **ancestral veneration** which is part of the religious history of the people.

According Turaki (2006:68),

> belief in the ancestors is the most fundamental religious tenet governing religion, culture, customs and meaning (*in Sub-Saharan Africa*[12]). Some refer to it as the "cult of the ancestors" and speak of worship or veneration of ancestors.

Ancestors are elders who have died and are believed to be in the great beyond. It is believed that the dead are still part of the living; hence, they are called the "living dead." For the role they played, and are believed to still play in the community, many Africans "venerate" these ancestors. There is, however, disagreement about whether recognition of ancestors with sacrifices and offerings reflects mere reverent respect or is equivalent to actual worship (see Fortes and Dieterlen 1965:126). In practice it is difficult to make such distinction, as reverence and worship can take place in one act.

Obviously, the relationship between the living and the ancestors shapes matters of daily life; some Africans "would not think of eating or drinking anything without a token offering of it to the ancestors (Turaki 2006:70). It has led to customs, superstitions, social laws, regulations, and taboos that define the general order of existence in Efik and other African societies. It has also led to the formulation of concepts of good and evil, morality, ethics, and justice that are strictly kinship based. This is the source and nature of ethnic values found all over Nigeria. What this means is that belief in ancestral spirits profoundly influences the practices, behaviour and attitudes of ethnic groups, tribes, clans and families.

But in the heyday of Christian missionary activity and colonialism, many missionaries described this belief and practice as the worship of the dead, and the Church failed to capture the worldview that governed the people's lives. Consequently, no relevant theology was developed to adequately address these beliefs and practices. The problem has perplexed and haunted the Church to the extent that some church members have refused to abandon their ancestors, whom they believe have active roles to play in their lives here on earth.

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[12] Italics mine

Still within the socio-religious system, there is also a **belief in witchcraft.** The people of Calabar believed and still believe in witchcraft**.** In pre-colonial Nigeria, witchcraft was regarded as the most heinous crime anyone could commit. Witches and wizards were accused of a wide variety of offences. In societies in which belief in witchcraft was strong, nearly the whole gamut of life's misfortunes was blamed on them. Witches were believed to have power of metamorphosis; that is, it was thought that they could change at will into non-human creatures like bats, leopards, mosquitoes and crocodiles (Amadi 1982:23). While in these guises, they could harm their neighbours. Virtually any illness whose cause was unknown was attributed to witchcraft. Sudden death, lunacy, crop pests, invasions by soldier ants or bees – witches took the blame for them all. No wonder the punishment meted out to witches was unusually severe. The Old Testament (Deut. 21:8) commands that witches should not be allowed to live. And in nearly all cases they were condemned to death by the Efiks. The only alternative was to subject them to "a trial by ordeal" (Amadi 1982:23). On the whole, they were brutally punished, and such punishment shows how thoroughly dreaded they were. This dread has persisted to this day. Amadi (1982:24) reminds us that:

> Late in 1978 a great witch-hunt raged throughout the Cross River State of Nigeria. Mobs moved swiftly to lynch witches allegedly exposed by one Edet Edem Akpan, alias Akpan Ekwong, a self-appointed witch-hunter. By the time the police stepped in several "witches and wizards" had been killed. Prominent chiefs supported the witch-hunt.
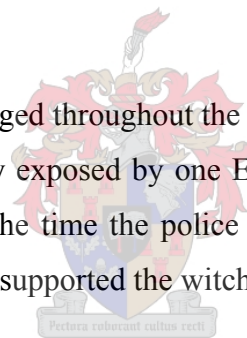
Such was the fate of witches in this part of Nigeria. Ironically, whereas the Efik killed witches, the Jukun of Northern Nigeria seemed to have had an unusual conception of the role of witches. Meek (1969:301) in Amadi (1982:23) reports:

> It is said by the Jukun that witches are necessary in the world; for without witches the crops would not ripen. The conception appears to be that the mightiest of witches, having grown weary of eating human beings, devote their energy and powers to the beneficent purpose of increasing the crops and assisting hunters to capture game animals.

While the Jukan believed that witches had positive functions in some circumstances, they nevertheless executed or sold into slavery proven witches and their relatives.
Among the Nupe in Northern Nigeria, the evil powers of witches were diverted:

The Nupe chiefs used to bestow the rank *Lelu* on the woman who was believed to be the most powerful witch in the village. Her secret knowledge could thus be made to benefit the interests of the community. Turned into an organ of the village administration, this woman could be used, in the opinion of the people, to check and control the subversive activities of the other witches (Amadi 1982:24).

In pre-colonial Nigeria and also in the post-colonial era, belief in witchcraft was part of the people's socio-religious life and no new religion (including modern day Christianity) has been able to eliminate it. It is integral to the worldview of the people − the overarching frame of reference to which they appeal for the ordering of their daily lives and existence. Thus it is not surprising that one can still find people who, though they have become members of the Church, continue to cling to these beliefs and practices so deeply embedded in their culture and philosophy.

What we have briefly described above are the social, economic, political and religious dimensions of the Cross River people's worldview before the Scottish missionaries arrived in Calabar with the Christian Gospel more than one and a half centuries ago. As we have seen, the people were highly religious and their religion permeated every facet of their existence. To understand their life, therefore, is to understand their religion and vice versa.

When we grasp this, it becomes clear that the planting of the gospel by the Scottish mission did not take place in a socio-cultural void. Rather, in Nigeria, the missionaries encountered a people who, long before the impending impact of the foreign culture, already had their own well-established modes of life, government, and religion. Consequently, these factors formed the foundations upon which the missionaries built the new Christian faith.

In what follows, therefore, we will be looking at the genesis of the mission and the subsequent cultural transaction and exchange that took place between the Scottish missionaries and the people of Nigeria.

2.4   THE SOURCE OF THE MISSION IN NIGERIA – THE SCOTTISH DIMENSION
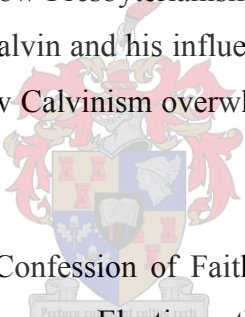
At the turn of the 19th century, when the Protestant missions got under way, the Scottish missionaries joined other missionary societies in the "scramble for souls" in Nigeria. Earlier in 1842, the Wesleyan Mission Society (WMS) arrived in Badagry, Southwestern Nigeria, while the Church Missionary

Society (CMS) came in 1844 (Okafor 1997:189). It is important to note that the missionaries embarked upon this adventure even though there were some socio-political problems in Scotland. Later in this project, we shall see that these problems were also to become manifest in the work undertaken in the faraway country of Nigeria.

2.4.1   The socio-political and religious environment in Scotland

In one way or another, we are all affected by our culture and time. The 18th century Scottish missionaries were no exception. In Calabar we see their cultural and religious traits unfold. We shall make brief reference here to some of the Scottish characteristics that affected the mission in Nigeria.

The Victorian Scottish Church was Calvinistic; but Calvin himself never visited Scotland (Udoh 1988:27). His influence on the Scots was clearly indirect, mediated through John Knox who had met him in Geneva. If we are to understand how Presbyterianism in Nigeria has been shaped by Scotland, we may need to know something about Calvin and his influence on John Knox – the father of Scottish Presbyterianism. Quoting Reybury on how Calvinism overwhelmed the reformation in Scotland, Udoh (1988:27) states that:

> Knox helped in formulating the Confession of Faith in 1560, which borrows from Calvin's Institutes at every point. The passage on Elections, the doctrine of the civil magistrate and its relation to the Church are practically direct translation from Calvin's writings.

Calvin's influence went beyond his writings. One could hardly consider any form of Scottish Presbyterianism without seeing a tinge of Calvinism in it. Thus, Udo (1988:27) asserts that "Knox's refusal to accept magisterial supremacy in spiritual matters, the emphasis on the Church's sovereignty and the autonomy of its jurisdiction, the introduction of eldership, in all of this, the Scots inherited Calvin". In addition, Knox had a strict, indomitable and firm personality, which he also brought to bear upon the Church life. So, in the final analysis, he bequeathed to the Scottish Church and subsequently the missionaries in Nigeria, an uncompromising posture toward any system or action deemed unscriptural. In Calabar, we meet this Scottish legacy in the English Bible and other documents which were used by the missionaries for religious education and as a guide for social reform in Nigeria.

It is against this background that we can understand the mission philosophy that was to shape and guide the outreach in response to invitation of the chiefs of Old Calabar to the Queen that missionaries should "come over to Nigeria and help them."

2.4.2 An Invitation for Mission in Nigeria

As indicated briefly in the previous section, the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria has some historical antecedents. It is only as we understand these issues that we can appreciate the successes and failures of the mission since its inception in Nigeria.

To start with, Jamaica − from where the mission found its way to Nigeria − was a slave colony established by the British government in 1838 after the abolition of the slave trade. The majority of the slaves there are believed to have had their ancestral roots in the West Coast of Africa. It is possible that some of these slaves had heard of Christ while in the ships that carried them away from Africa.

> For we first met Christ on slave ships. We heard his name sung in hymns of praise while we died in our thousands, chained in stinking holds beneath the decks....When our women were raped in the cabins they must have noticed the great and holy books on the shelves. Our introduction to this Christ was not propitious.[13]
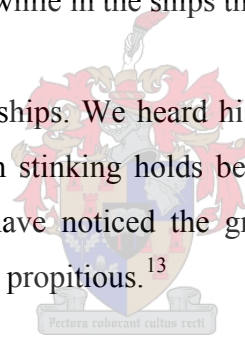
If the above words from the American slaves are clear expressions of their actual experience, it follows that the Jamaican slaves − some of whom went to America − had a similar tale of pains and woes. Like their kith and kin who were taken to America and introduced to American Christianity, it is likely that the Jamaicans who later returned to Nigeria had heard the name of Christ on the slave ships. Moreover, it would seem that their indominitable human spirit and the grace of God upon their lives, could not allow their own bitter suffering to diminish the sweetness of the name of Jesus − hence their desire to share the story of Jesus with their relations in Africa.
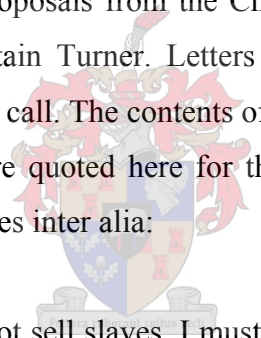
Calabar was considered the most probable promising place in Africa to start missionary work because of its weather conditions. So, the Scottish missionaries who had been in Jamaica since 1824 (ten years

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[13] This statement from Vincent Harding about the Blacks and American Christianity is quoted by Gayraud S. Wilmore (1991) in Identity and Integration: Black Presbyterians and their Allies in the 20th Century in *The Diversity of Discipleship: The Presbyterians and Twentieth-Century Christian Witness,* p.209.

before the settlement of the slaves) were willing and excited to be part the African mission project. Is it not remarkable that the desire to evangelize the people in Africa came from the slaves? The joyous commitment of the slaves to the Gospel of Jesus Christ was an eloquent demonstration of their resilience against the man-made odds of slavery. Consequently, their faith, radiant amid the darkness of plantation life, stimulated the Missionary Society to consider an African mission. In the words of W. P. Livingstone (1917):

> The agents of the Scottish Missionary Society and of the Jamaican Presbytery, talked over the matter, and resolved to take action, and eight of their members dedicated themselves for the service it called upon.

Coincidentally or providentially, only a month before the missionaries' proposals reached Calabar, a Queen's ship had arrived there to make a treaty with the Chiefs for the abolition of the slave trade and the reception of missionaries. Formal proposals from the Chiefs of Calabar for the settlement of the mission were sent by the hand of Captain Turner. Letters from two of the Calabar Chiefs to the Jamaican brethren seemed to be an added call. The contents of these letters from King Eyamba of Duke Town and King Eyo of Creek Town, are quoted here for their historical significance. According to McFarlan (1946:9), King Eyo's letter states inter alia:

> Now we settle treaty for not sell slaves, I must tell you something I want your Queen to do for me. Now we can't sell slaves again, we must have too much man for country, and want something for make and trade, and if we could get seed for cotton and coffee, we could make trade. Plenty sugar cane live here, and if some man come teach we way for do it we get plenty sugar too, and then some man must come for teach book proper, and make all men saby God like white man, and then we go for some fashion….

In a similar vein is King Eyo Honesty's letter:

> One thing I want to beg for your Queen, I have too much man now, I can't sell slaves and don't know what to do for them. But if I can get some cotton and coffee to grow and man for teach me and make sugar cane for we country come up proper and sell for trade. I very glad. Mr Blyth tell me England glad for send man to teach and make we

understand God all same like white man do. If Queen do so, I glad too much and we must try to do good for England always.

From the two royal letters, it is clear that agriculture and Christian education were to be topmost on the missionary agenda. At least, these two were the immediate needs the kings would want the missionaries meet as an alternative source of wealth in a slave economy. And when the missionaries eventually came, education in particular did receive a great deal of their attention, as we shall see in due course.

2.4.3   The establishment of Mission in Duke Town, Calabar

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (PCN) was born of divorcing parents abroad and nurtured by the proceeds of colonialism at home (Udoh 1988:4). In Britain the move by Scotland to sever political and ecclesiastical ties with England was under way. Andrew Melville was leading a stiff campaign in Scotland against Church – State alliance. But in Nigeria, the British colonial rule and Scottish mission were closer than a kernel and its husk, and Calabar served as mediating ground between the rival forces abroad. In the words of the Nigerian Presbyterian theologian, Udoh (1988: 4),

> Calabar mission like its counter-parts in the Continent has an unusual birth and midwife. Its conception took place in Jamaica, Caribbean; following the collapse of the Niger Expedition of 1841.The Nigerian (Presbyterian) Church was born at a time when Scottish nationalism was at its peak.

When eventually the missionaries were given the green light by the United Secession Church (USC), Rev H. M. Waddell, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Edgerly, three Jamaicans, Andrew Chisolm, Edward Millar and a former slave named George came as pioneer missionaries. The team sailed from Liverpool on board the 'Waree' on January 6, 1846. "By the kindness and protection of providence" the crew arrived at Fernado Po, a Spanish occupied island opposite Old Calabar, on April 2. And on April 10, 1846, they were accompanied by John Beecroft, Governor of the island, and arrived at Duke Town to establish the link between Scotland and Old Calabar - a link that was to shape the future and destiny of many people.

The first convert was Esien Ukpabio. After 30 years of ministry, the mission had less than two hundred members with very few workers (Livingstone 1917: 25, 79). At this time, mission was limited to a few places around the banks of the river. As Livingstone (1917: 25) further tells us:

> The number of members in all the congregations was 174, though the attendances at the services each Sunday was over a thousand. The staff, however, had never been very large; of Europeans at this time, there were four ordained missionaries, four men teachers and four women teachers, and of natives one ordained missionary and eighteen agent; and efforts were confined to Duke Town, Creek Town, Ikoneto, and Ikorofiong- all on the banks of the rivers or creeks- with several outstations.

In the affairs of the Church, certain developments were taking place. In 1858, the Presbytery of Biafra came into being. The Synod of Biafra was constituted in 1921 with two Presbyteries: the Northern Presbytery and the Southern Presbytery. In order to handle "important matters that affect the well-being of the people, and with the hope of the extension of the Gospel of God", the Eastern Nigeria Church Union Committee was formed in 1933. But in 1945, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church of Biafra became a reality. In 1952, the Synod met and adopted the name "The Presbyterian Church of Eastern Nigeria." But at Nigerian Independence in 1960, the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Nigeria was changed to the "The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria."
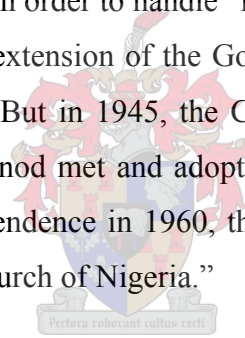
This "coming of age" both in the nation and the Church marked the genesis of the exodus of many of the missionaries; by May 1967, many who were still hanging on had to leave because of the civil war which lasted till May 1970. This meant that the natives had to take over the government of the church. The church now has an administrative structure comprising the General Assembly as the highest decision-making body, nine synods, 46 presbyteries and many parishes and congregations. It is estimated that the Church has about four million members[14]. However, it has not been possible to obtain the exact number because the congregations do not want to declare correct statistics for fear of financial over-assessment. It was this situation that led the 1996 General Assembly in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to adopt the "percentage system" in place of the "assessment method" of payment in the Church. Even with the new percentage system, the story has not changed much. The church is still searching for new and viable methods that can replace the old missionary practices.

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[14] This is according to the information given by the immediate past General Assembly Moderator – Very Rev. Dr Mba Idika during a Press Conference in 2003.

2.4.4   Scottish Missionary methods in Nigeria

The Scottish team in their outreach to the people used several methods. Some of these methods that can easily be identified are discussed below.

2.4.4.1 Education

As we saw earlier, education and agriculture were the main requests of the missionary invitation letters from the Chiefs of Old Calabar. Little wonder then education was part of the identity of the Scottish missions. From the very beginning, Scottish missions invested a high proportion of their activity in, and gave priority attention to education. In the words of Andrew F. Walls (2002:262),

> For many other missions, education was simply one branch of missionary activity, made necessary by the mission's other activities, or required as the price of its presence in the local setting. For the Scottish missions, at least for a substantial and determinative part of their existence, education *was* mission.

Schools were opened in almost every area of the mission work and some of those schools still bear "Presbyterian" in their names. The Scottish philosophy of education embraced the scientific, the mechanical, and the technological as well as the classically academic, and this was often evidenced in their missionary activity (Walls 2000:262). For instance, when Hope Waddell Training Institute was opened in 1895, the objective was to make it a comprehensive high school where science, technology, agriculture etc., were taught. Both the Scottish and Jamaican missionaries brought their intellectual and cultural influence to bear upon this institution and those who passed through it.

The underlying objective of European education was the promotion of the Gospel, Schools therefore served as the "nursery of the infant church." And they were used as an inducement to lure Africans into the missionary orbit for initiation into "Christian" civilization (Udoh 1988:63). So, Africans attended mission schools with well-defined political, social and economic goals. European education promised a lot of advantages for personal advancement and social transformation following the European political and economic model. Being associated with the Church and "civilization" was advantageous to social status. As a result, political changes in the early part of the twentieth century increased the attraction of

Christianity and young African teachers. Also, the indigenous medical missionaries trained in the missionary institutions began to play a more prominent role in the church and society (Edinburgh University New College Library MSS CALA: 52.5.1-6).

Unfortunately, not all those who passed through the mission schools continued to care about the Church that shaped their early lives. Of those who remained true to the faith, numbers left their benefactor and joined new churches, In fact, few missionary-educated members remain with the Church today. There are no easy answers to this situation; however, a dialogue with some of these people may help the Church to have a better understanding of their problems.

Generally, the standard of education in the country is perceived to have fallen when the government took over schools after the Nigerian civil war. It is also probable that the continuous proliferation of private schools today is a reaction to falling standards in the public schools. This situation partly explains why missionaries are still being fondly remembered for their educational work in Nigeria.

2.4.4.2 Evangelism

Efik society, like many others of the period, was divided people into classes: the rulers and the ruled, the free and the slaves. The Scottish missionaries came at a time when many people, especially slaves, women and twins, were not sure of their lives. Even those who thought they were free were still enslaved by superstitions and the fear of supernatural forces. The gospel was presented not only as a liberating force but also as a unifying factor in that society. The missionaries travelled day and night through the waters and thick forests to preach the gospel. Mary Slessor's popular scripture was Jesus' words in John chapter five verse twenty-four: "He that heareth my words, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life" (Livingstone 1917: 81-82).

On many occasions, the missionaries risked their lives in proclaiming this message. During some outreaches, young boys used to carry drums, and beat them to call people together. Hearing that white people were in their vicinity, a great crowd would quickly gather. Many of those sermons were preached under the shade of trees. With time, those who answered the gospel call formed congregations, and mud houses were built as worshipping centers for them. Today, there are many congregations whose existence may be traced to the loving work of the Scottish missionaries who came

to Nigeria in the 19th century. Because of the the price these missionaries paid, the gospel was planted and has remained alive with us.

2.4.4.3 Medical Work

When the Scottish missionaries arrived at Calabar, their worst enemies were the tropical diseases, which hit many of them so suddenly. Quite a number died because of this and it affected the mission work terribly. The situation was quite a challenge to the mission, so medical work was taken seriously. It was said of Mary Slessor that "her days were full of treating the sick, teaching the bible and visiting neighbors." Because medical work was seen as part of the mission endeavour, the Scottish mission did not only train medical workers, but also ensured that hospitals were established to sustain medical programmes.

One of the people trained by the Scottish mission, was the late Doctor Akanu Ibiam who to this day, is seen as the icon of the missionary medical practice in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. He studied medicine and graduated from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland in 1934. He was instrumental in opening the hospital in Abiriba (1936), which served the neighbouring communities of Item, Igbere, Nkporo, Abam and Ohafia (Uka 2001:4). In 1945, he was posted to Itu where he facilitated the establishment of the School of Nursing. From Itu, he was transferred to Uburu in 1952, where he advanced the cause of women by promoting maternity work and child welfare services.

As an African, and a member of the Ibo cultural group, Ibiam understood the impact of superstition and witchcraft on his people. This belief caused the people to attribute all their problems – be it barrenness, the birth of twins, malaria, miscarriages, fever, etc., to demonic attacks. As a Christian, he knew that not all sicknesses could have been caused by demons. Yet he was very understanding and sympathetic in dealing with his people. Ibiam was bold and fearless in dispelling these fears from the minds of his patients. "He gave them physical healing through Western medicine, and spiritual and emotional healing through the preaching of the gospel." On October 21, 1960, he was appointed the Governor of the Eastern region of Nigeria and served as one of the six Vice-Presidents of the World Council of Churches from 1961 to 1970.

It is apparent that the Scottish mission had and still has some success stories. But there were also problems in the missionary process as our research will later show. For now, we will be looking at

other streams of Presbyterianism which have contributed to the shaping of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

2.5 THE STREAMS: OTHER PARTNER CHURCHES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

2.5.1 The Canadian Stream

The decision by Canada to enter Nigeria was almost fortuitous (Johnston 1996). The process began at an ecumenical conference in Germany with conversations between Laura Pelton of the Women's Missionary Society and her counterparts in the Church of Scotland. By 1953, Nigeria was a *chose jugee* (Johnston 1988:97). At this point the women's discussions came to the attention of the General Board of Missions, the principal mission agency of the Presbyterian Church of Canada. The Canadian initiative to share in the work of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria came to fruition in November 1954. But in 1956, E H Johnson, the then Secretary of the Board visited Nigeria on a fact-finding mission. He documented the outcome of his visit under the title, *Nigeria: Record of a Journey*. Historical records show that while women were the first to demonstrate the zeal to go to Nigeria, it was Johnson's questions that were to be the intellectual and theological cornerstones upon which the missionary enterprise was established. Among these very important questions were the following:

- How can the churches hold their youth and lead them into responsible happy adult church membership?
- How can the churches secure enough candidates for the ordained ministry and train for strong leadership in the church?
- Can the church provide men and women of character and ability to serve their country with distinction at this critical moment of growth? (Johnson 1956:18-20).

Answers to these questions which focused on youth development, ministerial formation and leadership empowerment, later formed the basis of the Canadian involvement in the mission and work of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria for the next 50 years (1954 -2004). In practical terms, the responses to these questions are manifest in but not limited to the issues below.

2.5.1.1 Women's/ Youth Work:

From the onset of the Scottish mission in Nigeria, women had a priority place on the Church's agenda. After some years of missionary labour, the place of women in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria became more of a provocative issue in the minds of people everywhere. Accordingly, a special committee met at the Henshaw Memorial Church on Thursday, 19 June, 1947 to consider it. It was convened by Rev. A. T. H. Taylor. Present also were Revs. E. Utit and Uwakwenta and Elders Usang Iso and Asuquo. By the direction of the Synod it was named "The Committee on the Ministry of Women in the Church." Fortunately, after a heated debate on the pros and cons of women in the ministry, the trend of the debate turned in favour of women. Subsequently, Synod resolved inter alia:

> "Being of the opinion that the election of women members to Sessions would be for the spiritual good of the whole church, and that their participation in all its Courts, would increase the efficiency and representative character of the courts, the Synod, after consultation with both Presbyteries, declared the office of Ruling Elder to be open to men and women alike; and that a person should not be debarred on the grounds of his or her sex from performing any of the duties proper to the said office" (Aye 1987:130).

Whereas Scotland is known to have pioneered and championed the cause of women in general, it was Canada that gave teeth to the ordination of women into the ministry of word and sacraments in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. The policy change was, of course, not without controversy and debates. But Canada will be remembered for leading the Nigerian Church into another of phase of inclusive theology and mission. This watershed decision regarding the position of women in the Church has been highlighted by Otu (1982:12):

> At the end of August, 1972, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria nominated Miss Mgbeke Okore for the Presbyterian Church in Canada's three years scholarship to study Christian education in Ewart College, Toronto. She took her Diploma in Christian Education and then at the University of Toronto, her B. A. in Religious Studies. She lived in Canada from 1972 to 1976.

To be trained is one thing, to be ordained by the church is another. So it took at least three years for the church to make up its mind on the issue of ordaining women into the ministry. In the Synod of August 1979, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria approved the accepting of qualified women for ministerial

training with a view to ordination (Min. 2081(4)). It has to be observed that whereas Esien Esien Ukpabio was ordained the first male minister in the PCN in 1902, it was not until eighty years later (20th February 1982) that the first female minister, Rev. Mgbeke George Okore, was ordained in the church.

2.5.1.2 Theological Education

Theological education and the related question of contextualization were of utmost concern for the Canadian Church, and it was committed to strengthening existing institutions. Trinity College Umuahia had been functioning since 1948, and was considered a good starting point. But it seemed that, unlike earlier years, the fifties saw something of a dearth of strong candidates. The Canadian contribution in arresting this situation came in the person of E. H. Johnson, who was full of orthodox ideas about the importance of a well trained ministry.

At the beginning of their work in Nigeria, The Board (Minute of 1956), which set out the guiding principles for the Canadian involvement in Nigeria, spoke of both the provision of staff and the awarding of scholarships. In 1961, Geoffrey Johnston replaced the Scottish tutor at Trinity College while he was on leave. When the latter retired in 1963 for medical reasons, the former took his place as a regular tutor in January 1964 and stayed there till Easter 1966. During his time in Trinity College, he was joined by M. R. Gellatly, who remained at Trinity until his evacuation in July 1967 when the civil war broke out.

The war may have made personnel withdraw for safety, but that did not destroy the vision and commitment of the Canadian church to theological education in the PCN. The relationship continues today with Arlene Onuoha, a Canadian-born missionary now married in Nigeria, being the visible expression of that partnership as she teaches in, Esien Ukpabio Presbyterian Theological College in Itu, Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

2.5.1.3 Structural Edifices

In addition to its contributions to the development of human resources in the PCN, Canada is also noted for substantial investment in the Church's structural development. Of particular mention is the Lagos

Presbyterian Church which stands as the architectural symbol of Nigerian Presbyterianism. Because of its strategic location, Canada was committed to the development of the Lagos church both in projects and in people.

So, after several years of struggles to find a ministerial leader and a place of worship for the members of the Church, an intervention came from Canada. Reverend John Johnston and his wife, Heather, were sent to the aid of the Church. Unlike most of the Canadians, Johnston had had several years of experience as parish minister in Ottawa when he arrived in Nigeria. In his two years in Lagos he set the congregation going and began a major building campaign. A permanent site for the church in the city was acquired from a casino. In 1965 they turned the sod and a few dedicated members worked very hard to raise the funds for the building of the church. The Canadians not only helped with the building plans but also supervised the work to produce one of the finest churches in the country. Unfortunately the Johnston family was forced to return to Canada after a serious automobile accident. Graciously, a replacement came in the person of Russell T. Hall[15], also an experienced minister. He and his family arrived in 1966 to carry the congregation through the difficult years of war, building and re-building.

Geoffrey Johnston's publication, *Of God and the Maxim Guns* (1988), stands as a Canadian bird's-eye view of the Presbyterian missionary engagement in Nigeria between 1954 and 1988. It is important to say that while one can speak of the Canadian contribution to Nigeria, one can speak equally of the Nigerian contribution to Canada. Many of those who played important roles in the missionary engagement in Nigeria, also subsequently became key role players in the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Earl Roberts became Secretary for Overseas Missions, Clerk of Assembly and finally Moderator. Marjorie Ross became Director of the Presbyterian World Service and subsequently Associate for International Ministries. Rick Fee succeeded her as the Director for Presbyterian World Service and Development; he served as one time Moderator of the General Assembly; and is currently the General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency. "Nigeria shaped our adult lives, in large measure made us who we are", Geoffrey Johnston testifies. Thus, whatever these people may have done in Nigeria, such are the contributions that have enriched the stream flowing from the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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[15] The Rev Russell Hall was the first post-civil war Moderator of the Synod of the PCN. He took the mantle of leadership after the church that merely survived the onslaughts and ravages of the 30 month civil war. He (Rev Hall) told me in a personal interview in November 2005 in Toronto, Canada that he was chosen because neither the Efik nor the Ibo could trust each other to lead the whole church since both had experienced mutual betrayals during the war. He was elected Moderator not just because he was an expatriate, but more because of his manifest and demonstrable commitment to peace and reconciliation among the people who were desperately in need of a new direction and a new future.

Interestingly, records available to this researcher indicate that it was Canada that linked the Americans to the vision and mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria.

2.5.2   The American Stream

The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria was restricted to the South East of Nigeria (known as the Calabar Mission) for over one hundred and ten years. This was because it entered into an agreement with the Anglicans and the Methodists to concentrate in specific parts of the country in order that the work of evangelizing Nigeria might not overlap. The official policy held that the Presbyterians outside their south-eastern ethno-home areas should attach themselves to the churches they found in their new homes in order to avoid "denominational rivalry and strife." But first the Anglicans and the Methodists dishonoured the agreement; then the Presbyterian Church was compelled to advance into non-Presbyterian areas where much of her missionary energy is currently being spent.

During the 1950s, the official policy of geographical restriction came under increasing pressure − especially from Nigerian Presbyterian leadership. In 1953, few of the worshipping communities outside the PCN area, like Umuahia and Aba in Ibo territory, were officially recognized as congregations. However, they were accorded a parish status in 1956.
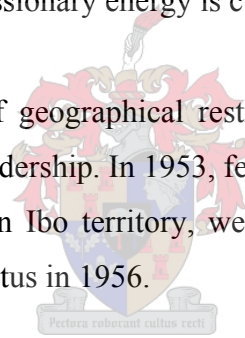
The increasing migration of Presbyterians to the urban centres posed a new challenge in respect of ministerial leadership in the Church. The problem was how to find ministers with the necessary experience and education for those congregations where laypersons often held senior positions in government and business. The solution seemed to have been found when in the next few years, the church recruited two Americans, one Scot, and three Canadians, for the city churches. Ray Pedrotti,[16] who succeeded Walter McLean, became the first visible expression of American blood in the Nigerian missionary stream.

Later, Emory Van Gerpen and Phyllis Van Gerpen, formerly SIM missionaries, became PCUSA fraternal workers with the PCN. They were based in the north but exerted much influence on the Church's whole life. In fact, much of our liturgy has been coloured with the American version of the

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[16] Ray died this year in the USA. Unfortunately, I could not establish contact with him before his death.

Reformed tradition. Because of their role and significance in the PCN, two areas of the American legacy deserve our mention.

2.5.2.1 Worldwide Communion Sunday

Worldwide Communion Sunday is a popular liturgical day most Nigerian Presbyterians look forward to every year. It is observed on the first Sunday of every month of October. But the point is that there is nothing worldwide in this practice, except for the universalizing influence of everything American. In fact, all through my years as Principal Clerk of the PCN, I was unaware that this was an American church tradition. I learned about this only when I was to officiate in a Holy Communion service in South Africa in October 2004. I was surprised when the United Church[17] here in Stellenbosch showed no knowledge of the 'Worldwide Communion Service' which we in Nigeria observe annually, and I realized then that what we have accepted and practised as an ecumenical given, is actually an American tradition.

2.5.2.2 The Book of Services

To date, the PCN is yet to have any standard liturgical guide that is truly original. At best, "virtually all of the Orders and prayers have been revised or adapted" from those of the Partner Churches and other Reformed allies. The existing Book of Services is ours today thanks to Rev. Emory Van Gerpen. In his capacity as the Secretary to the Board of Faith and Order, Van Gerpen influenced many of the doctrinal and liturgical formulations employed in the Church today. As a missionary in Nigeria, he was given such opportunities that hardly any aspect of the Church's life escaped his sometimes overbearing presence. With unmistakeable confidence, he amply confirmed this when he wrote the Preface to the current Book of Services:

> In the 1990's, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, having undergone major internal changes and now under a General Assembly with a system of Boards, moved to make the publication of this *Book of Services* a high priority. The Rev. VanGerpen, Secretary to the Board of Faith and Order, undertook major revisions and enlargement....[18]

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[17] This church is a merger of two congregations that were formerly Presbyterian and Congregational. Since our arrival here in Stellenbosch, members of my family have been part of this worshipping community.
[18] See *The Book of Services* of The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, page iv.

VanGerpen claimed he had consultations with some figures in the Church; but the message this clearly conveys is that after 160 years of missionary enterprise in Nigeria, the PCN is yet to yield theologians and liturgists who could produce a theology and a liturgy that are truly and originally African. Is it not for such a situation that Mbiti laments: 'Africa has neither theology nor ecclesiology of her own'? The question then is: shall we continue with the status quo in the 21st century?

2.5.3 The Dutch Stream

It has to be observed that as early as 1961, Nigerians were in correspondence with the Dutch. This process eventually led to the arrival, among others, of Herman Middlekoop (Johnston 1996:105). The appearance of the Dutch at this point may be attributed to two important historical factors, both of which made it a timely response. In the first instance, the expulsion of the Dutch missions from Indonesia had released a number of doctors, some of whom had experience in rural health. Besides, the medical workers from Scotland and Canada were already facing a situation in Nigeria that was apparently beyond their competence to handle. Every doctor knew that, surgery apart, most patients suffered from diseases either caused or complicated by the environment, by malaria, intestinal parasites, or malnutrition. Malaria responded to a variety of prophylactics, but intestinal parasites required improvements in water supplies and sewage disposal, which was the purview of engineers rather than doctors. Malnutrition could be approached through a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the traditional diet − something most doctors had neither time nor the training to acquire. They had been trained in curative medicine and curative medicine took up their time. Besides, the problem was so enormous it was hard to know from where to start. At this point, the Dutch appeared. Since their coming into the system in Nigeria, they have made significant contributions in the shaping of the mission of the Church especially in relation to its social concerns. Though the link still exists through the medical work in the Presbyterian Joint Hospital, Uburu, the Dutch influence in the PCN, unfortunately, seems to be waning fast. This is partly owing to the termination of formal partnership ties between the PCN and the Netherlands Reformed Church as a result of the Church unification process in the Netherlands.[19]

Thus, the Dutch, like other partners of the PCN , have their own contributions for which they will be remembered in the annals of Nigerian Presbyterian history.

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[19] Three churches have now merged to form the Uniting Churches in the Netherlands or the Protestant Churches in the Netherlands.

2.6. **SOME SUCCESSES OF THE MISSIONARY WORK – A SYNOPSIS**

Of all the missionary successes in Nigeria, there are a few legacies that will outlast others in the minds of Nigerians − including those who do not belong to the Presbyterian Church family. For the purpose of this work, we will do a synopsis of two of these to prove that the Presbyterian mission in Nigeria has been a worthy venture after all.

2.6.1. **Saving of twins and their mothers**

In the old Calabar, life meant little or nothing especially for slaves and for women who had twins. Slavery was common and slaves were often killed. So were women; if a family had too many children already, they would just leave an unwanted child in the bushes to die. The birth of twins was thought to be an evil sign. Twin babies were cruelly murdered, and their mothers ostracized from the community to the jungle, where they were sure to meet their deaths. This was the situation when Mary Slessor and other missionaries began their work in Nigeria. Mary, popularly known as the *Queen of Okoyong*, told the natives the good news of Christ. She urged them to quit the worship of human skulls and not to be afraid of evil spirits. She also taught them to stop killing wives and slaves of a "big man" when he died, because "they cannot help him in the next life". Mary succeeded in rescuing from death hundreds of baby twins and other deserted babies thrown out in the forest to perish of hunger or to be eaten by ants or leopards.
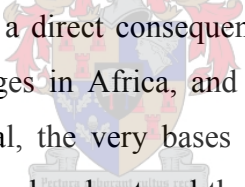
It is to the credit of the Scottish missionaries that the killing of twins was stopped and these infant lives were saved through the gospel which was preached with love and courage. This attests to the transforming power of the gospel in a society that was cruel to some human beings because of their primal religion and worldview.

2.6.2. **Development of vernacular language through education**

The missionary history reveals that the mission houses overflowed with destitute twins and orphans. Women missionaries like Mrs. Goldie, Edgerley and Anderson, continually came to the rescue of unwanted children (McFarlan 1946: 91). They were never allowed to remain idle. Girls were trained in the keeping of a Christian home and initiated into the arts of cooking, sewing and looking after the

infants. They learned cleanliness and self-respect, and in time were sought in marriage by Christian youths. "Some of them became the mothers of Christian families and something of the gracious influence with which they had been surrounded in the mission household went down to a new generation" (McFarlan 1946: 91). Some of those who embraced Christianity and Western education later became the pioneers of Nigerian nationalism as well as exponents of liberation theology. This was what professor Ayandele meant when he said: "by far the real coup de grace in Igboland and other places was the Western style education which the population patronized beyond the limit the missionaries considered safe for the propagation of Christianity".

The educational and intellectual legacy of the Scottish missionary labour may also be found in the prominence it gave to the development of the vernacular language. The importance that Christian missionaries attached to mother tongues like the Efik, Ibibio and Ibo languages, therefore, was "no small contribution to the advancement of the cause of the general human enterprise." Writing about the significant role of the Christian mission in the development and promotion of vernacular languages in Africa, Sanneh (1993: 77) affirms:

> Mother tongue particularity was a direct consequence of mission's careful development and promotion of vernacular languages in Africa, and from that we come upon the springs of cultural particularity and renewal, the very bases on which significant literary and artistic creation in Africa has gone forward and entered the wide stream of world history. Therefore, we owe these linguistic pioneers, missionary as well as African, an incalculable debt for being the architect of the new consciousness which a maturing humanity ranks among its most prized possessions.

We must, however, point out that if some missionaries saw and welcomed the liberating and renovating effect of vernacular literacy, there were others who saw and feared it (Sanneh 1993: 114-115). In much of French and Portuguese speaking Africa, for example, vernacular scriptural translation was discouraged, in large part because the authorities suspected it of fomenting the nationalism they abhorred. Of course, there was a fomenting element in this; otherwise, people like Nnamdi Azikiwe, a former student of Hope Waddell Training Institute and former President of Nigeria, would not have played such active roles in Nigerian nationalism. The adverse effects of the language policies of the French and Portuguese colonialists on our colonized fellow African brothers and sisters are nothing but a linguistic nightmare even in the present generation. One assessment underscores the point by stating

that "hardly any writing is done in vernacular in former French, Belgium, and Portuguese territories, in contrast to English speaking Africa where indirect rule and the concern of protestant missionaries to make the Bible available to the native populations was paramount"(Sanneh 1993:77).

Who knows what could have become of many vernacular languages like Efik and Igbo, had the missionaries not played a pioneering role in their literary study and usage? Perhaps this may be why former Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, John Miller could say after visiting Nigeria in 2002: "Never have I felt more proud of the Scottish heritage than when in Nigeria!"

But what gave pride to the Scottish missionaries and their Western colleagues also produced some unintended burdens with which the people of Nigeria are still struggling. We shall consider briefly few of these burdens inherited from past missionary labours in our country.

2.7   THE STRUGGLES OF THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE – AN ANALYSIS

Like every other human venture, the mission to Nigeria was not without problems or rather, struggles, as I have chosen to call them. In this work, we shall mention some of the struggles which were and have remained major setbacks in the missionary process.

2.7.1   Insufficient understanding of the people's culture and worldview

As we pointed out in 1.1, one of the problems that has continued to haunt mission work in Nigeria is the issue of culture. In the first place, the missionaries had insufficient or poor understanding of the people's culture. This affected the work negatively and brought a lot of social disintegration and dislocation both in the families and various communities. Time and space will restrict the scope of investigation here; but our immediate illustrations will be drawn from marriage, especially polygamy – an area which was and still is a great source of concern to the people.   The second issue will be ancestral veneration.

First, we shall consider the issue of polygamy. Failing to understand that polygamy was more than a matter of male lust but also an issue of economic security for women in rural Africa, the missionaries insisted that only monogamists are rightful church members. Udoh (1988: 44-5) captured the message when he submitted that:

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Polygyny[20] was and still is a shorthand by which foreigners commonly identify African society. True, African customary law recognizes polygyny. It is a marriage system by which an economically capable man may legally have more wives than one. The number of wives a man had corresponded to his social status. Hence, African kings took in the largest number of wives. The missionaries blamed polygyny for their failure to convert African rulers. For example, despite his outstanding contribution to Calabar Mission − both by reforming the society through *Ekpe* laws and offering his services as a translator − King Eyo of Creek Town, like many African rulers, refused to be converted. In Rev. Waddell's estimation, this was due to his love for money and power. What really caused his rejection of the Gospel was his refusal to give up polygyny. King Eyo added wife upon wife.

Polygamy, no doubt, may have inherent social problems; but one may still question whether the policy stance of the missionaries could not have had another alternative. Up till today, the position of many mission Churches on this issue can best be described as embracing double standards. Having insisted and appealed to monogamy as the standard form of Christian marriage, they did little or nothing about the fate of those coming from a polygamous background. Thus, they created a class of human beings who were socially uprooted and also kept "floating" after severing their matrimonial ties. Now that the Church is becoming serious about mission to Northern Nigeria, which is a Muslim enclave, there is a need for a critical evaluation of the Church's marriage policy in the knowledge that Islam has ample appeal and permission for men marrying up to four wives if they are capable and so desire. This situation calls for a serious dialogue with Islam and the culture of the people.

On the point of ancestral veneration, mentioned earlier in this chapter, Kwame Bediako (1983:113), another Presbyterian from Ghana, poses a troubling question which has not been well answered by the Church in Africa. We need to hear him:

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[20] According to the New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought "Polygyny is a form of legitimate plural marriage (as opposed to illegitimate, i.e. bigamy) in which a man has several wives…It is most commonly found in Africa, where approximately 35 per cent of marriages are estimated to be polygynous….The incidence of polygyny has been linked to certain economic conditions in Africa. It has been suggested that ploygyny is associated with extensive hoe agriculture where labour is the critical factor of production and women play an important role in cultivation. The more wives a man has, the greater will be the productivity. But other anthropologists like Goody (1973) in *Polygyny, Economy and the Role of Women* have linked polygyny not with women as producers, but as reproducers: i.e. their ability to reproduce children which alleviates labour scarcity and allows expansion in the areas of economic activity.

I am concerned with ancestor "worship" as an instance of wrestling with a problem in context – my own specific culture and to my own situation in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The issue is a theological and missiological one, not just an evangelistic question. It is the issue of affirming the Lordship of Christ, which I accept and by which I live in context. The context is the awareness of the importance of ancestors in the Christian organization of the people. The question is: How does Christ who is God according to Christian confession, not simply remain abstract but become an existential experience and reality of the Church? How does that relate to their perception of the role of ancestors in the communal life of the people and in their individual perception of themselves?

Since raising the question in 1983, Bediako and a few other African theologians like Maluleke, Mugambi, and Turaki have been struggling to provide appropriate theological responses to assuage the agitation attending the debate. However, this question is an indication that in many parts of Africa, the issue of ancestral veneration was far from being answered by the missionaries ; indeed, to this day it is still troubling the membership of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. From every indication, the Church in Africa needs new hermeneutical lenses to re-examine the issue if we are serious about doing contextual theology today.

Another matter which was and still remains a problem to deal with in the missionary engagement is witchcraft. We have referred to this in an earlier discussion as one of the religious realities in the African worldview. But the modern missionary movement, child as it was of the evangelical and pietist movements, was deeply influenced by the Enlightenment (Walls 2002:176), and could not provide the needed response to this socio-religious phenomenon. Even missionary education regularly expounded an Enlightenment worldview.

According to Andrew F. Walls (2002:177):

One American missionary in Sierra Leone early in the twentieth century writes home after a science lesson of the privilege it is to reveal a law of nature when his pupils "expect a witch."

The reality of witchcraft was, at best, a matter of intellectual caricature to some uninformed missionaries. It is clear that during the missionary education, a scientific worldview and Christian conviction intermingled and seemed equally opposed to the magical. But the African worldviews were

different. The frontier between the empirical world and the spiritual world was being crossed and repressed every day in both directions. Africans responded to the gospel in multitudes, but they could not easily lose the vision of that open frontier. As a result, the theology they inherited, and the Church practice based upon it, frequently did not seem to fit the facts of daily experience. The problem was that some of the devastating problems of life- witchcraft, for instance- were beyond the mission theology, beyond the Western theology. The resultant clash between worldview and theology, between what people see the world to be and the resources the Church supplies for coping with it in a Christian way, has been incalculably damaging. Multitudes of Christians have not known what to do in emergencies for which traditional Africa has traditional remedies (Walls 2002: 178). There was hardly any mutuality and reciprocity in theological learning in the Church, hence, a "real and imaginary dichotomy"[21] existed in the missionary theatre.

Lack of mutuality and reciprocity in the missionary theatre was one of the problems in the enterprise. There were other problems like the high death toll of the missionaries.

2.7.2   High death toll of the missionaries

One of the major problems that the Presbyterian Mission faced in Calabar was the high death toll of the missionaries. The losses of the early years created crises in the history of the mission. And in the words of the greatest scholar of the Mission – Hugh Goldie, 'of the many deaths, most of them … were victims of over work.' This was why in a display of worry over Mrs. Timsom's death, Mr. Anderson wrote to the Home Mission "to send us a hundred others with broad and expansive chest" (McFarlan 1946:70). The answer came strangely in a slim shy young spinster from Dundee, Miss Mary Mitchell Slessor, who was to become a heroine of African Mission.

We must note, however, that this high death toll was not just a problem to the Calabar Mission. For all of the Protestant missions in the African continent − whether in the West, South, East or up the Congo River − the story was almost the same. In the early years when the going was hard, deaths were numerous and results were meager. Kane (1978:138) reports:

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[21] Kwame Bediako (1995:155) has pointed out that as a result of the absence of mutuality and reciprocity in theological learning in the church, some African theologians like Mbiti saw that there was a real and yet a false dichotomy at the heart of the church's very experience of universality. This dichotomy is real because it is there; it is false because it ought not to be there. One indicator of the lopsidedness in the church's experience of universality and therefore a false universality was the fact that the theology that was brought from the older churches seemed unable to cope with the concerns in the new churches.

The European arm of this missionary movement… was a costly business. In the first twelve years of its work from 1828 at Christiansborg, Accra, the Basel mission lost eight of nine men from fever. The CMS lost fifty-three men in Sierra Leone between 1804 and 1824. The Methodist in the fifteen years following 1835 had seventy-eight new appointments, men and wives in the Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast; thirty of these died within a year of arrival.

At a point, Africa was called "the white man's grave", and Calabar, the cradle of Nigerian Presbyterianism, has a large share of the graves where the remains of many of the Scottish missionaries are resting till today.

One of the effects of these deaths was the seriousness that it produced among the missionaries in finding medical solutions to these irreparable losses. But there were deaths which were caused by diseases and sicknesses that defied, and still defy, Western orthodox medicine. It would appear that African healing seemed to have answers to some of those health problems. Yet, for reasons which include ignorance, pride and prejudice, the Church did not care to source for this alternative. The resources of the African traditional healing system can be explored and exploited to address our contextual health issues if only we would humble ourselves to learn from those who are gifted and knowledgeable.
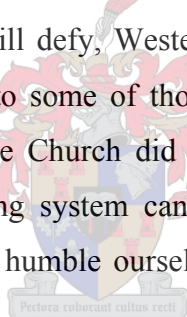
Humility in mission has been lacking in the Church in different places and in so many ways, and the willingness to learn from others has not always been an attribute of missionary endeavours. This statement holds true even for the early Presbyterian missionaries in Nigeria, considering some dimensions of their racial and ethnic relations.

2.7.3. Racial and ethnic rivalry and conflicts in the missionary theatre

At the advent of the Scottish mission, many communities around the Cross River area were in constant conflicts and war. The European traders who had arrived earlier than the missionaries found it impossible to reconcile these communities through commerce. The situation constituted a stumbling block to the spread of the Gospel especially to the interior areas of the Cross River terrain. So, most of the missionary activities were concentrated in Duke Town, the mission headquarters, and the

neighbouring Creek Town area. While other missionaries had desired to base themselves in Duke Town, Mary Slessor had a burning and unquenchable zeal to go to the interior — despite the fact that the Calabar headmen in the interior were a spoke in the wheel of mission outreach there. In an effort to discourage Mary, she was told that the inlanders were cannibals who would not spare her life if she reached their communities.

However, Slessor's prayer was answered when the Mission Committee sent her to work among the people of Okoyong. Accompanied by Mr. Bishop, the printer in Creek Town, she arrived at the new station in August, the height of the rainy season (McFarlan 1946:94). It is important to say that the missionary party made this historic journey amidst torrential rain and in a canoe lent by King Eyo. Mary Slessor at first lived in one of the women's compounds, receiving the hospitality and humanity which continued even when she left for her own self-made mud house.

In the practice of mission, Mary Slessor demonstrated that she was an astute politician and a tested diplomat. Bringing diplomacy to bear upon missionary enterprise, Slessor went to Okoyong when the people were not on speaking terms with the Calabar people – the initial recipients of the Scottish mission. She tried to foster their interest by appealing to native traders in Calabar to come and sell their wares in Okoyong, The traders refused; but she remained persistent:

> …Miss Slessor persuaded the "Christian" King Eyo VII of Creek Town to invite the suspicious chiefs of Okoyong to a palaver in his town. The expedition went down, and was received kindly and courteously… trade with Calabar was then opened up (McFarlan1946:94).

Mary's wit and insight prompted her to initiate a move that yielded immeasurable dividends to the mission even after her death. Little wonder she was appointed Vice Consul over Calabar after her two-year leave and return to Okoyong in 1892. This added responsibility made her an unconventional government servant and clearly exposed her qualities as a judge. The tale of this great gem, who reconciled rival communities through the preaching of the gospel and her exemplary public life, is beautifully told by W. P. Livingstone in his classic of missionary biographies, *Mary Slessor of Calabar, Pioneer Missionary.*

Although we can say that conflicts were prevalent among the local people, the same could also about the missionaries themselves. By the time the mission work in Nigeria was one hundred years old,

things had gone so sour that the Jamaicans could no longer sustain the zeal with which they had joined the work. Consequently, the deteriorating race relations between the Europeans and the West Indian counterparts adversely affected the mission work in Nigeria. On this, Aye (1987:132-133) writes:

> What was clearly noticeable after the Centenary was the severing of that ecclesiastical rope that linked the Calabar Mission with its parent church in Jamaica, and this had to happen under the malicious weight of some sensitive social matters. Indeed, it had begun to be expressive before the centenary days because no new Jamaican member of staff was being recruited to the mission after the retirement of Mr F. A. Foster in the late thirties. The early cordial relationship among racial groups in the Mission was giving way to dissatisfaction that engendered bitterness and frustration among the West Indian members of staff, and this had begun to be sensed in 1921 when the Rev. Macgregor, Principal of the Hope Waddell Training Institution, threatened to resign his post as protest against the deteriorating race relations provoked by some European members in that virgin seat of learning. Mr Manderson-Jones appeared to have been the last of the West Indian staff of the Institution who finally resigned his job for the legal profession.

Contrary to Geoffrey Johnston's[22] claim that "the church was governed without discrimination based on race... All its activities were managed by a single presbytery in which black and white sat as equals" (Johnston 1988:3), it may be seen from Aye's account just cited above, that the missionaries had already sown the seeds of racism in the young Church. Colour and language lines had been subtly drawn and were used as essential determinants for charting the missionary course in the Nigerian Presbyterian mission. And if the underlying philosophy of racism is to separate the "superior" from the "inferior", the "insiders" from the "outsiders" with the former dominating the latter, then it should not be difficult for a discerning mind to understand the ongoing rivalry in the contemporary church in Nigeria. An African proverb says "when the mother goat chews the cord, the young one watches to emulate." In the missionary era, it was racism with the pioneers; in the post-missionary and contemporary era, it is ethnocentrism among their successors. On one hand, the missionaries tried to unite the slaves and their masters in Efik society; but on the other, they were segregating from their colleagues on grounds of colour. Of course, this is one the abiding paradoxes and ironies of human life.

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[22] During my research visit to Canada in November 2005, I drew Johnston's attention to this point. He (Johnston) admitted that racial tension/conflict could have existed in the missionary theatre in ways unknown to those of them who joined the enterprise after a century and a decade.

Indeed, ethnocentrism, which is a twin of racism, has since become part of the distorted ecclesiological identity (the DNA) of the PCN. It has indeed become a cancer sapping the soul and body of the Presbyterian missionary enterprise in Nigeria. As we have pointed out earlier, the effect of ethnocentrism in the Church has been so pervasive and corrosive that there is now a clear correlation between it and lack of true progress even in the nation. This has been discussed in detail in chapter four of this dissertation. Again, as has earlier been explained, it remains strange that despite its painful and overwhelming impact on our ecclesiastical polity, "we seldom call it by its name in our meetings except to justify a decision or a certain course of action which is itself ethnic in nature" (Udoh 1988:272). The Church may not have faced up to this problem, but there is no gainsaying the fact that the Presbyterian Church is caught in the web, and struggles with the pervasive evil of ethnocentrism, which is one of the banes of the Nigerian society today.

One could say that the seed of ethnicism in the PCN today might have been sown with the spirit of racism that prevailed in the days of the Scottish missionary enterprise. Whatever may have been the successes of that missionary endeavour, the abiding effects of ethnicism and racism present the greatest obstacle yet to be overcome in our contemporary mission. The research results in chapter four of this dissertation attest to this fact.

2.8.   PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Methodologically, we started listening to the PCN story in order to understand how that story shaped its identity. The core argument and conclusion drawn from this chapter may be expressed thus:

- The Presbyterian Church was born in a context that influenced, and has continued to influence, her identity.
- Coupled with the local contextual factors, and equally important and critical in shaping the identity of the PCN, are the socio-political and religious events in the countries of the partner Churches − especially Scotland, which happened to be the main source of Presbyterianism in Nigeria.
- Among the events impinging on the mission field was the fraught racial interaction between the Scots and the Jamaicans. This may rightly be described as the precursor to ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, which has increased the already endemic problem in Nigerian society. We shall take up this matter in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE   ETHNICITY IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN NIGERIA

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 gave an overview of the history of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and how the early missionary strategies became a precursor to the prevailing identity and the ethnic problem in the church compounding what is already a problem in the larger society. That ethnic conflicts and religious bigotry are social cankerworms sapping the soul of the Nigerian nation should not be news to anyone who is conversant with the nation's affairs. On seeing the massive scale of destruction in various parts of Jos and its environs, a troubled President Obasanjo addressed the community and religious leaders at Government House and described the whole scenario as "an act of extreme barbarism," and he added: "there is probably more to it than we know"[23] (http://www.vanguardngr.com/news/articles/2001/September/17092001/f2170 901.htm).

He blamed religious, ethnic and community leaders as well as the elite for the crisis, noting: "If we had all done what we ought to have done as we should have done it, this would not have happened."

This chapter, therefore, attempts to unravel the intricate nature of ethnicity as it affects the church and the larger Nigerian society. It is our firm belief (and part of the methodology) that members of the Christian community should be involved in a vocationally based, critical and constructive interpretation of their present reality i.e. local analysis (chapter 1.6). Therefore, a detailed discussion of ethnicity in the church and society in Nigeria requires a working understanding of what ethnicity really means. Methodologically, we are working on the correlational interplay between the theory of ethnicity and the Nigerian reality. Through this process, the contextual identity of both the nation and the church will become clearer.

Secondly, since our focus is missiology, which is a theological enterprise, it is important also to explore briefly the biblical meaning of ethnicity. Hopefully, this attempt will provide the necessary heuristic tools for Nigerian Presbyterians to not only reflect critically on their ethnic differences and qualities, but also to cherish the ideals of the new community in Christ, which should transcend any human classification such as race, tribe nationality and the like. This will lead the church then to ask a critical question: what does it mean to be Christ's disciples in the context of ethnic rivalry, conflicts, and

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[23] This was after the ethno-religious conflict that claimed several lives and property in Jos in 2001.

confusion? And in the face of situations of ethnic manipulations, which hinder rather enhance the proper appropriation of the gospel message, **what is our true identity as Christians?**

Informed, therefore, by the above problems and critical hermeneutical questions, this chapter will deal with the following issues:

- ❖ Ethnicity: origin and conceptualization.
- ❖ Anthropological reflections on ethnicity and identity.
- ❖ Overview of theoretical approaches– instrumentalistm, primordialism & constructivism.
- ❖ Biblical and theological reflections on ethnicity.
- ❖ Ethnicity in Nigeria:

  Ethnic groupings – formation of the groups, main groups, minority groups.

  Ethnic consciousness/identity in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras.
- ❖ Ethnic stereotyping/prejudice in Nigeria
- ❖ Preliminary conclusion

3.2 ETHNICITY: ORIGIN AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The process of specifying what we mean when we use certain terms in research is called *conceptualization* (Babbie 2004:122). As Banks (1996: cover page) has observed, "ethnicity has been a key concept in anthropology and sociology for many years, yet many people still seem uncertain as to its meaning, relevance and its relationship to other concepts such as tribe 'race[24]', and 'nationalism.'"[25] Its meaning is so ambiguous that it is often interchangeably used with the latter terms. Yet, the fact remains that, "while ethnicity has become an over-used concept in the anthropological vocabulary, it is

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[24] It is not that clear that the terms race and ethnicity can be effectively distinguished. The English word "race" is derived from the Latin *ratio* (reason or understanding) which became part of European scientific language during the 16th Century, when it was first used to classify plant and animal species. During the 19th Century the term was subverted, with the help of social Darwism, to justify the power and domination of white Europeans over non-white colonized peoples. This classification was not used to establish scientific anthropological categories but simply to "prove" white "superiority"; and such pseudo-scientific abuse became known as "racism" (Tschuy 1997: xi).

[25] The root of the term "nation" is the Latin *nation* (those born from a common ancestry). Originally equivalent of the Greek *ethnos*, people, it took on different connotations during the course of history. At the time of the French Revolution, *la nation*, the people, stood in opposition to the declining monarchy and the nobility. Soon the expression began to be used for all the inhabitants of a country who lived within the frontiers, which were controlled by their (presumably democratic) government. From there it was a short step to insisting on one common language, uniform administrative structures, fixed boundaries, armies and if possible an identical ideology (Tschuy 1997: x-ix).

finding increasing use (or even misuse) in public language and thought" (Bank 1996: cover page). The question then is: what is ethnicity?

Again, Babbie (2004:122) reminds us that conceptualizing a term like ethnicity would help us have a specific agreed–upon meaning for the purposes of research. This process of specifying exact meaning involves describing the indicators[26] to be used to measure our concept together with the different aspects of the concept called dimensions. It is important also to add here that we don't need to agree, or pretend to agree, that a particular specification about ethnicity is ultimately the best one. And this is why opinions are really divided and there are different schools of thought about what ethnicity means to humanity. But at least, many scholars agree that ethnicity

- gives people a sense of belonging,
- provides an economy of affection especially in the traditional societies where, for example, payment of bride price or wealth involves the interaction of different ethnic groups, and
- enhances socialization of norms and values. e.g. honesty and hard work within the various ethnic groups.
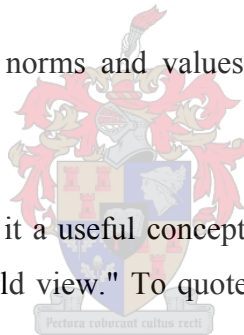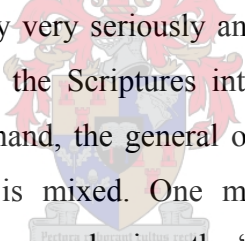
But what then is an ethnic group, and is it a useful concept? The answer to this question depends on whom you are talking to, and their "world view." To quote a fairly long but useful description from Berry and Tischler (1978:41):

> An ethnic group is a human group bound together by ties of cultural homogeneity. Complete uniformity, of course, is not essential; but there does prevail in an ethnic group a high degree of loyalty and adherence to certain basic institutions such as family patterns, religion, and language. The ethnic group often possesses distinctive folkways and mores; customs of dress, art and ornamentation; moral codes and value systems, and patterns of recreation. There is usually some sort of object to which the group manifests allegiance, such as a monarch, a religion, a language, or a territory. Above all, there is a consciousness of kind, feeling of association. An ethnic group may even regard itself as a race, a people with common ancestry; but the fact of such common descent is of much less significance than the assumption that there is a blood relationship, and the myths that the group develops to substantiate such an

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[26] An indicator is a sign of the presence or the absence of the concept we are studying.

assumption. Ethnic groups, of course, are not all alike, and none would embody all the features we have enumerated. Some will emphasize certain of these characteristics to the exclusion of others. Religion may serve as an important object of allegiance to one and be of little importance to another. Furthermore, ethnic groups are dynamic. The folkways may change, the institutions become radically altered, and the object of allegiance shift from one trait to another, but the sentiment of loyalty to the group and the consciousness of belonging remain as long as the group exists. An ethnic group may or may not have its own political unit; it may have had one in the past, it may aspire to have one in the future, or its members may be scattered through existing states. Political unification is not an essential feature of the group.

Because of the ambivalence of the subject, people − especially in missiological studies − have often wondered whether ethnicity is a blessing to or a burden to humanity. In an article entitled, *Ethnicity: friend or foe?* Donald R. Jacobs (http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1002 accessed on 20/2/2006) wrote:

> Modern missions do take ethnicity very seriously and their work is not always understood or appreciated. Those who translate the Scriptures into the vernacular are often criticized for fostering ethnicity. On the other hand, the general opinion in academia is that missions have destroyed cultures. The review is mixed. One modern proponent of mission is Donald McGavran who, with his colleagues, emphasizes the "homogeneous principle" which is that the gospel spreads most readily in a horizontal direction, that is, within ethnic groups. They advocate an ethnic evangelism which produces ethnic churches. Yet some missiologists fear the specter of ecclesiastical apartheid if Christians embrace ethnicity. In summary, missiologists do not know what to think about ethnicity.

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, there is, indeed, a relationship between ethnicity and identity. In fact, ethnic affiliations, in most cases, determine the political landscape and greatly influence the social web in Africa. In the context of Nigeria, ethnicity seems to have an unfading role in the country because it has formed the people. In Nigeria, as in other African countries, ethnicity is ancient and inherent: it is not a matter of choice. One may argue that people do not choose state citizenship either. But states do not form people; rather, it is cultures that do so.

Therefore, the study of ethnicity and its connection with religion has overwhelming implications for the Church in Nigeria. This is not only crucial to an understanding of the various social identities, but is also necessary in the critical analysis of the pathologies of the nation. So, to fail to address the issue of ethnicity both in the church and the state can result in political suffocation for the country and spiritual suicide for the church! Put more pointedly, the study of the interaction of ethnicity and religion in state or church is a project that can only be neglected at a perilous cost at this moment in history.

Einer Bratathen, Morten Boas and Gjermund Saether (2000:3) in *Ethnicity Kills? Social struggles for Power, Resources and Identities in the Neo-Patrimonial State* boldly argued:

> Obviously, ethnicity plays a role in most conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the sense that ethnic affiliations often structure the composition of groups in conflict. Moreover, there is little doubt that one of the main reasons why people kill each other is who they are and the identities they represent. We are all to some degree still tied to the identities around which ethnic national conflicts are fought. The power that binds us to these identities through a process that Foucault (1982:212) refers to as *assujettisement*, or subjectification, still operates.

It would be helpful to observe that ethnicity is not an essential attribute of Africans, or Europeans for that matter, but just one of several identities. Ethnicity, therefore, cannot be discussed outside of its precise historical context (Chabal and Daloz 1999). Furthermore, ethnicity is neither essentially a primordial carry-over nor the result of a modern conspiracy. Every ethnicity has a social history, and it is in a continuous process of being made and remade (Mamdani 1996:185). Thus, it should not be used as a static concept.

As stated previously, ethnicity plays some positive roles in human society. It also has to be observed, however, that ethnicity has some fearsome and destructive potential within any given society. Ethnicity does not only humanize people, it also dehumanizes. This may be illustrated from the many intractable conflicts in the world today that are said to be ethnic in nature. Among the numerous examples of deadly ethnic conflicts in our time are: the Arabs against the Jews, Hutus against Tutsis, Irish against British, Basques against Spaniards, Kurds against Iraqis, Croats against Serbs, Ukrainians against Russians, and Tamil Nadir against Sri Lankans. All these make headlines almost every day; yet they are only the tip of the iceberg. Just under the surface of virtually any state lies a heterogeneous mass of groups, tribes , languages and nations. It is trouble waiting to happen (Jacobs 2006:6)

It is important to emphasise that ethnicity *per se* is not evil; but ethnocentrism is. There is nothing essentially evil about tribe; but tribalism is malevolent. Ethnicity is a legitimate expression of the origins of an ethnic group, with its revered beliefs, myths and traditions. It identifies a people. After all, every human being is born into a particular ethnic group and none of us, in fact, chooses the ethnic group into which s/he is born. Ethnic ethnic identity gives one a sense of belonging, stability of mind and character.

During the process of socialization, a child is made aware of his or her ethnic identity, and there is nothing intrinsically bad about that. But again, a lot depends on what is being taught by those inside and outside the child's ethnic group. If during the process of socialization a child is made to feel that other peoples and their values are inferior, s/he will grow up believing that such outsiders are inferior and less human, and may even find nothing wrong in killing, plundering and enslaving them. Thus the person's sense of judgment becomes distorted by ethnocentrism (or, ethnism) This form of ethnicity is not only an ideological tool but something dangerous and demonic; its evil consequences have been obvious in many parts of the world, including Africa. If we are avoid a repeat of the ethnic manipulations of the past century − with the appalling human destruction that accompanied them − we need an orientation towards true ethnicity. This orientation should be deeply rooted in a critical anthropological investigation as well as honest biblical and theological reflection.

This is what I intend doing in the section that follows.

3.3 ANTHROPOLOGICAL/SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON ETHNICITY

3.3.1 Importance of the reflection

Since ethnicity has the capacity to humanize and dehumanize, it means that a critical anthropological reflection on the subject is an imperative.

 Since ethnicity is a cultural issue, it is as such tied to people's worldview. In Africa, each culture has its distinctive worldview that sets it apart. Moreover, it enables people to rationalize life and to control their circumstances. Each tribe, in turn, views itself as an entity, a "people", that includes "every one" of them: the living, the departed, and the unborn. All of those included in the mystical group, living and dead, are "us"; all others are "them." Since no tribe can isolate itself, they all have to learn how to

inhabit the same geographic area. Each group relates to persons of other groups in ways that are different from their own interaction.. So while each is a self-contained universe, it also interacts in some way with neighbours, both hostile and friendly.

This cosmological configuration confounds the Western mind, which has learned to disdain ethnicity as a vestige of the past and view tribalism as somewhat "primitive" (Jacobs 2006:8). Most people in North America have difficulty understanding the power of ethnicity because they constitute an immigrant society which does not anchor its ethnicity in the geographic environment. Therefore, citizens easily transfer their loyalty to the State. In North America, rarely do persons perceive of themselves first as Irish, German, Polish, and then as patriots of the State. This also explains why North Americans find it hard to believe that modern Quebec truly wants to secede from Canada.

Admittedly, "ethnicity" is a complex issue and our understanding of human beings determines how we treat it. There is an extensive amount of literature[27] on the subject. The publication of Barth's work (*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*) in 1969 was both an indication of, and stimulus to, the increasing importance of ethnicity as an area for academic study, in Africa and elsewhere (Atkinson 1999:21). Since then, much has been written; however, most of the available materials use modes of analysis which reflect more of the Western categories of thinking and interpretation than those of the peoples under review
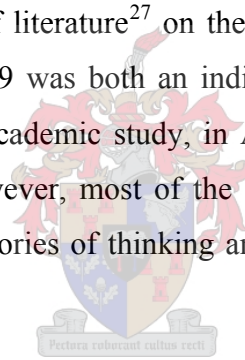
The scenario seemed to have changed by the end of the 1990s. From 1989 onwards African scholarship produced more published work with a substantive emphasis on ethnicity than it had during the previous four decades[28]. This may be a fulfilment of Bogumil Jewsiewicki's prediction at the beginning of the decade that the 1990s 'will accord a place – perhaps even a central one – to intellectual history', history that deals with popular ideologies and conceptual frameworks elaborating on identities including class, ethnicity and nationalism (Atkinson 1999:21). Certainly, with respect to identity in general and ethnicity in particular, this prediction seems to be proving true (Atkinson1999:21). Even the very research work of this dissertation could be a testimony to that prediction. This is an indication that

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[27]During the decade of the 1970s, six comparative, cross-disciplinary journals devoted extensively to the study of ethnicity were founded (although none were African –focused): Plural societies (1970), Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism (1973), Ethnicity (1974), Ethnic Groups (1976), Ethnic and Racial Studies (1978), and Research in Race and Ethnic Relations (1979).

[28] I have looked at many books and titles on ethnicity. A few of these titles have been consulted and are included in the bibliography.

African voices must be heard on African problems; it is important not only because we Africans know, but also because we understand, where the ethnic identity shoes pinch. We are part of the struggle and we understand the interplay of the various dynamics. Our experience of the impact of ethnicity in Nigeria – one of the key countries in the African continent- shows that ethnic groups and identities are a product of many factors.

For this reason, Atkinson may, perhaps, be right in arguing that ethnic groups and identities are not the inevitable outcome of cultural beliefs and practices, but a creation of socio-historical dynamics, politics and ideology. Conceptualizing ethnicity this way has become much more powerful analytically than earlier approaches; it has contributed to the crucial idea that such terms as tribe, ethnic group, and nation are fundamentally constructs of human imagination − rather than entities with a concrete, practical existence in the real world (Atkinson 1999:19). Atkinson, no doubt, is of the constructivist school of thought when it comes to ethnicity. This school of thought is one of the approaches that are considered in the overview that follows.

3.3.2   An Overview of the approaches

According to Crawford Young (1993:7-8), there are basically three approaches to the study of ethnicity: *instrumentalism, primordialism* and *constructivism.* The approaches are summarized thus:
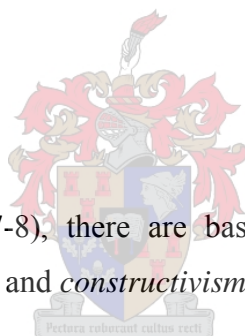
3.3.2.1 Instrumentalism

Writing about ethnicity as an instrument employed in pursuit of material gain in the Copperbelt region of Southern Africa, Young (1993:7-8) explains:

> [b]uilding upon the insights of Coleman and others [particularly the Copperbelt studies], its contributors privileged the uses of ethnicity as a weapon in political combat and social competition. Ethnicity was contingent, situational, and circumstantial; it was an available identity in a repertoire of social roles for use in the pursuit of material advantage. Such a conceptualization beckoned exploration of the political factors that might induce its activation, the cultural entrepreneurs who supplied its doctrines and the activists who exploited these solidarities.

This approach was utilized by scholars across disciplines and with a wide range of interests and theoretical perspectives. They included anthropologists concerned with understanding 'tribal' Africans in multi-ethnic urban settings; political scientists interested in bringing ethnicity into considerations of contemporary modernization, nationalism, politics and the state (Atkinson 1999:22); and those materialist scholars who paid ethnicity some attention mainly as a form of consciousness to be exploited by members of the political elite for their own class interests. In a sense, ethnicity is seen by the school of instrumentalism as an ideological tool in the hands of both cultural entrepreneurs and political actors.

3.3.2.2 Primordialism

The second approach to ethnicity distinguished by Young is primordialism. However compelling instrumentalism was, Young (1993:21) submits that,

> …in illuminating the contemporary dynamics of cultural competition and conflict, something important was missing in the material focus of the instrumentalist. A *primordialist* school – in reality an older perspective but now renovated by its dialogue with instrumentalism – emerged to explore the psychological and the cultural dimensions necessary to grasp the intensities which might surround ethnic conflict.
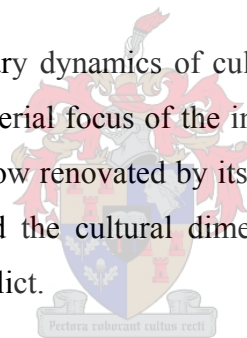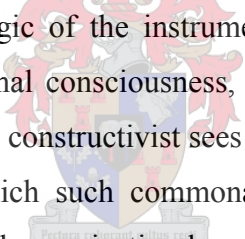
This new primordialism has taken several forms. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, for instance, argued for the strength of primordialist attachments which are expressed through various cultural forms in places throughout the world. Fellow anthropologist, A. L. Epstein, followed up his earlier instrumentalist Copperbelt studies with a primordialist-oriented work which he found necessary in order to understand the 'powerful emotional charge' of the 'affective dimension' of ethnic behaviour (Atkinson 1999:23). In more popular realms, journalist-scholar Harold Isaacs wrote in the mid-1970s about the primordial psychological power of what he called a 'basic group identity', which provided at least the promise of emotional security, belongingness, and self-esteem for its members (Atkinson 1999:24) More recently, politician-scholar Daniel Patrick Moynihan has asserted the essentially primordialist position that ethnicity is 'ascriptive', a consequence of birth. Finally, some sociobiologists have argued an extreme primordialist interpretation of ethnicity that makes it part of basic instinctual urges – or even of the imprinted genetic codes of human beings (Atkinsons 1999:22).

Despite such extremes, Young argues that primordialism can, in a sense, help 'complete' instrumentalism. It can do this, Young writes, 'by explaining the power of the "affective tie" through which interest is pursued' and by capturing 'the passionate dimension latent in ethnic conflict, its capacity to arouse deep fears, anxieties, and insecurities and to trigger collective aggression inexplicable in terms of simple material pursuit of interest (Atkinson 1999:23).

3.3.2.3 Constructivism

By the mid- to the late-1980s, argues Young (1994:79-80), both earlier positions were being largely superseded by or incorporated into a broadly (and variously) delineated third approach to ethnicity, namely, 'constructivism'. Influenced by the post-structuralist theoretical discourse in general, and more specifically by Anderson's conceptualization of the nation as an 'imagined community', most constructivists incorporated and built upon insights of the two earlier perspectives while also turning them on their heads. For constructivists, writes Young, 'the essence of the problematic is the creation of ethnicity':

> [t]he constructivist inverts the logic of the instrumentalist and primordialist, both of whom presume the existence of communal consciousness, either as weapon in pursuit of collective advantage or as inner essence. The constructivist sees ethnicity as the product of human agency, a creative social act through which such commonalities as speech code, cultural practice, ecological adaptation, and political organization become woven into a consciousness of shared identity....The constructivist thus places higher stress on contingency, flux, and change of identity than the other two approaches would concede.

Constructivist approaches move beyond taking the ethnic unit, ethnic identity, or ethnicity for granted or accepting that these are givens. Instead, ethnic groups and ethnicity need to be explained and accounted for in dynamic terms. This allows theorizing and reconstructing ethnicity as it evolves, redefines itself, and is redefined by others over time; it invites the consideration of the complexity and fluidity of the multiple (and ever-changing) forces that shape notions of collective identity. These shaping forces are found within and without and through both the powerful and the dominated. In short, constructivist notions are – or can certainly be construed to be – fundamentally historical. It is thus hardly surprising that while a wide range of scholars across disciplines have constructivist approach to ethnicity, historians – including, and perhaps especially, historians of Africa – have been influential in this endeavour.

On the whole, I find these classifications very fascinating and useful − first, in order to assist in placing one in the ethnic firmament of Nigeria; secondly, in order to judge the critics of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria and, finally, in order to begin to understand ethnic group dynamics and conflict in Nigeria and elsewhere. It is fair, for example, to expect that those people in Nigeria with little or no contact with other ethnic groups are most likely to be "primordialists", and would be too easily dismissed by critics as "primitive." Epiphenominalist ethnicists would be dismissed as opportunistic by critics who might consider themselves "enlightened" and principled. Supporters of the ascriptive approach would be described with an air of disappointment as "enlightened persons who should know better",or as "closet opportunists with a hidden agenda!" (Atkinson 1999). It is clear that governments bent on homogenizing a people and making one country out of many ethnic nations, might dismiss every type of ethnicist as undesirable, and hence seek to crush them. This could lead to ethnic-state conflict. One can only hope that it does not happen in Nigeria as it will only expose the ignorance of our social engineers and political actors.

What this boils down to is that ethnicity as an anthropological category remains a complex and an ambivalent concept that avoids neat approximations. The paradoxical feature of the phenomenon is rooted in the abiding ambivalence of human nature itself. For people are not only social beings; they are also innately religious, which means we have to resist any mono-directional approach to human phenomena like ethnicity. In order to grapple with the subject of this dissertation, we need a theological anthropology in addition to social anthropology.

3.4 BIBLICAL AND CHRISTIAN[29] THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON ETHNICITY

Anthropology refers primarily to humankind and the way we comprehend our identity, which includes ethnicity. Theological anthropology[30] is therefore important in our study of human beings in their relationship to God and to one another (especially in terms of our shared identity). Karl Barth's

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[29] Aware that there are other shades of religious opinion on anthropology, I have deliberately introduced the term 'Christian' in discussing anthropology in this dissertation.

[30] A theological anthropology deals with the origin, nature and destiny of human beings (Hendriks 2004:22). We believe that human beings are inherently sinful (Genesis 3, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:1-10), but that we can be redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ in a process of being born again. John explains this as the work of the Holy Spirit that is shrouded in mystery. Belonging to Christ our Redeemer leads to a life-long process of sanctification, meaning a process in which we have to grow spiritually to become what God has intended us to be: people bearing His image and likeness (Gen 1:226-28).

influential but controversial thoughts on contemporary Christian theological anthropology, as documented in Daniel J. Price's *Karl Barth's Anthropology* (2002), are relevant here. The salient feature of Barth's anthropology is that it is dynamic[31] − not merely in the sense that it indicates raw motion as opposed to a static state,, but also in the sense that "dynamic" refers to interpersonal relations (Price 2002:97).

In order to understand the relational character of Barth's anthropology, a shift in perspective is required from former categories of Christian anthropology. The relational implications of Barth's anthropology are highlighted by his adoption of the Latin phrase: *Si quis dixerit hominem esse solitarium, anathema sit.*[32] This Latin phrase indicates the social character of Barth's anthropology: to be human is to participate in a shared experience. Therefore no accurate understanding of the human being can be derived if we look at a person in isolation from God and others (Price 2002:97). This communal aspect of our human 'beinghood' occupies Barth's attention for the first half of his volume on Christian anthropology[33]. The question may be asked: what provided stimulus for Barth's interest in this relational anthropology? According Price (2002:98), two possible sources come to mind:

> Barth cultivated a deep suspicion of Western individualism, perhaps due to his earlier interest in Christian socialism. The influences of Christoph Blumhardt, Herman Kutter, Leonhard Ragaz, and others who thought that socialism was about to deliver us from the excesses of the industrial revolution and bring about a better world quickly come to mind. But in Barth's later thought it is far more likely that his anthropology grew out of his reading the Bible, especially the Gospel John, and most especially … chapter 17.

Thus, Barth founded his anthropology on the human nature of the Christ of the Bible. In doing so, he did not only 'safeguard theological anthropology against *docetism* but also concretized theological

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[31] We have to keep in mind that, among other views the Scriptural assessment of human beings is not primarily pessimistic; it does not bind them to their guilt and transience. Neither is the Scripture optimistic; it does not ignore sin, nor does it rely solely on human inner potentials. The biblical view of human person is realistic. It uses the notions of salvation and empowerment to reveal to human beings who they are. Knowledge which emanates from the relationship with God, creates in a person a *dynamic ambivalence*. A person is a being who can confess: '*I* sinned and *I* trespassed.' But a person is also a being who is liberated and can give thanks to God. A person can profess: 'I believe.' This reality of faith results in thanksgiving and praise (doxology): 'I praise God.' [*Therefore*], biblical realism is a realism of faith (Louw 2000:155).

[32] CD, III/2, p.319. "If anyone will have said that man is solitary, let him be anathema."

[33] See CD, III/2.

anthropology'. In the book, *A Pastoral Hermeneutics of Care and Encounter* Louw (2000:150) suggests:

> Barth believes that a Christology offers understanding of the basic trait of human beings: people in their togetherness with and a focus upon God. This ontological destiny of a person is grounded in the fact that Christ is, a priori, the Fellow-human being of all. Each person also is the fellow human being of Christ.

This link between Christology and true humanity (anthropology), gives human existence a symbolic character. The togetherness of people becomes a symbol of the original partnership between God and humankind. As Louw (2000:151) puts it: "This association is truly experienced in human deeds of love. The human person becomes a parable (image of God) and an analogy of the relation God-Christ (the Person)."

In terms of our reflection on ethnicity as part of our human identity, the question remains: Can this Barthian model of the relation between Christology and anthropology be justified scripturally?

3.4.1   Ethnicity and the Bible

As the Bible remains the irreplaceable **normative and authoritative** document for the faith and life of the Church, its identity and mission, it is imperative that our discussion on the Christian understanding of ethnicity proceeds from here. This normativity of the Bible in relation to ethnic discourse has also been echoed by Brett (2000:5):

> There can be no denying that the Bible has had, and continues to have, an influence on many cultures, and a specialist knowledge of this ancient library is something which carries moral and political implications – whether scholars possess particular faith commitment or not. As the discipline of biblical studies begins to absorb the significance of reader-oriented literary theory, and the "cultural studies" movement, it is becoming yet clear that scholarly discourses themselves have histories and socio-economic locations. Whether we like it or not, we are implicated in contemporary ethnic issues.

As a "library", the Bible has much to say about humanity and creation. Thus, despite the prevailing onslaught of secularism and secularization, and the apparent disappearing of a Bible- reading culture in many people today, Barzuk (2001:27-28) reminds us that:

> The Bible is a whole literature, a library. It is an anthology of poetry and short stories. It teaches history, biography, biography, biology, geography, philosophy, political science, psychology, hygiene, and sociology (statistical at that), in addition to cosmogony, ethics, and theology. What gives the Bible so strong a hold on the minds that once grow familiar with its content is its dramatic reporting of human affairs. For all its piety, it presents a worldly panorama, and with particulars so varied that it is hard to think of a domestic or social situation without a biblical example to match and turn to moral ends.

As many scholars would agree, one of the prominent subjects of the Bible is anthropology. And in biblical anthropology, human identity is found in God, not in race or ethnic group. The author of Genesis states: "every human being is created in the image and likeness of God".[34] The Scripture also clearly attests: "When the Most High gave nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples".[35] This verse therefore reflects the early history of humanity in which different ethnic groups were associated with different territories. And to say that God is sovereign over the nations is but another way of saying that he is Lord of history – a history that starts with the Old Testament.

3.4.2   Ethnicity in the Old Testament

As Christians, the Bible is our normative document for the study of theological anthropology. Ethnicity in the Bible (Old Testament) is denoted by several words. An investigation of the use of *ger* in the Hebrew Bible, and a social description of the *gerim* and their condition, will help us to understand biblical ideas of ethnicity. In the LXX, *ethnos* is almost always used to translate *ger* and *laos* for '*am*'. In disagreement, however, different scholars give English translations of *ger* as "s*ojourner*" **"***alien*" or "*immigrant*" (Thanzauva and Hnuni 2001:344). Thus, the Hebrew term *ger* primarily refers to people who are distinct from , and not part of the dominant group. What is important, though, is the fact that whatever meaning may be given to the Hebrew words, they do not signify much apart from their

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[34] Genesis 1:26,27
[35] Deuteronomy 32:8

context. Therefore, an etymological approach to the study of these words should not be pushed too far. Rather, context and usage in understanding the ideas are essential considerations.

In this regard, the most formidable problem has to do with the description and explanation of social groups larger than the family. As with all social groups, the formulation of boundaries is a crucial feature of self-definition: who should be considered one of "us" and who should be considered "other"? (Brett 1996:10). This differentiation creates a boundary - a boundary between "us" and those who look "like us." Thus the Old Testament emphasizes different aspects of this phenomenon and also illustrates the complexity of it as a social dialectic (Brett 2002:13). The legal texts regulate the treatment of the "stranger" by reminding the people of Israel that they should love the stranger as themselves because they, too, were once strangers (Leviticus 19:34). One could even say that the idealistic laws tried to codify the traditions of "hospitality to the stranger" (Exodus 22:20; 23:9, 12). Isaiah (2:2-4; compare Brueggemann 1987:15) had a vision of all people drawn into community around the will of Israel's God. But Sparks (1998:322) argues that although popular ethnic sentiments were well established by the eighth century, when Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah did their work, "it was the task of Hosea and his proto-Deuteronomic community to take these pre-existing ethnic sentiments and to intensify them in support of a mono-Yahwist agenda, which rejected all other deities as 'foreign'". Because of such ethnic sentiments, 'foreigners' or 'strangers' were oppressed in the Isaelite community.

Yet, offences against them were viewed by the Prophets not simply as ethical violations, but as the disruption of God's intended shalom, the perversion of the community God wills for people in history.

> "Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are in the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy…" (Amos 4:1 compare Brueggemann 1987:18).

That the Hebrew term *ger* refers primarily to people who are distinct from, and not part of, the dominant group, still creates a problem when we want to draw a boundary to determine who should be 'inside' or 'outside' (Brett 1996:11). It appears that, in most parts of Israelite history (including the monarchical period), exclusionary attitudes towards the strangers co-existed with idealistic laws about them. It would seem also that the exile experience "raised the stakes" on this discussion because of the particular circumstances of tension within the post-exilic communities, who were seeking to re-build their lives in Palestine during the Persian period (Brett 1996:11). One extreme position is the

"racialized" marriage[36] policies of Ezra/Nehemiah (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 13:3, 23-31). Therefore, the Old Testament in various ways denotes ethnicity both as inclusion and as exclusion.

But one indisputable claim of the Hebrew Bible ii that God is the author and architect of history. The Israelites were aliens (*gerim*) before their settlement in Canaan. They entered Canaan as clans, and their experience as aliens became the basis for their responsibility to care for people from other ethnic groups. "You shall not oppress a stranger (*ger*), for you were strangers (*gerim*) in the land of Egypt" (Exod.23:9). For almost four centuries, they managed almost no state apparatus. God seemed pleased with this arrangement and resisted their repeated attempts to become a state. When they finally instituted the monarchy and became a state, the clan system continued functioning to some degree until the coming of Christ. Anyone reading the Old Testament is made aware of how seriously God takes ethnicity. In the inter-testamental period, the Jews of the Diaspora were busy proselytising Gentiles, and absorbing the converts into Jewish culture. And this was the case until the advent of Jesus Christ and the early Church.

3.4.3   Ethnicity in the New Testament and the Early Church

The term *ethnos* and its cognate words, *ethnikos* and *ethne,* were used for nation, people in general, and for the Gentiles as distinct from Jews or Christians (Thanzauva and Hnuni 2002:344). The use of *ethne* in the New Testament, as a technical term for the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews and Christians, corresponds in some measure to *gerim* in the Hebrew Bible.

We may, however, ask the question: what role did ethnicity play in the identity and character of the early Christian movement? In attempting to address this enquiry, one must start from the life and ministry of Jesus who is the one from whom the Church originated. The first thing which can be said is that the gospel, while critical of ethnic pride and strife, does affirm ethnicity. Its central theme is the incarnation − God taking on human "flesh." The Messiah was a Jew. As the Man of all cultures, Jesus entered a specific culture. He was a descendant of David, raised in a small Galilean village. He accepted a cultural identity. That is consistent with the incarnation. To become human, therefore, is to engage fully in one of humanity's cultures.

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[36] Brett 1996:11 emphasizes that Ezra –Nehemiah is an example of a "long heated conversation about how the boundaries of Israelite community are to be constructed and maintained". He sees the "racialised marriage policies of Ezra-Nehemiah" as an "extreme position" in "construction" of ethnic boundaries. By "racialised" marriage, Brett (1996:11) alludes to the "lineage-based of biological idea inherent in the 'holy seed' (Ezra 9)".

In the first few years of the Church, all its members were Jews. At this time the Church included the disciples and the family of Jesus, all Jews by birth, and perhaps another hundred people (see Acts 1:15) who must also be reckoned as Jews since Luke refers to them as "Hebrews" (compare Acts 6:1).

But Paul represents a view that, within the social space defined by Jesus Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free (Galatians 3:28); Christ has erased the categories of ethnic group, gender and class" (Boyarin 1994:5). Nevertheless, complexities are still manifest within the New Testament material. For if Paul appears to be describing a "new humanity of no difference," then the wider contours of his argument constitute precisely an ascription of ethnic identity to the Galatians − an identity opposed to the Jewish ethnos. For instance, the picture of Matthew's community is that of a Torah-centred but messianic Jewish sect, which regards blood-ties and genealogy and the Jewish practice of circumcision as necessary (though not sufficient) for membership in the community. This concept contrasts with the peoplehood advocated by Paul in Galatians 4:29. Mathew falls between these extremes: the physical and the spiritual descent.

It is remarkable how some of these basic conflicts in biblical theology find their parallel in the recent scientific debates about the nature of ethnicity. For example, *primordialism* presents ethnicity as not just a function of interaction , but as a deeply rooted and durable affiliation based on kinship, shared territory, and tradition (Brett 2002:12). On the other hand, *constructivism* suggests that ethnicity is more manipulable and variable; the agency of the subjects concerned has a much higher profile. This is evidenced, for example, in Fredrik Barth's (1969) classic introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.* Over against Ezra/Nehemiah's primordial nativism, one might be justified in seeing Barth's volume as a kind of Pauline *constructivism*.

But Bosch (1991:50) argues that, "The community around Jesus was to function as a kind of *pars pro toto*, a community for the sake of all others, a model for others to emulate and be challenged by. Never, however, was this community to sever itself from others". Yet the book of Acts, in spite of presenting, on the whole, an idealized picture of the primitive Church, does not hide from us some of the tensions, failures and sins of the early Christians, including their racial and ethnic conflicts (Cf 6:1) The Church

went through great controversy and conflicts before accepting the Gentiles[37] into the Christian fold without circumcision.

Moreover, when we read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev 2-3), we realize that the early Christian communities were as far from the ideal as our own churches are today.

Interestingly, the Day of Pentecost marked a living spiritual experience with all cultures; no identities were lost, no traditions were disvalued[38]. The Gospel simply permeated each cultural situation.   The Pentecost event was not a reversal of Babel . Prior to the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-10) , all of humanity was of one language; in Jerusalem at Pentecost the new community spoke many languages (Acts 2). When the Spirit comes, all understand each other; yet each speaks his or her own language. Therefore, Pentecost is not a reversion to the unity of cultural uniformity; it is an advance towards the harmony of cultural diversity (WARC 1994:4)

Accordingly, Paul thinks that Christ's greatest achievement was to open a pathway to God that transcended national distinction. Hence, the gospel knows no privileged nation. Human beings from every nation can come to God in exactly the same way through Jesus Christ: 'Here [in Christ] there is no Greek, or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.'[39] Paul was vilified by the Jews because he defended the Gentiles against the demands of those Jews who wanted proselytes to adopt Jewish cultural habits. He insisted that conversion does not catapult a person from one culture to another.

According to Hughes and Bennett (1998:225), Peter picks up this same theme at the beginning of his first letter. He described those to whom he wrote as 'God's elect...scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia' (1 Peter1:1). He describes those who had become Christians from all the nations as 'a holy nation [*ethnos*], a people [*laos]* belonging to God.'… ' Once you were not a

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[37] According to Bosch (1991:42), "This did not come about without controversy, as is evident from a reading of Acts. In order to appreciate something of this controversy and its significance to the early Christian mission, it is necessary to take cognizance of the differences in self-understanding between the *hebraioi* ("Hebrews"), or Aramaic-speaking Jewish-Christians) and the *hellenistai* ("Hellenists" or Greek-speaking Jewish Christians)."

[38] Acts 2:1 – 40.

[39] Col. 3:11.

people [laos]' he goes on, 'but now you are the people [laos] of God'[40]. Peter is clearly saying here that allegiance to Christ defines the most fundamental sense of community for the Christian. Being united in Christ with others from a whole variety of nations brings into being an alternative nation or people. This reconciliation of different ethnic groups within the Church is integral to God's saving purpose. Ethnic identity, therefore, is made radically relative when a person becomes a member of God's new 'nation' (Hughes and Bennett 198:225).

What this means is further clearly spelt out by Paul in his address to the intellectuals of Athens: 'From one man', Paul states, '[God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places they should live.'[41] It follows from Paul's argument therefore that no nation is inherently superior to another nation because of its origin, in that all nations have the same origin. Similarly no human being is inherently superior to any other human being since they are all created in the image of God, although this image has been universally polluted by the Fall.[42] Paul then challenged the Greek idea that they were superior to other people because they had sprouted from places other than Greece.

The fact that Paul was wrestling with this issue means ethnicity was already a problem in the early Church. Even then, the social stratification in the Church had become so pronounced that the believers needed a constant reminder that 'sex, social status and ethnic identity mean nothing where status before God is concerned'.[43]By the logic of biblical Christianity, the question of human dignity is therefore a theological one, and derives its very origin from God. Here lies the challenge to both missiologists and missionaries. Missiologists, in particular, must ultimately ponder this issue. And we need to start by asking: What is our theology of ethnicity? How does ethnicity fit into God's scheme of things?

Obviously, Christians are called into a new nation and a new commonwealth. This calling is a struggling and a challenging one. However, the calling does not mean to deny our nationhood, but to sanctify it. Paul's attitude towards his Jewishness is very instructive in treading a path between transcending and owning one's ethnic identity. On the one hand, Paul, more than any other in the early Church, was responsible for demolishing the idea that there is any such thing as national superiority where relationship with God is concerned. Rather, in the most fundamental area of our being there is

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[40] 1 Pet. 2:9 -10.
[41] Acts 17:26
[42] See Gen. chapter 3 and compare that with Romans 3:23.
[43] Gal. 3:28.

complete equality among human beings. Consequently, Paul can hold his Jewish identity very lightly. He reminiscences: 'to the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews; to those not having the law I became like one not having the law.'[44]

On the other hand, it seems that Paul saw no contradiction between his central conviction that relationship with Christ entailed a radically new identity, and what was essential to his Jewishness. He had a passion and self-sacrificing love for his own people. 'I have a great sorrow and anguish in heart', he says, 'For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my race, the people of Israel'.[45]This is seen clearly in the way he respected his own language and tradition. It may also be significant that Jesus − himself an Aramaic speaking Jew − chose to address Paul in Aramaic on the road to Damascus. Jesus, like Paul, loved his own people passionately despite his knowledge that his calling was to draw people from all nations to God (Hughes and Bennett 198:226). Clearly, there is a creative tension between the transcending and the owning of our ethnic identities.

At this point, we may have to remind ourselves of the **climactic** scenes of the Book of Revelation. The apocalyptic writer tells us: 'And they sang a new song: You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men (and women) for God from every tribe, and language and people and nations' (Rev. 5:9 NIV). The theme is repeated in Revelation 7:14, and 15. The very ethnicity we often deplore takes "centre stage" in the revelation of future events: tribe, language, people, nation (*phyle, glossa, laos, ethnos*). Why this reference to ethnicity in the victory of the Lamb? Tribes in heaven? Perhaps, John is emphasizing the scope of the Church, including not only the twelve "tribes" of Israel but all tribes on the face of the earth; or, that the gospel is well suited to appeal to persons of all cultures. Or does he see in this vision the leveling of all cultures, when the mighty Romans will come to God in humble submission alongside battered slaves of the empire? John does not tell us. However it appears that in *missio Dei,* any contribution that any nation may make in any sphere to the glory of God is not going to be forgotten. As I. Howard Marshall (1979) expressed in a comment on Revelation 21: 12, 26:

> Culture is inextricably bound up with people; it is people which form societies, and so if
> the people move over into the next world, to some extent their societies and thus some

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[44] 1 Cor. 9:20.
[45] Rom. 9:3-4.

aspects of their culture go with them. It can be objected that this is not so, that in heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, and human society as we know it no longer exists and is replaced by a colossal individualism in which we are all joined to God in fellowship but not to one another, except perhaps in a holistic, undifferentiated way. But to argue this is to imply that the whole of human society-formation, blessed in this life by God, passes away and the life of the world to come is infinitely poorer than the this world. Surely, this is a ridiculous conclusion!

Indeed, we must seek to understand the divine counsel in our *ethnie*. For if *ethnie* is part of God's creation, then it is willed in heaven. And when we pray 'your will be done on earth as it is in heaven', do we not affirm that ethnicity is part of God's 'gracious ordaining' meant for our grateful living here and now? This was what the early Christians tried to understand and practise. While not denying their ethnic origins, they lived their lives in ways that were both exemplary and challenging. An example is one of the earliest expressions of post-apostolic Christian attitudes in the *Epistle to Diognetus*, an early second-century tract intended to witness to pagan society. The unknown author observes that believers lived lives that were indeed exemplary and peaceful:

> For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observed. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity...But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life (Breckenridge 1995:31).

Such a wonderful display of life has remained a challenge to succeeding generations of Christians including the Reformers.

3.4.4   Ethnicity and the Reformers

By the end of the 15th century, new ideas about life and religion were spreading across Europe. When the German priest, Martin Luther, nailed his 95 theses, or ideas for reforming the Church, to the church door in Wittenberg in 1517, he intended to improve the Church. Instead, he started a split within it

because not all Protestants agreed with him. The Reformation in Europe divided people across racial and national boundaries.

John Calvin[46], became involved in the Protestant movement in the early 1530s. Though a Frenchman by birth, Calvin's spiritual home was Geneva. Here Calvin left his footprints on the sands of Reformation history. Thus, he loved Geneva more than any other place in the world. This passion has been described in a very vivid manner by his disciple, John Knox.

> As a refugee from England just in time to witness the expulsion of the Libertines, and after looking the place over and noticing all that was being done for Christian nurture and Christian living, John Knox wrote to an English friend, ecstatically declaring it (Geneva) to be "the most perfect school of Christ on earth since the days of the Apostles" (Davies 1965:24).

Calvin's views on religion and society were more severe than Luther's. Calvin reflected a strong concern for social justice. This is affirmed by Davies (1965:22-23):

> From industry to sanitation, the community felt his improving hand. Nothing seems to have been too minor a matter to receive his personal attention, whether it was increasing the number of municipal latrines, or providing a more efficient night watch, or suggesting additional railings to the balconies of house so that children would be safer, or seeing that magistrates got after dishonest business practices. Everything reflected for social justice which was one of his admirable qualities. And social justice of this kind, we need to be reminded, was something rather new in the world. Up to this time, the common people, in particular, had not experienced much of it.

Calvin may have worked for social justice in Geneva; but his followers and many adherents of the Reformed tradition are known to have walked on paths that were a far cry from Calvin's social ethics. Experience shows that Reformed history on racial and ethnic relations is racked with contradictions, especially in Africa. Boesak (1984:83-84) testifies:

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[46] Calvin has been described as a remarkable man, and also as the most learned man in Europe; before he was 21, he had taken his doctorate in both law and theology at the University of Paris, the world's leading seat of learning. His memory in particular was phenomenal, as he showed by an impromptu performance shortly after coming to Geneva (Davies 1965:14).

The Europeans who came to South Africa and claimed the land and scattered its people, did it in the name of a Christian God whom they prayed to as Reformed Christians. When they introduced slavery and enforced it with the most vicious forms of dehumanization and violence, it was the Bible read through Reformed eyes and arguments from the Reformed tradition that gave them justification for such acts of violence and human tragedy. In a sense, the God of the Reformed tradition was the god of slavery, fear, persecution, and death. Yet, for those black Christians this was the God to whom they had to turn for comfort, for justice, for peace.

During the apartheid struggle in South Africa, there was no uniform response from the Church to the nation's socio-political issues. The Church in apartheid South Africa was divided on the question of the legitimacy of apartheid: while most black churches in South Africa resisted apartheid, most white Afrikaans churches, ironically, gave their blessing to apartheid theology and ideology. The Church, therefore, faced a politico-theological dilemma.

Today, contemporary Christians face a decision in determining which view will characterize their own understanding of the Church's relationship to society. Those who follow the tradition of Luther must decide whether their position truly reflects the life-changing purpose of the Gospel. This is because the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his call for a *religionless Christianity*[47] (Wüstenberg 1997:57) was a response to a Lutheran state church, which he felt did not adequately resist the onslaught of Nazism. Again, his accusation of 'cheap grace' was directed toward those who were absorbed with the Word and Sacrament, yet ignored the public menace of Hitler and his party. For Bonhoeffer, Lutheranism was altogether fraught with problems.

But if one thinks that Lutheranism on race, religion, and society was fraught with problems, Calvinism should not be considered a smooth–sailing option either. For those who follow Calvin have some difficult decisions to make just as the Lutherans do. What would Jesus have thought about the attempt to kill Hitler? Did Christ or the early Church advocate rebellion and lawbreaking in the name of

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[47] In May 1944 Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote to his friend Eberhard Bethge from Tegel prison: "I am thinking about how we can reinterpret in a "worldly" sense – in the sense of the Old Testament and of John 1:14 - the concepts of repentance, faith and justification, rebirth, and sanctification. I shall be writing to you about it again." In a subsequent correspondence between the two friends, they discussed those concepts which would subsequently become well known to us: the conviction that a religionless time had a arrived, and that the world had come of age since it began to exist without God as a stop-gap for the incompleteness of our knowledge (Wüstenberg 1997:57).

Christianity? Perhaps the best response to the issue was provided by Luther's 1520 treatise, "The Freedom of a Christian". The central thesis here is that as Christians we are free from sin through faith in God, yet at the same time we are bound to serve our neighbors in love. As Luther put it, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all" (Luther 1957:344). What it means is that at different times and in different places, the Church must define for itself what it means to be a "free servant" for all. This is no less required even today.

3.4.5 Ethnicity and the Contemporary Christian Approach

Ethnicity is increasingly presenting itself as an unavoidable missiological issue even though adequate attention is yet to be paid to it. Bosch (1991)[48] raised the matter but did not address it as a major fact of our time. As one of the emerging elements of a postmodern paradigm for missions, Bosch calls for 'ecumenism.' This call is a lofty idea and compelling vision; but how can true ecumenism become a reality if we do not fairly and squarely address the issue of ethnicity? Of course, in pressing for ecumenism, Bosch (1991) acknowledged the reality, indeed the necessity, of the inculturation of the gospel. He makes a great deal of that, develops a marvelous theology of inculturation, and finally concludes: "There is no eternal theology, no *theologia perennis* that may play the referee over other local theologies (Bosch 1991:425-432).

In Bosch's view, every theology is worked out in a local ethnic context, therefore giving validity to ethnicity. He hastens to describe how the many local theologies do not merely exist but can in fact enrich the entire theological discourse. He counsels: "while acting locally, we have to think globally". This is correct, and precisely the reason why we need to work hard on a Christian theology that addresses ethnicity.

Working out such an appropriate theology begins with asking relevant questions. Why do Christians become involved in interstate on interethnic squabbling? Why do Christians often go silent when their own tribe or ethnic group makes war on another? One of the greatest tragedies of the Rwandan genocide is that the Church all too often championed the cause of ethnicity. The intra-communal conflict in Igbere, and the inter-communal mayhem in Ikwun/Okon-Aku villages, − both areas in

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[48] Bosch's post modern or ecumenical missiology is further described in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Nigeria, with a strong Presbyterian presence − are clear examples of such developments in the PCN. One keeps asking: how does the Church get itself into this position of compromise?

Lamin Sanneh's writings help us to understand this puzzle. Every time the gospel enters another group or culture, he observes, it gets "retranslated" (Sanneh 1989:35). This is one of the wonders of the gospel. Believers can translate the Christian faith into any culture without losing either its Christocentric nature, or its commitment to shape life according to the Scriptures. In this way the gospel is friend to culture. The visible Church is the result of local interplay between the gospel and culture. For this, Sanneh takes ethnicity seriously. He, as did Bosch, emphasizes the important role culture plays in the theologizing process; yet neither spells out for us a workable theology of ethnicity.

To accomplish the latter, according Bediako (2001:2), requires that we see the Scripture as our "road map". This road map is not only to guide us to our destination; it is to shape our identity as pilgrims 'who are in the world but not of the world' (John 17:14-16). Bediako (1999:9) postulates that gospel and culture cannot be "separated" as it is "not possible to ... talk about the Gospel and ignore the impact it has on culture and vice versa." Very forcefully, Bediako (2001:2) insists we must see "Scripture as the hermeneutic of culture and tradition", adding also that the engagement of gospel and culture is about the conversion of our cultures − the turning over to Christ of all that is there in us, about us and around us that defines and shapes us when Jesus meets us. In so doing, the elements of our cultural identity are brought within the orbit of discipleship. Therefore, Bediako (2001:3) concludes that:

> the basis of the Christian's new identity is essentially religious, not national, social or cultural in the narrow sense. This religious basis of the Christian identity is rooted in the continuing work of the redemption, initiated by the one and the same God who called Abraham with the aim of making out of him a people for his own name. So there is no place for cultural pride or ethnic arrogance!

Following this argument, it becomes imperative that the Church engage in theological reflection on ethnicity. David Lyon (in Breckenridge1995: 37) notes four options before the Church in confronting contemporary social issues like ethnicity:

1. Escapism − an option that avoids human relationship issues by retreating to the world of 'theology.'

2. Compartmentalism – this creates an artificial division between life and practice by labeling social issues as secular, and therefore not necessitating Church involvement.

3. Acceptance of sociology as a worldview that is 'superior' to that of the Gospel − one that diminishes the Gospel's value and allows social sciences to rule over theology.

4. Critical integration – this is the final option, which views social relationships within the context of God's world.

This last option involves meaningful interaction on three levels: "**worldview, institution** and **intellectual practice**." It is this type of critical integration that the PCN must adopt in dealing with ethnicity − not only as a social fact in Nigeria but also as a theological reality. Christians must allow our worldview, our institutions and our practices to become sensitive and open to those rooted in very different backgrounds and environments. Yet as we face the ethnic conflicts that are raging in Nigeria and all over the globe today, our first act as Church and Christians must be to repent , because all too often we have been accomplices in ethnic wars, rather than agents of peace; finding it difficult to distance ourselves from our own cultural milieu in the strife, we have tended to echo its prevailing opinions and practices − sometimes even its political slogans and propaganda.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has shown a worthy ecumenical example[49] that individual Christian denominations should emulate. This is the task of giving visible expression to the prayer of Jesus: 'that they may be one (John 17:21)'. "The Churches are called to move towards visible unity in order to proclaim the gospel of hope and reconciliation for all people and show a credible model of that life God offers to all".[50] For the sake of ethnic harmony, the PCN is summoned to respond. The urgency of the response lies in the fact that, as the AIDS pandemic is threatening the very survival of African countries, so is ethnicity. At least the Rwanda case makes this assertion irrefutable!

Furthermore, giving concrete expression to this call, lies at the heart of what it means for the Church to be engaged in public theology.[51] We can no longer afford to shy away but must forcefully address the

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[49] See the work on *Ethnic Conflicts and Religion* by Tschuy earlier mentioned in this dissertation. Why can't the churches in Nigeria follow this example by emphasizing the kingdom of God as a motif for doing mission among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria?

[50] This was the essence of the theme - The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia:* Gift and Calling, statement by the seventh assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, 1991.

[51] See John de Gruchy, William F. Storrar, Andrew R. Morton and others on public theology in *Public Theology for the 21st Century: Essays in honour of Duncan B. Forrester,* 2004.

spiritual, social, political and economic issues that oppress our fellow humans in our own context. In this connection, the PCN must through the process of critical integration, start dealing with the fact and menace of ethnicity both within its polity and the larger Nigerian society. When the PCN is faithfully engaged in this process, it would be embodying, as well as expressing , the essence of the belief that all human beings are made in the image of God and that therefore every person (regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex, or age) has an intrinsic dignity. For this reason, he (she) should be respected, and served, not exploited − even in Nigeria.

We will now examine the reality of ethnicity in the Nigerian society.

3.5 ETHNICITY AND THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Ethnicity is one of the keys to understanding Nigeria's pluralistic society. It distinguishes groupings of people who, for historical reasons, have come to be seen as distinctive – by themselves and others – on the basis of locational origins, and a series of other cultural markers. Ethnic variety in Nigeria is indeed remarkable − and even somewhat bewildering. Opinions today vary as to the number of ethnic groups that make up Nigeria. While some maintain that there are up to 240 ethnic nations, others have suggested that there are probably less than sixty (Adejuyigbe, 1970). According to Adejuyigbe (1983), an ethnic group in Nigeria is best distinguished by a common language used by its members.

Political historians observe that the present geopolitical map of Nigeria owes its origin to the activities of the British authorities who operated in the area during the latter part of the 19th century (Adejuyigbe 1983). In fact, the boundaries of Nigeria as a former English colony were drawn to serve commercial interests, largely without regard for the territorial claims of the indigenous peoples (Okpu 1977:38). The map bears little resemblance to the geo-cultural reality of the country. Indisputably, Nigeria became an artificial creation , which did not consider the wishes or the will or the interests of the people who were enclosed and lumped together within its borders. The formation of Nigeria, therefore −as with many other African countries − was flawed, (Soyinka 2004:256). Nevertheless, the internal political map has changed many times in response to the geo-cultural forces since the creation of the country (Okafor1997:48). The creation and re-creation of political units have has been greatly influenced by the spatial pattern of social systems, which itself is connected with the geographical pattern of ethnic dominance of space and traditional political units. Presently, the country is composed

politically of 36 States and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory[52]. This structure was the outcome of a series of political negotiations and social engineering (mostly by the past military regimes) in order to contain the clamouring agitation for self-determination of some ethnic groups. . Notwithstanding the leaders' geo-political adjustments, the agitations for self-determination have continued unabated; Nigerians still show a greater loyalty to their constitutive ethnic groupings which define their identities, and it is something that deserves our reflection here.

3.5.1   Ethnic and Regional Groupings in Nigeria

The concept of ethnic group requires definition. Okpu defines it as "a group of people having a common language and cultural values" (1977:10). These common factors are emphasized by frequent interaction between the people in the group. In Nigeria, the ethnic groups are occasionally fusions created by intermarriage, intermingling and/or assimilation. The smaller groups comprising such a fusion maintain a limited individual identity. However, there are as many differences among them "as there [are] between Germans, English, Russians and Turks" , as Chief Obafemi Awolowo[53] put it (1977:11).

Following Okpu's definition, it means that an ethnic nation is regarded as a group whose forms of speech are mutually intelligible; language could therefore be a delimiting factor so that ethnic boundaries roughly coincide with language boundaries. Experience, however, shows that language boundaries and ethnic groups do not always necessarily coincide. For instance, Hausa is spoken as a first language by a number of ethnic groups in Nigeria. Ijo, on the other hand, is an ethnic group that speaks a cluster of languages. Yoruba is also spoken by some language units as first or second language. On the whole, three of the four language phyla (Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afro-Asiatic, Khoisan) in which African languages are grouped, are represented in Nigeria, namely, Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic (Okafor 1997:50).

Barbour (1987) has attempted a language map[54] of Nigeria, but it has been regarded by some scholars as an oversimplified model, since there are many places where two or more languages are spoken. So at

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[52] See Fig. 1 on page xx for the 36 states of Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

[53] Awolowo was the Premier of the then Western region of Nigeria. He is also remembered as the "President Nigeria never had" because his wish to rule Nigeria even for a day was an unrealized dream.
[54] See fig. 2 on page xxi for the language map of Nigeria.

best, the language map shows the language of the majority, those regarded as indigenous within the delimited geographical units. Out of the 400 indigenous languages, only three are branded major languages, while more than 390 are labeled minor[55] languages. In the final analysis, there are only three ethnic groups which have attained ethnic majority status in their respective regions (Metrowich 1969:13-15): the Hausa-Fulani[56] in the north, the Ibo[57] in the South-east and the Yoruba[58] in the south-west. These three groups comprise only fifty-seven percent of the population of Nigeria (Okpu 1977:11, 12). The remainder of the people are members of the ethnic minority groups, which include such peoples as the Kanuri, the Nupe, and the Tiv in the North; the Efik[59]/Ibibio, the Ijaw, and the Ekoi in the East; and the Edo, and Urhobo/Isoko to the West − along with hundreds of other groups that differ widely in language, culture and even physique (see Table 1 for a comprehensive list of the ethnic units and their languages).

Interestingly, the language groupings are helpful markers in identifying the Presbyterian mission in Nigeria. And of the many ethnic nations in Nigeria, it is only among the Ibo (a major ethnic group) and Efik/Ibibio (two minority groups) − both located in South Eastern Nigeria − that the Presbyterian Church has concentrated its work for almost 160 years. With the infighting between these groups in the PCN, the challenge is how to evolve a mission strategy that can enable the church reach the other

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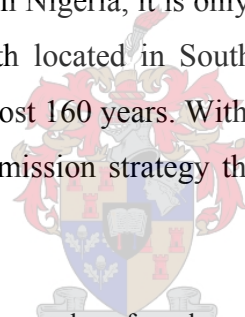
[55] Minor is to be understood in the sense of relative number of speakers, i.e. the speakers of a given language are fewer than those who speak any one of the major languages. Grimes puts the population of Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba speakers at 18,000,000, 18,525,000, and 18,850,000 respectively.

[56] The Hausa-Fulani people in Nigeria consist of different emirates in the north and a wide variety of other non-Muslim tribes in the Middle Belt (Okpu 1977:20).

[57] The Ibo comprise the second largest ethnic group in Nigeria and like the Hausa-Fulani are a synthesis of smaller groups. These smaller groups are the Onitsha Ibo, the Western Ibo, the Cross River Ibo and the Northeastern Ibo. Their origins are completely unknown, as they claim to be from about nineteen different places with a population of about 5 to 10 million people (Okpu 1977:32).

[58] The third ethnic majority group, the Yoruba is, like the others, made up of numerous smaller collections of people. Those who are identified as Yoruba consider themselves to be members of Oyo, Egba, Ijebu, Ife, Ilesha, Ekiti or Owu peoples. The Yoruba are united, however by their common belief in the town of Ife as their place of origin, and the Ooni of Ife as their spiritual leader. Their mythology holds that 'Oduduwa" (name for the Supreme Being or God) created the earth; present royal kingdoms trace their ancestry back to Oduduwa, while members of the Yoruba people maintain that they descended from his sons. Yoruba society is organized in Kingdoms, the greatest of which was called Oyo and extended to as far as Ghana in the West and the banks of the Niger in the East. The Oyo Empire collapsed in 1830 when Afonja, an ambitious governor of the state of Ilorin, broke away but lost his territory to hired mercenaries of the Fulani. Despite the fact that this event occurred in close temporal proximity to the Fulani Jihad, it was not associated with it (Okpu 1977: 29-30).

[59] As we mentioned earlier in chapter 2, it was among the Efiks that the early Scottish mission work was started in Nigeria. The mission was later extended to the people of the Cross River Ibo among whom most Nigerian Presbyterians are to be found today.

ethnic units and language groups (see Table below) that constitute the majority of the Nigerian population.

Table 1. *The Ethnic Groups of Nigeria and their Languages* (Okafor 1997:50-51).

Ethnic Units	Language units contained within its space
1. Yoruba	Yoruba, Egun, Akoka dialect cluster, Ijo Central, Akpers Ukaa
2. Ora	Ibie language cluster, Okpamberi, Ogorimango, Uneme, Okpe Idesa-Oloma Akuku, Ebira, Uhami-Iyayi, Ukuhe-Ehuen, Ghotuo, SasaRU-ENUAN Igwe, Ikpeshi, Emai-Luleha-Ora dialectical group
3. Yekhee	Yekhee
4. Edo	Edo, Benin, Esan
5. Bassawa	Bassaa Nge, Bassa Kaduna,Bass-Gwomu, Kwomo
6. Igala	Igala
7. Idoma	Idoma north dialectical group, Oring dialectical group, Akpa-Yache dialectical group, Kukele
8.Igbo	Igbo, Ehie, Egbema, Ika, Ukwuani-Aboh, Izzi-Ezza-Ikwo_Mgbo, Ogbah, Ikwerre
9. Ijo	Ijo central, Kalabari, Okrika, ibari, Nkoro, Ijo Biseni, Okordia
10. Isoko	Isoko, Eruwa
11. Urhobo	Urhobo, Okpe, Urbie
12. Itshekiri	Itshekiri, Ijo central
13. Baatonun	Baatonun
14. Kambari	Kambari, Auna, Agaraiwa, Kukele
15. Dulawa	Duka, Lela, Puke-Geri-keri, Wipsi

	dialectical group, Nkem, Nkum, Banga, Duka, Chipa, Ucuida
16. Kamaku	Kamaku, Ngwoi, Ura, Baushi, Gurmana, Basa, Dongu
17. Ebira	Ebira
18. Nupe	Nupe central, Ganagana, Kakanda, Bassa Nge, Eggan
19. Gwari	Gwari metai, Gwari Yamma, Gade
20. Tiv	Tiv, Gwadara, Etulo Kpan, Egon, OtankJukun
21. Jukun	Jukun Wukari, Jukun takum, Ndoro, Iken, Mbute, Jibu, Baga, Batu, Bitare, Ican, Kuteb, Yakaben, Bete
22. Chomo-Karim	Chomo-Karim, Turkwarm, Bashar, Lotus-puri, Kunkun of Wase, Tarok
23. Jarwa	Jarwa, Shall-Zwall, Gurumtum-Mbaru, Jaku
24. Angas	Angas, Goemai, Sura, Shagawa, Sha, Karfa, Kulere, Daffo-Batura, Mundat, Bkkos, Chahfen Mushare, Fyer, Tambas, Janji, Jorto, Kofyar-Mernang-Deomak-Bwol-Kwagallak-Bwol-Gworan-Jipal, Tapshin, Libo, Koenoem, Pyapun, Monto, Boghom
25. Hausa-Fulani	Hausa, Fulani, Kuda-Chamo, Tala, Ju, Dulbu, Kir-Balar, Mangas, Margi, Buta-Ningi,Paa, Dirya, Siri, Warji, Galambi, Gurumtum-Mbaaru, Jukun, of Kana, Bankal, Ligri Kanya, Kopop, Jinbin, Dendi, Geruma, Jimi, Kanam, Bobar,Gingwak, Duguri, Bada, Rumaya, Beno, Gwa, Gera, Gubi, Kubi, Kirifi,

	Geji, Polci, Zeem, Luri, Zangwal, Kushi
26. Karekare	Bole, Kupto,Lungu, Ngano, Bade-Duwai, Bade, Karekare
27. Eloyi	Eloyi
28. Gade	Koro, Kadara
29. Buri	Buri, Maha
30. Batta	Kilba, Gude, Gaanda, Herom, Mboi, Banga Hauda
31. Kanuri	Kanuri, Fulani, Mober
32. Margi	Margi, Wandela (Gamargu, Kurawa), Piti Kilba, Margi south, Margi central, Fali, Kanwe, Sukur, Ngoshe Ndhang, Matakam, Liamang, Dghwede, Nzangi, Laka
33. Delta Minorities	Ekpeye, Ogbogolo, Olema, Kanue, Kana, Degema, Ogboronuagum, Obulum, Odual, Kolo, Oloibiri, Anyama, Ogoni, Engenni, Kugbo, Epie, Kugbo, Mini
34. Gwadara	Gwadara, Dong, Kutui, Lanja, Mumbaka, Kumba, Tal, Gengle
35. Chamaba-Daka	Chamaba-Daka, Kugama, Dirim, Kotopo, Chambe Leko, Koma, Kam, Verre, Wom
36. Mambila	Mambila, Ndoro, Membe language group, (Tingongo) – Ashuku, Nama, Magu
37. Katang	Hyam, Iku-Gora-Ankwa, Kaje, Ikulu, Katab, Berom, Chawai, Atem, Emai-Lleha-ora, Kanufi-Kaning-Kong, Nindern, Kagona, Lungu, Yeskwa,Mada, Mumana-Nunku-Gwantu, Ninzam, Nungu, Mama
38. Berom	Berom, Izarek, Naraguta, Fyam, Kwa,

	Jaku Chara
39. Kadara	Kadara, Doko, Idon, Kutumi, Koro
40. Kurama	Kurama, Jera, Lame, Ruyama Rurama, Songa, Kitimi, Dungi, Kaivi, Sure-Kahugu, Kono, Kuballo, Kuzamani, Kinuku, Binawa, Surubu, Piti, Amo, Sukur, Sanga, Chokobo, Shani, Dediya
41. Mada	Mada, Numena-Nunku-Gwantu, Ziazam, Nungu, Mama, Ayu, Nandu Tari, Yashi, Turkwarm, Arum-Chesu, Jida-Abu
42. Alago	Alago
43. Migili	Migili
44. Eggon	Eggon
45. Bokyi	Bokyi, Lopa, Ekajuk, Nnam, Nde-Nsele, Nta, Abanyom, Nkem-Nkum, Mbe, Utugwang-Okorgung-Okorotung-Afrke-Oboso, Bekwarra, Alege, Ukpe-Bayobiri, Bette-Bendi, Obanliku (Basang, Bebi, Beshiri, Bisu and Busi), Otang, Icheve, Evat, Ubang
46. Ekon	Ejagham, (Bendeghe, Etung, Ejagham, Ekin), Korop, Olulumo-Ikom, Efutup, Membe, Nde-Nsele-Nta, Yala
47. Agoi	Agoi, Doko-Uyanga, Legbo-Leyigha, Lenyima, Kohnmono, Loka, Nkukobi, Akpet, Ehon, Maha, Lubila, Umon, Maha
48. Efik	Efik, Ejagham, Oron, Ibino, Eket
49. Ibibio	Ibibio, Obolo
50. Annag	Annang, Kamwe, Kana
51. Mumuye	Mumuye, Lak, Waka, Yaundang, Panya, Passam, Bali, Bauchi, Gengles, Mumbake, Kumba, Gai, Kugama,

	Lamaja, Dong, Kutim
52. Waja	Waja, Kamo, Awak, Tula, Longuda, Panyam, Cham-Muama, Lotsu-Piri Kwa, Dadiya, Janjo, Janjiwingi, Burak, Bambuka, Gwomu, Lo, Muga, Legbo
53. Busa	Busa, Shanga
54. Dendi	Dendi, Zarma, Hausa
55. Buduma	Buduma
56. Shuwa	Shuwa, Kanuri

From the foregoing, it can be seen that Nigeria is a geographical entity inhabited by numerous ethnic groups, the administration of which is not easy. As a result of this scenario, the country's unity has consistently been under siege: eight attempts at secession threatened national unity between 1914 and 1977. The Biafran War[60] was the last of the secessionist movements within this period (Okpu 1977:3). One can easily see the chaotic effects of the Babel of tongues, which continue to bedevil the nation.

Still, it goes without saying that it is only a church that understands the *misso Dei* that can be a reconciling ambassador for Christ in this context. This, of course, is a challenge and a tall missionary order for the PCN. And it seems, sadly, that the church has not been rising to the occasion. Experience shows that rather than being the solution, the church has been part of the ethnic problem in Nigeria by joining the non-Christians to play the ethnic ball game and not living up to the gospel mandates. In this situation many Presbyterians have been sacrificing their Christian identity on the altar of ethnic loyalty, fanning the embers of ethnic consciousness, tensions and conflicts in the polity.

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[60] Biafran War was started by the Ibo group who wanted to secede from the other federating units of Nigeria because of perceived injustices and marginalization. The war lasted from 1967-1970.

Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka (http://www.thisdayonline.com/nview.php?id=57707 accessed 06/09/2006), has warned that the continued agitations of power shift by a section of the country could lead to another civil war and the notion of divine right to rule by any section of Nigeria must cease, saying that it is undemocratic. He described charges of treasonable felony for which certain ethnic militia leaders, including Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo of the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Ralph Uwazurike of the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and Gani Adams of the Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) as spurious and not in tune with democratic tenets. Speaking at the public presentation of his memoirs, 'You Must Set Forth at Dawn,' Soyinka said the injustices and marginalization that led to the 1967-70 civil war were still rife, a development he said could yet plunge the nation into another civil war. Said Soyinka: "Now, I spoke about civil war. I spoke about our lessons. What should be our lessons from the civil war?

In what follows, we will be looking at ethnic consciousness and tensions in Nigeria more closely to see how they are encouraged among the various groups.

3.5.2   Ethnic consciousness, tensions and conflicts in Nigeria

There are various views on ethnic consciousness and the social conflicts[61] in Nigeria. In the book, *Ethnicity in Canada*, Anderson and Frideres (1981:194) opined that: "Most intergroup conflicts occur after they have been living together for some time. This means that a moral order and rules of behaviour (for all groups) have been established. Conflict will begin to become evident when this moral order is disrupted and subordinate ethnic groups begin to act in non-normative fashions. Shibutani and Kwan (1965) refer to this as the breakdown of the *colour* line. For as the *colour* line begins to deteriorate and blur the distinctions between groups, *group consciousness* will begin to develop. Members of a minority ethnic group will discover that they occupy similar social spaces and develop a consciousness of kind. According to Kriesberg (1973) three aspects of awareness are required:

- ➢ Consciousness of a kind must exist for the group. A major requisite for this to emerge is the intensity and frequency of communication between members. The greater the frequency and intensity of the interaction, the greater the likelihood that a sense of consciousness of kind will emerge. A bondedness will emerge and common symbols will be defined positively.
- ➢ Ethnic groups will be dissatisfied with their position relative to other ethnic groups, and
- ➢ Ethnic groups must think that a reduction of their dissatisfaction can be brought about by the other group changing their behaviour.

In the case of Nigeria, I can agree with Shibutani and Kwan as well as Kriesberg to some extent. Needless to say, all the component ethnic groups in Nigeria share the same "black" skin colour – and there is no variation of shade. However, their coming together as one nation was never an act of their consensus but rather the choice of the colonial powers − based mainly on selfish economic considerations and political exigencies. The economy created by the colonial authorities did not fulfil the aspirations of the component ethnic groups, hence the restiveness in the polity. Therefore, what has been causing the major conflicts in Nigeria, including the ill-fated civil war, is not a break down of

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[61] The issue of conflicts in Nigeria and their causes are discussed in more detail in chapter 6 of this dissertation.

colour line but rather what I may call the *"collapse of comatose political economy."*[62] Manuel Castells (1998:101-105) has quite a critical and incisive analysis of this situation in the book, *End of Millennium* (2nd edition).

Also, another writer seems to have to have vividly captured the crux of the crisis in a different way. In the article, *A Divided Nigeria*, Jessi Herman (2001) wrote:

> Originally, the British controlled Northern and Southern Nigeria as two separate Protectorates, but in 1914, they joined the two colonies to form the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. During its pre-colonial existence, Muslim Northern Nigeria had developed a society with centralized authority, administrative machinery, judicial institutions, and class divisions, while most of the North's non-Muslim groups, located primarily in what is now the Middle Belt remained rather segmented and non-centralized.

> During colonization, the British implemented a policy of indirect rule under which native administrations were maintained. Under this system, British High Commissioner Lieutenant-Colonel F.D. Luggard saw that the Muslim states were more centralized with bureaucratic socio-political institutions, and formed an alliance with them. Over the next several years, the British gradually gained control of the more resistant non-Muslim groups by a system of punitive patrols and tax assessment involving "massive destruction" of farms, human life, villages and property.

> Once under colonial administration, the non-Muslim groups were considered "primitive tribes," while the Muslims were considered "advanced communities." This distinction was easily transformed into a notion of racial hierarchy, with the non-Muslim groups at the bottom and the Hausa-Fulani near the top, just below the British. The Hausa-Fulani were considered a ruling class by nature, and their superiority over the non-Muslims, Turaki explains, "was established as an administrative principle."

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[62] From the very time that the colonial authorities handed over the reigns of power to Nigerians, the nation never had a sound and viable political economy. This partly explains why there were military coups and counter coups and a civil war among the ethnic groups within seven years of political independence.

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It also goes without saying that this colonial arbitrariness of political marriage of different ethnic groups in the country remains fundamental to the issue of ethnic consciousness and the quest for identity on the part of all groups involved in the corporate entity now called Nigeria. Moreover, it is undeniable that the entire story of the awareness of ethnic identity is closely tied to the issue of the economic survival of the various groups. This is why every discussion about ethnicity in Nigeria can also be called a matter of *being* and *bread*.[63] But in other contexts such as South Africa, where skin colour is an issue, the problem is referred to as racism; yet both ethnicity and racism as terms, overlap.[64]

To understand the Nigerian nation and the group dynamics, we will also need to grasp the distinctive ethnogeography.   According   to   Aluko, (http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/earticles/ethnicity_conflict_resolution_an.htm   accessed 30/5/2006), six indices distinguish Nigeria's ethnicity:

1. **Diversity**: More than 240 ethnic groups exist within a relatively small geographical space, under tight economic circumstances and subject to unclear laws. Furthermore, there is a great unevenness of geographical distribution. As Table 1 indicates, certain states in the country have as many as sixty ethnic groups, while many other states have just one or two.

2. **Geographical contours**: Despite increasing geographical diffusion, again Table 1 shows that − except for the Fulani − the overwhelming majority of the ethnic groups still have identifiable geographical homelands within the various states of the entity called Nigeria.

3. **Distinctiveness of language and name affiliations:** The name of a person invariably gives away his or her ethnic background, instantly conjuring up all biases of the jaundiced mind, and therefore a sometimes perpetual stereotyping based on the allegedly bad conduct of one person from an ethnic group.

4. **Limited contact between groups:** Before the advent of the British, and except for the Igbos, there was still relatively little mass contact between the people. This had both positive and negative impacts: lack of contact means that there is little baggage from the past. However,

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[63] See Tony Balcomb on the Theology of Being and Bread in *Missionalia*, 26:1 (April 1998) 54 -73.

[64] A consultant at a 1994 World Council of Churches meeting on racism, ethnicity and indigenous peoples offered a shorthand definition: racism is based on power and privilege, while ethnicity derives from blood and belonging (*Ethnic Conflict and Religion. Challenge to the Churches* by Tschuy 1997: xi). Obviously, the two terms overlap, and they are not used here as hard and fast socio-political categories.

it could also mean that lack of interaction makes it difficult to negotiate present conflicts, and again leads to actions based on stereotyping.

5. Varied modes of interaction with the British by different ethnic groups during colonialism: For example, there was indirect rule (through the Emirs) in the North with limited Western education and, in the South, direct rule (through the Obas in the West and warrant chiefs in the East), coupled with broad Western education. This differentiation reinforced perceptions, real or imagined, of political favoritism during and immediately after colonial rule.

6. Religious identification with particular ethnic groups: Except for the Yoruba where there is almost an even distribution of Christians and Muslims, each of the other ethnic groups are either **overwhelmingly Christian** in population or else **overwhelmingly Muslims.** This leads to confusion as to whether a particular crisis is a religious strife or an ethnic strife.

These distinctions are important in understanding the various ways in which ethnic consciousness and tensions have been fuelled over time. For the purpose of this work, I would, at this juncture, like to look at the developmental phases of ethnic consciousness in Nigeria, namely, in the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial eras.

3.5.2.1   Pre-colonial era

In the pre-colonial times, interethnic relations were often mistrustful, or discriminatory, and sometimes violent. At the same time, there were relationships, such as trade, that required peaceful communications. In the South east, communication was between the Ibo and their Efik/Ibibio neighbours who traded slaves for sea and farm products respectively. The most widespread communication was in the north between pastoral and agricultural peoples who traded cattle for farm products, and pasturage rights for manuring. More subtle and peaceful exchanges involved smaller ethnic groups in the middle belt. In towns and along the trade routes, occupations such as smithing, cotton production, cattle-selling, weaving, house building, and beer making were often confined to, or correlated with, ethnically defined units. Thus, ecological and economic specializations promoted interethnic relations. Conversely, promulgating conflict, mistrust, and stereotypes in ethnic relations were droughts and other factors.
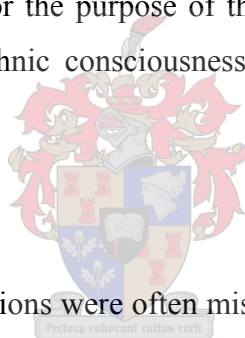
3.5.2.2   Colonial / Missionary era

Like other scholars earlier mentioned in this work, Nambala (1997:30) reminds us that colonialism was imposed upon the Africans by the Europeans without regard to their nationhood, big or small. Thus Nambala (1997:31) argues:

> Colonial states often grouped together several ethnic groups and created a "multi-ethnic state" with artificial boundaries which often run across pre-existing nations, states, ethnicities, states, kingdoms, and empires.

De Jong (1999:5ff) argues that during the colonial rule, the principle of divide and rule was used by the colonialists to play off one ethnic group against another, "resulting in innumerable conflicts and strifes." Sometimes the missionaries acted as collaborators with the colonial powers in dividing the ethnic groups thereby fueling intra and inter-ethnic tensions. In this connection, Nambala (1997:31) states that missionary activities often accompanied colonialism in executing the colonial project.

> Various denominations did not only divide the clans and tribes, but also worked separately among different ethnic groups in a given country. The result was that one finds one ethnic group belonging to the membership of one denomination, whereas the other denomination possesses membership of another group. Separate activities of missionaries from different denominational backgrounds also aggravated the ethnic consciousness among the African people. One ethnic group might have a tradition of looking down upon another ethnic group; this would mean that even the denomination working among the so-called inferior ethnic group would be seen as inferior.

Nambala (1997:31) then argues that as the church concentrated on certain groups of people in a country, those groups were also slowly encouraged to leave their culture and take up much of the European culture, whereas:

> Those groups which did not have missionaries, although in the same country, maintained much of their cultural tenets. This state of affairs also forced ethnic groups to view themselves differently from others even in terms of faith and social affiliation.

Language played a vital role in this cultural process and imbibitions. Thus, Lamin Sanneh (1993:63) has espoused that the labour of the missionaries regarding vernacular translation did not only provide support for the spread of the Christian knowledge but also provided the stimuli to the intellectual framework that enhanced the fight against colonial domination and quest for political independence in many African countries. It is the argument of this project that this vernacular work also raised great ethnic consciousness and pride in Nigeria particularly among those who saw that their language has also become a vehicle for communicating the Christian message and a benchmark for wider social engagement and engineering.

For instance, at the beginning of the 1860s the Scottish Mission in Nigeria had, among other missionaries, three men of high intellectual stature in the field, namely Hugh Goldie, William Anderson and Alexander Robb. The work of these men immensely ushered a new era of hope for the gospel. Quite remarkably, it also meant that the church was getting prepared for the great intellectual awakening that was to give it its new life and sustenance. In this scholastic era, Goldie (after whom is named one of the PCN's Seminaries today) identified himself as the foremost scholar of the Mission (Aye 1987). One of his early achievements was the translation of the New Testament into Efik in 1862 and, in conjunction with Alexander Robb, the complete Efik Bible came out in 1868. Several hymns followed these and in 1874 his Efik dictionary was published and Efik grammar also, both in English and Efik. These were no mean feats for the missionary endeavour. The Presbytery of Biafra which had been formed in 1858 welcomed this development enthusiastically and in the minutes of its meeting held on February 4, 1863 recorded:

> "The Presbytery recorded with great interest the completion of the New Testament in Efik, made by Mr Goldie, the whole expense of which has been borne by the National Bible Society of Scotland; and they agreed to approach the throne of grace to express their earnest thanks to God for the accomplishment of the important work and implore His enriching blessing on the use of the book in the future labours of the Mission. It was agreed that the book should be sold, and the price was fixed at 15 rods, native money, or 1 dol. English money" (Aye 1987:74 -75).

By the time the Church was stepping up penetration into non-Efik land, Efik was adopted as the *lingua missionalia.* This is attested to by the fact that when Anderson visited Ikorofiong, an Efik outpost, he discovered that its large market had attracted many from beyond the confines of the area. Then, it was

in these circumstances that he recorded the importance of that rural settlement as a major exit into Ibibio "country" and decided to use it as springboard into these virgin areas that were wedded to the soil for their livelihood (Aye 1987:74). Interest for mission work here heightened partly because Efik was already a language for commerce and a uniting factor for the place that was becoming a microcosm of the 19th century cross river culture. In the light of this discovery, Aye (1987:75) records:

> Besides, Ikotofiong was an Efik outpost, traditionally linked with Creek Town, and speaking the Efik language which had already been reduced to writing and would easily serve in disseminating the gospel of Christ. Anderson discovered in the people their eagerness for Christianity and their town easy access by river from Calabar.

More than any other time in the history of the Scottish mission in Nigeria, it was the lot of the church at this time to cultivate the human mind, to educate, to enlighten, to investigate and appreciate the knowledge and wisdom of God in order to make people know and understand their Maker and to serve Him better. In pursuit of this goal, Alexander Robb who had already served the Mission in Jamaica before he came to Calabar in 1858 was another scholar of the mission. He came with the express purpose of training native evangelists and pastors for the Mission, to assist in translating the Old Testament into Efik, and if possible to revise the existing Efik literature. Apart from translating other Bible tracts and literature, in 1868, the printed edition of his translation of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (*Mbuk Asana Usun Hev'n*) into Efik appeared. The translation work was a display of Robb's great intellectual energy, depth of scholarship and mastery of Efik language in its various ramifications. With these, the mission appeared to have laid the intellectual and linguistic foundation upon which to do the work for a long time to come.

Consequently, Efik gained primacy and remained the main indigenous translation work of the Scottish Mission. It took a long time before a similar endeavour was pursued among the Ibo. Rather, it was the Anglicans, through the Church Missionary Society (CMS) that made a pioneering effort in this direction. Nwoka (2001:326) has observed that "The first and to date, the only standard Igbo Bible was translated by Archdeacon Thomas J. Dennis between 1913 and 1917." Archdeacon Dennis was an Anglican clergyman and as a result, this Bible was mainly used by Igbo Anglicans. It is noteworthy

however that the Presbyterians identified with this project by sponsoring Mr Nwafor Ogwuma[65] (Kalu 1996:60) to the translation committee.

The role of the Bible among the Igbo especially, during the civil war, has been written by Nwoka[66] The Ibo somehow understood that the Nigerian–Biafran war was not just war of political, but also of religious and ethnic, survival (Nwoka 2001:328). Their only hope of survival then against overwhelming odds rested in the God of the Bible, and so the Igbo read the Bible and prayed as they had never done before. Reading the Bible and hearing God's word in their own language prompted in them a hermeneutical process that strengthened their spirit and affirmed their ethnic identity during the war.

Unfortunately, 1966 was the year that the pogrom against the Igbo people was executed in Nigeria. Consequently, Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu declared independence for the Igbo dominated Republic of Biafra, a move that occasioned the three-year Nigerian Civil War. The threat of the late Sir Ahmadu Bello, the last Premier of Northern Nigeria, to dip the Qur'an into the Atlantic Ocean, together with the boast of the military Governor of the then Province, Colonel Usman Katsina, to crush Biafra within forty-eight hours if permitted by the Federal authorities, caused great concern to the Igbo people. So the Nigeria forces were considered to be working under the Qur'an while the Biafrans believed they were being guided and inspired by the Bible, the language of which is Ibo – the oppressed people.

It would appear that this phenomenon of language empowerment was not just peculiar to the missionary enterprise in Nigeria. For instance, Brett (1996:346) observes that in India,

> Since the British administrators had learned Bengali (also spelt "Bangali") and trained
> the Bengali people, they had a policy to introduce Bengali as a court language. It was
> the Christian missionaries who developed and reduced the tribal dialects to written form.

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[65] Ogwuma was the first Igbo to administer the Sacraments in the Church of Scotland Mission after he was baptized by Rev. Rankin in 1909 and ordained a ruling elder in Arochukwu in 1912.

[66] See Nwoka, Anthony O. 2001. The Bible in Igbo Christianity of Nigeria in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trend.* West and Dube (eds.)

Reducing dialects to written forms promoted them as tools for disseminating theological missives and fostering missionary engagement in the Christian missionary enterprise. Through the work of the various missionaries in Nigeria, Efik and Igbo languages were developed both for missionary instruction and intellectual advancement. This gave the people a real sense of pride, heightened their ethnic consciousness and enhanced the sense of identity with which they are still negotiating their existence in the Nigerian nation today. The problem remains however that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria has been so confined in this region and its life immersed in the cultural categories of Igbo and Efik people that authentic mission work among other cultures in Nigeria has become almost "mission impossible." The fact is that after 160 years in Nigeria, one can speak of strong indigenous Presbyterian presence in only six out of the 36 states of Nigeria (see the asterisked states in Table 2). Only an extensive overhaul of the church's missionary machinery will enable it to propagate the Gospel effectively in the whole federation. If the church is serious in becoming a truly national Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, this is its task at hand.

State	Language(s)
Abia *	Igbo (Ibibio)
Adamawa	Hausa, Fulfulde, Bachama, Mbula, Gude, Lunguda, Kanakuru, Yandand, Batta, Highi, Kilba, Bura, Yungur
Akwa-Ibom*	Ibibio, Annang, Oron, Mbe, Okobo, HuMbuno, Eket, Andoni (Obolo)
Anambra	Igbo (Igala)
Bauchi	Hausa, Fulfulde, (Karikari)
Bayelsa	Kolokuma (Izon)
Benue	Tiv, Idoma, Igede
Borno	Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde, Margi, Schwa, Babur
Cross River*	Efik, Ejagham, Bekwara
Delta	Enuani, Ika, Ndokwa, Okpe, Urhobo, Isekiri, Isoko, Ijo, Delta Pidgin
Ebonyi*	Igbo
Edo	Edo (Bini), Esan, Esako, Okpameri, Owan
Ekiti	Yoruba
Enugu	Igbo (Igala)
Gombe	Hausa
Imo*	Igbo
Jigawa	Hausa
Kaduna	Hausa
Kano	Hausa
Katsina	Hausa
Kebbi	Hausa, Fulfulde, (Zabaramanchi)

Kogi	Yoruba, Ebira, Bassa, Igala, Igbira-Koto, Basankomo, (Kakanda, Oworo)
Kwara	Yoruba, Nupe, Baruteen, (Hausa)
Lagos	Yoruba, Igun
Nassarawa	Hausa
Niger	Hausa, Nupe, Gbagi, (Gwari), Kambari, Kamuku
Ogun	Yoruba
Ondo	Yoruba, Egberi (a dialect of Izon)
Osun	Yoruba
Oyo	Yoruba
Plateau	Berom, Ngas, Tarok, Mwahavul, Goemai, Eggon, Borghan (Hausa) (Fulfulde in preaching)
Rivers	Ikwere, Kalabari, Kana, Port Harcourt Pidgin (Special English)
Sokoto	Hausa, Fulfulde
Taraba	Hausa, Fulfulde, Mumuye, Junkun
Yobe	Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Bolewa, Badenchi, Karikari
Zamfara	Hausa

Table 2: States of Nigeria and Languages of the Media (adapted from Emenanjo 1995) by Ethelbert E. Kari: Mutilingualism in Nigeria: The Example of Rivers State.

*It is only in these States that one can speak of strong Presbyterian presence in Nigeria.

The Church's mission work in other States is not yet enough to accord it strong recognition in these areas.

The point we are making is that after more than 160 years of Christian witness in Nigeria, the PCN is challenged more than before to evolve and engage in a new process to deal with the ethnic tension in the post-colonial and post- civil war Nigeria.

3.5.2.3   Post-colonial era

After gaining political independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria's first military coup took place in 1966 and this was later followed by a civil war which lasted for over three years. The civil war taught Nigerians that ethnic conflicts were among the most destructive forces in the life of the nation. Like other African countries which face problems of ethnic and cultural diversity, Nigeria's recent history has been of civil unrest, riots, violence and conflict in the process of finding an answer to the 'national question' in order to build a strong and unified country. Nigeria's national question relates fundamentally to the question of rights of peoples and groups, particularly in the context of oppression and marginalization.

By 1990 ethnic conflict was suppressed and carefully controlled so that any outbreak of - or public discrimination on grounds of - ethnicity was considered a matter of national security. In the outbreaks that occurred since the war, the federal government acted swiftly to gain control and stop the conflict. Nevertheless, the way in which ethnic relations might threaten the security of the individuals and groups was among the most serious issues in national life, especially for the millions of Nigerians who had to live and work in inter-ethnic contexts. Given our present socio-political situation, the question still remains: Can Nigerians really live together? Can dialogical hermeneutical interpretation in Nigeria adequately address Nigeria's problems? (Brett 2002:350). Is it possible to solve the national question when people have damaging perceptions and images about people from outside their ethnic groups? Key to answering these questions is our understanding of the ethno-stereotypes and the images in the country.

3.6   IMAGES OF THE "OTHER" – THE PROBLEM OF ETHNIC STEREOTYPING IN NIGERIA

One of the ways in which individuals categorize other individuals is through the use of stereotypes.[67] The question may be asked: How do people develop stereotypes of others? One way is by drawing a line of demarcation between peoples. Over long periods of time, these lines of demarcation later become matters of customary usage. But what are these lines of demarcation, one may ask? Geographical mapping is an obvious form of demarcation, but there are others less tangible yet equally damaging. These include 'stigmas' attached to certain groups of people. These stigmas though similar to prejudices[68], are generally referred to as stereotypes.

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[67] According to Stangor (2000:6), the term stereotype was coined by the American journalist Walter Lippman in his 1922 book entitled *Public Opinion*. Lipman was interested in how individuals reacted to people from different countries and different races, and he thought of stereotypes as "pictures in our heads" of the people of other social groups around us. Lippman's first use of the term was followed by many others over the following years, and the study of stereotyping is now a central concern of social psychologists.

[68] The word *prejudice*, derived from the Latin noun *praejudicium*, has like most words, undergone a change since the classical times. There are three major stages in transformation:
1. To the ancients, *praejudicium* meant a precedent – a judgment based on previous decisions and experiences.
2. Later, the term, in English, acquired the meaning of judgment formed before due examination and consideration of the facts – a premature of hasty judgment.
3. Finally, the term acquired also its present emotional flavour of favourableness or unfavourableness that accompanies such prior and unsupported judgment (.Allport 2000:20).

Allport (2000:20) has also given an example to illustrate a type of social prejudice that is common in South Africa.
    "In South Africa, the English it is said, are against the Afrikaner; both are against the Jews; all three are opposed to the Indians; while all four conspire against the native black."

Stereotyping in Nigeria is a very serious and complex social issue with its grave political consequences. Each of the main groups has disparaging stories and sayings about others that are discussed openly when a foreigner is alone with members of a single ethnic group (Guest 2004:120). Through some socio-political processes which have intensified ethnocentrism, defined ethnic boundaries have been frequently adjusted and employed to polarize Nigerians into "we" and "they" with the ethical dualism of viewing "our" group as "good" and "their" group as "evil". As an outcome of the moral judgments about the "we" and "they" conception in the nation, certain stereotypes became not only instruments of reinforcing ethnic and social boundaries, but also the basis for vilifying other ethnic groups. These stereotypes were undoubtedly strong before and shortly after the civil war; but they are – in different forms - still ubiquitous in the nation's polity. They are perpetuated because they still serve some socio-political and economic objectives. To buttress this point and underscore the reality of ethnocentric stereotypes in Nigeria, we will consider few examples from Ikime (n.d :59-64):

- **<u>Gambari</u>:** To many a southern Nigerian, the Northerner is summed up in the word Gambari. It means not just the herdsman we see driving his cows along the roads of Nigeria but a complete nincompoop (Ikime n.d.:60). To many Southerners, the Northerner was incapable of any higher intellectual development than that required of a cowherd. The physical toughness that goes with driving cattle hundreds of miles on foot did not impress us; if and when it did, it was quickly dismissed. The vital role of the North supplying the meat requirements in Nigeria was of no importance when Southerners spoke of the *Gambari*. Deliberately, Southerners glossed over the compelling fact of the essentially complementary nature of Nigeria's economy in order to nurture that image of Gambari that is so dear to the southern "sophisticated" hearts. We had branded a whole people as "fools", for this was what was meant as *Gambari*. Consequently, "when we met a Northerner whose education or disposition enabled him to meet us on equal or near equal footing, we have been irritated that a mere *Gambari* should dare to seek a place in the sun" (Ikime n.d.:60). The situation in which we find ourselves today is, to a large extent, the outcome of the determination of the Northerner to be more than a *Gambari*. For more than thirty years of Nigeria's 45 years of political independence, the country has been ruled by "*Gamabaris*".

- **Yoruba Tricks:** As for the Yoruba, he is cowardly, untrustworthy, lazy, cunning, "diplomatic", and essentially dirty in his habits. It is impossible, others say, to trust a Yoruba man. Behind his outward smoothness and finery there lurks a basically self-seeking, dirty nature. Unconsciously,

the non-Yoruba refuse to play fair with the Yoruba because they believe he's full of tricks. Consequently we put the Yoruba in a position where he has to be extremely "diplomatic" and then we say: "We told you so!" (Ikime n.d:61).

- **The grabbing Ibo:** To many a Nigerian, the Ibo is selfish, grasping, ubiquitous, always seeking a place for his brother or sister. All Ibos are avaricious, fiercely and unscrupulously competitive, determined to get to the top and to fill the bottom with yet more Ibos. The leopard does not change its spots, other groups say. The Ibo will always be an Ibo. Principles, qualifications, merit – these are of no significance to the well-placed Ibo man who is in a position to employ and promote people. KEDU DIANYI? – these are the pass words. Yet as people complained of the 'omnipresence' of the Ibo, they forget to remind themselves that if the Ibo man gets on, it is partly because he is prepared to do jobs which the average Yoruba or Mid-Westerner would dismiss as mean and dirty? As with the Northerner so with the Ibo, their virtues are deliberately and cruelly discountenanced (Ikime n.d.:61).

While the three major ethnic groups are engaged in this game, the question is: what happens to the minority groups who constitute a little less than half the population of Nigeria? On this, Ikime (n.d.:61) says:

As for the Efik, the Ijo, the Edo, the Urhobo, the Isoko, the Itsekiri – these are "the others". We refuse to accord them any characteristics. They are no more than a vexatious source of trouble, always seeking to reap where they have not sown. Unaccustomed to accept them as fellow labourers in the Lord's vineyard, their emergence as a competitive force in the life of the nation irritates the "Gambari", the "lazy Yoruba" and the "grabbing Ibo", all of whom are quite prepared to edge out "the others" – to deny them a share of the national cake".

Stereotyping thus raises few fundamental problems for us. First is the issue of whether stereotypes are mere myths or have any real basis. Secondly, how valid – if at all - are the stereotypes applied to various ethnic groups in Nigeria? These questions concern the whole Nigerian society where ethnicity is not just a social reality but also a tool of political manipulation and maneuvering. The reality of ethnicity requires an on-going contextual analysis for us to be able to deal with its dynamics in the Nigerian society.

At the beginning of this chapter, the researcher pledged to attempt to unravel the intricate nature of ethnicity in the church and Nigerian society. Our discussion so far has shown that the concept of ethnicity is a complex one. In the case of Nigeria, it has been made more complex because of the diverse ethnic groups that make up the country. Thus, even the governance of the country has been made difficult and its progress retarded because of ethnic complexities. This poses a great challenge to the mission of the church. But the question is: Does the Presbyterian Church know that, like the larger society, ethnocentrism has been taking a toll on its mission, and if so, in what ways has this been happening?

We will reflect on this question in chapter 4.

3.7 PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to help the PCN recover its missional identity. In this chapter, we pursued a correlational dialogue by describing the theory and reality of ethnicity in Nigeria. The dialogue also addressed the culture–Gospel aspect of ethnicity. The reason for taking this course is this: Within the Nigerian context, ethnicity is a necessary hermeneutical key in describing identity, both in gospel and culture.

From the discussion so far, the following have emerged:

- The question was posed: What is ethnicity? What is the biblical meaning of ethnicity? How should the church understand ethnicity?

- We understand that ethnicity is a term that is somewhat difficult to define clearly. Broadly speaking, there are three approaches that anthropologists and sociologists have adopted to the study of ethnicity, namely: instrumentalism, primodialism and constructivism. However, the paradoxical feature of the phenomenon rooted in the abiding dynamic ambivalence in human nature itself shows that people are not only social beings, but also innately religious. By implication, in addition to social anthropology, we need a theological anthropology in the study and understanding of ethnicity. Karl Barth and Daniel Louw have made useful contributions on the reformed understanding of theological anthropology as I have reflected in this chapter.

- Ethnicity in the Bible (Old Testament) is denoted by several words. An investigation of the use of *ger* in the Hebrew Bible, and a social description of the *gerim* and their condition helped us to understand biblical ideas of ethnicity. In the LXX, *ethnos* is almost always used to translate *ger* and *laos* for 'am. In disagreement, different scholars give English translations of *ger* as "s*ojourner*" "*alien*" or "*immigrant*." Thus, the Hebrew term *ger* primarily refers to people who are distinct from and are not part of the dominant group. What is important, though, is the fact that whatever meaning that may be given to the Hebrew words, they do not mean much apart from their context. Therefore, an etymological approach to the study of these words should not be pushed too far. Rather, context and usage in understanding the words are essential. Because of this fact, Ethnicity in the Bible is denoted by various words but primarily apply to those who, by being excluded from and by the dominant group, are marginalized. In sum, the Hebrew term *ger* which primarily refers to people who are distinct from and are not part of the dominant group still creates a problem when we want to draw a boundary to determine who should be 'inside' or 'outside' (Brett 1996:11). As it appears in most parts of Israelite history, including the monarchical period; exclusionary attitudes co-existed with idealistic laws about the stranger.

- In Nigeria, ethnic consciousness aided by ethnocentric stereotypes, combine to create tension and conflicts that often result into loss of lives and property. Hence stereotyping in Nigeria is a very serious and complex social issue with grave socio-political and economic consequences. Each of the main groups has disparaging stories and sayings about others that are discussed openly when a foreigner is alone with members of a single ethnic group (Guest 2004:120). This is a common trend even in a church like the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

- In this regard, the question may be asked: Is the PCN aware of the reality and impact of ethnicity on her mission and in what ways is this phenomenon manifesting in the life and mission of the church?

This question is the focus of chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR ETHNOCENTRISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM IN NIGERIA: RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter two outlined the historical development of the PCN and chapter three surveyed the concept of ethnicity in Church and in Nigerian society. This chapter analyzes results of empirical research on the interface between ethnocentrism and Presbyterianism in Nigeria. In particular, it describes the results of the questionnaire administered to, and the structured interview conducted with, individuals who have been involved in the life and ministry of the Church over a considerable period of time. Thus, the chapter addresses the key research question of this thesis, and analyzes interviewee responses. In doing so, it identifies the issues that should shape the missional understanding of and the theological response to ethnicity and ethnocentrism within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

4.1.1 The question under view

It is clear from prior observations that ethnocentrism has seriously eroded the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria. As observed in chapter one, ethnic biases emerge most strongly during elections, and the location of joint projects in the Church are to be decided. Members whose friendship was based previously on their commitment to Christ often jettison that friendship when ethnic issues are at stake. The higher interests of the Church and the kingdom of God are often sacrificed on the altar of ethnic agendas.

So the questions which this study seeks to answer are

- What is the relationship between ethnicity and the execution of the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria; and,

- In the light of violent tensions and destructive conflicts among the various ethnic groups even in the Church, how can the PCN witness to the Gospel in ways that incarnate the life and love of Christ in Nigerian society?

In answering these questions, it is hypothesized that, for the Presbyterian Church to recover its missional identity and be an agent of reconciliation among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria, it

needs to foster a theologically-driven and hermeneutically sensitive dialogue in shaping a common mission.

In order to address the problem and argue the hypothesis as stated, the following methodology was followed.

4.2   METHODOLOGY

4.2.1   Research procedures: data and methods

The data were collected for two primary purposes, namely to: 1) gauge perceptions of indigenes as well as expatriates on the reality of ethnocentrism in the PCN; and 2) use the resultant information to challenge the Church to use dialogue in its response to issues of ethnocentrism within and outside its membership.

To facilitate the process, a *Focus Group*[69] approach was adopted. Also, different generative questions[70] were devised to elicit greater understanding of ethnicity, conflict resolution and dialogue in the mission of the Church in Nigeria. The questionnaire was administered to selected leaders who had been involved in the life and ministry of the Church in different capacities and at different times. There were two broad categories of respondents,[71] namely Nigerian respondents and non-Nigerian (expatriate) respondents. The Nigerian respondents were chosen from across the various leadership strata (ministers and elders) to represent the populations of the Church. In contrast, the non-Nigerian respondents are former Canadian missionaries to Nigeria. The questionnaire to the latter was designed to complement the information collected from the archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the oral interviews with the retired missionaries who had worked in Nigeria. In addition, Doug Welch, the coordinator for Africa, Presbyterian Church (USA), was interviewed in writing.

Fifteen questionnaires were personally distributed to prospective respondents in Nigeria. However, only eight respondents (53%) completed and returned their questionnaires. Seven questionnaires were

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[69] See Krueger (1988:47) in Babbie (2004:302 for more advantages and disadvantages of focus group research method.

[70] Samples of the questionnaire for the Nigerians and the Canadians are in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively. Appendix 3 contains the brief questionnaire to Doug Welch of PCUSA.

[71] The profiles of the Nigerian and the Canadian respondents are Appendices 4.1 and 4.2 respectively.

given in person to former Canadian missionaries[72] who had worked in Nigeria, which were all completed and returned. The 100% response rate among the Canadian respondents was due to the fact that the General Assembly Office of the Church had informed all available retired missionaries of its purpose and had arranged for them to meet in one venue, namely 50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7 (PCC's headquarters). In this way, these respondents were prepared to complete the questionnaire and were available for the one hour interview held with each of them. The questionnaire to Doug Welch of the PCUSA was not a detailed one because he had not lived in Nigeria. However, his experience as coordinator of the region of Central and West Africa (now whole of the whole of Africa) of which Nigeria is a part, provided important additional insights into the Nigerian Church. These insights were gleaned from a three-point written interrogation (see below). Unfortunately, logistical reasons prevented me from travelling to Scotland or the Netherlands to interview any official in these countries. In future, I trust it will be possible to include their input in this research.

As with any research constructs, focus group methods have strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the strongest advantage is that the researcher is privy to substantive insights developed through guided thought-flow, thus conforming to participatory action research methodology (PAR). A further strength is its inherent *validity* in the sense that the responses are elicited from respondents with direct experience of the issue.

However, this methodology also has its disadvantages. First, the guided nature of discussion means that responses may not represent the full set of knowledge or experience of respondents pertinent to ethnocentrism in the Church. Secondly, the information received from the respondents may not represent conclusions on ethnicity in the Church that are generalizable or statistically valid.

Despite these limitations, however, the qualitative data derived are rich in detail and of high quality. The calibre of respondents and consistency of responses suggest that the information gathered so far is credible.

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[72] I am using this medium to thank the McGraws who were already on their way to Toronto to participate in this exercise but were prevented from doing so by the torrential rain that poured that morning (4/11/2005).

4.2.2 Field trips

The qualitative[73] research was conducted in Nigeria in December 2003 and in the USA and Canada in October and November 2005 respectively.

Following is a description of responses.

4.2.3 Questions to and responses from Nigerian members

Responses elicited from the Nigerian participants are presented below. Note that these responses are preceded by an explanation of the relevance of each specific question.

4.2.3.1 How long have you been a member of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

Relevance to study: To ascertain membership and involvement in the life and mission of the Church for long enough to have substantive experience of the issue under review.

Interpretation of response: All respondents are members of the Church and have had many years of experience in the life and ministry of the entire Church. Some of them were baptized into the Church as infants and others as adults and have remained Presbyterian members throughout their lives [See Appendix 4.1].
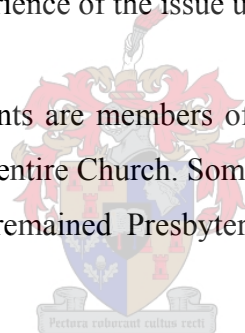
4.2.3.2 What position(s) have you held or are still holding in the Church since you became a member?

Relevance to study: This study sought to interview Church leaders; hence the Church question sought to establish the leadership profile of the respondents and their level of involvement within the Church system. In this way, respondent involvement with ethnic groups other than their own could be established.

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[73] In *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* "The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured, in terms of quantity, amount or intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. …They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (See also Earl Babbie 2004:281-311).

Interpretation of response: It was confirmed that respondents were leaders of the Church, in various capacities. These included involvement in parish ministries, educational and health institutions, and General Assembly boards where they related with people of different ethnic groups (see Appendix 4.1).

For instance, the responses (see Appendix 4.1) show that Ude served as acting Principal of Trinity College in exile[74] during the civil war years (1967-1970), taking care of Igbo and non-Igbo students. He also served as the Director of City of Faith (the Itu project), another Presbyterian theological institution whose student population was drawn from more than one ethnic group. In a similar way, E. M. Uka has been a theological consultant; a theological tutor, pastor, a university chaplain, hospital chaplain and Chairman, Board of Faith and Order (BFO) of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Leading in these capacities has exposed them to the diversity of peoples and cultures within and outside the Church. The question that logically follows is: Having served in these leading capacities in the PCN, do the respondents think that the Church has made any appreciable progress in reaching out to the diverse ethnic groups of the country?

4.2.3.3 How would you assess the progress of the Church in terms of its missionary activities among the different ethnic groups of Nigeria?

Relevance to study: This question provides insight into PCN members' understanding of mission, and their perception and evaluation of the (Presbyterian) Church's mission among the various ethnic groups, in the light of over 160 years in existence in Nigeria.

Interpretation of response: The responses show that mission is understood in different ways among the members of the PCN. While some think of mission as numerical growth, others think of mission in terms of the spread of the Church's influence. It is also evident from the responses that there are some members who believe that, even though the Church could not reach many ethnic groups during the missionary era, at least, in Mbonu's words, "Discrimination on ethnic ground was (then) unknown" .

On the other hand, there are members who hold the view that the PCN has made and is still making better progress under its indigenous leadership in terms of its outreach to different ethnic groups. Speaking of the two periods: the missionary and indigenous eras, Ude says:

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[74] He took the students to Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone to complete their theological studies when the civil war hit Trinity College, Umuahia.

"Our missionary activities were stringently limited by the Scottish missionaries to the bounds of the cross river basin notwithstanding the fact that born-Presbyterians; no less than converts, were all over Nigeria. When we became autonomous, it was the lay Presbyterians from this Cross River area who pressured the home based church leaders to furnish them with pastors to service them in their places of domicile. Thus for some time churches opened outside the Cross River enclave were known either as Calabar or Ohafia churches. Though autonomous, the Church's mission was for some time tele-guided or under the remote control of the overseas mission agents. It was only when the administrative staff at all tiers of the Church came into Nigerian hands that serious thought and action were given to missionary activities among other ethnic groups of Nigeria. Here special credit must be given to our Directorate of Missions (because of) the aggressive focus on reaching out to areas where the Gospel has not been KNOWN!"

Despite this divergence of opinions on Question 3, all the respondents agree that the missionaries left some legacies for which they are still being remembered and upon which the present generation is building.
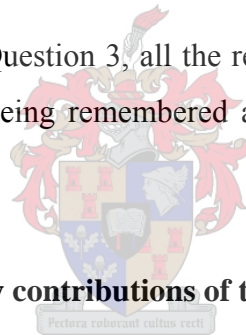
4.2.3.4 Describe the greatest missionary contributions of the PCN to the Nigerian society.

Relevance to study: This question seeks to identity some positive elements in the missionary enterprise which provided and still provides strength to the mission of the Church in Nigeria.

Interpretation of response: All respondents agree that the greatest missionary contributions are in the saving and serving of human lives through governance, education, health and agriculture. As Ude stated, it was for these reasons that "Nigeria seemed to be the British Empire's most successful venture at colonization." This conclusion actually raises a question about the relationship between the Scottish missionary agenda and the British colonial project in Nigeria, an intriguing relationship that affected the Nigerian mission in so many other ways.

4.2.3.5 What in your thinking are the major problems of the Church in its missionary efforts in Nigeria?

Relevance to study: Knowing that the missionary enterprise is a mixed tale of blessings and burdens, this question aimed to identify some of the major problems in the Church which have placed greatest burden on the Church's life and missionary practice.

Interpretation of the response: The revelations from the responses are quite interesting. Knowing the profession of each respondent, it is interesting to note that their hermeneutics of the Church's problems reflect their professional background. Here I cite three examples:

a)   Mbonu who is a Chartered Accountant believes that:

> "Finance is a major problem. (Therefore) PCN needs big philanthropists…
> Management is another problem. A lot of us are bad managers of time and money. Accountability is another problem. We are reluctant to follow the proper procedure. And we compromise our faith easily by being influenced badly by Pentecostalism (with its prosperity preaching)..."

b)   On the other hand, Ude who is a minister, a historical theologian and had worked closely with many of the past missionaries thinks differently:

> "The major problems are two—fold: (a) economic, and (b) ethnicity:
> (a) Compared with other areas, PCN has its roots in economically disadvantaged area of Nigeria. Even the oil that abounds in the East is outside the Presbyterian controlled area. It is only of recent that we have begun expanding into the oil belt area.
> (b) The bulk of PCN members are Ibo who seem to have no friends among the other ethnic groups. An overwhelming majority of our workers are Ibo. The snobbery with which they are treated militates against their missionary zeal in reaching out to non-Ibos, no matter how sincere."

c)   Mba Idika who has been a teacher in the Muslim north and had experienced the effect of ethnic isolation in Nigeria tends to agree with Ude when he said:

> "Tribalism as a result of converting various groups into the Presbyterian Christianity, cross-cultural conflicts, and destruction of African ways of life (seem to be the major problems)."

Thus, we can deduce that while some members of the Church believe that ethnocentrism and tribalism, among other things, are the main problems of the PCN, there are a few who think differently.

4.2.3.6 Which of these problems are traceable to the missionary root(s) of the Church? Please explain.

Relevance to study: The purpose of this question is to facilitate comparison of the problems being experienced in the PCN now and in the period that the Church was in the hands of the missionaries. It is to evaluate critically the missionary policy then and now. A separate survey was conducted to determine if the expatriates themselves experienced the present problems in the Church in their own time. Results of this enquiry will be discussed later in this chapter.

Interpretation of the response: The responses show that while most of the respondents attribute the problems to the missionary roots of the Church, two (Mbonu and Ukariwe) believe the missionaries are not to blame. Instead, missionaries should be eulogized for the sacrifices they made in coming to work in Nigeria. In the end, most of the respondents agreed that, among others, ethnocentrism and other conflicts which resulted from the missionary practice is a major problem in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and the entire Nigerian society. The missionary era left a mixed legacy for the Nigerian Church: of blessing and of burden.
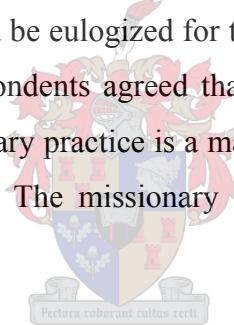
When we think of the burdens which the Church still shoulders today, one is led to ask if the membership is sufficiently aware of the problems and if there is any adequate theological response to them.

4.2.3.7 Do you think the PCN membership is sufficiently aware and creatively responsive to the pluralisms and life-threatening conflicts in the Nigerian society? Give some examples.

Relevance to study: The purpose of this question is to assess the level of awareness of Presbyterians regarding the reality of pluralism in Nigerian society and its attendant problems in trying to forge one nation out of the diverse political, religious and ethnic groups in the country.

Interpretation of the response: The litany of inter-communal, land and religious conflicts listed by the respondents show that people are aware of the reality of conflicts in Nigeria. However, the knowledge and the skills on how to deal with these conflicts seem to be lacking.

Respondents were asked to illustrate their answers with examples. Following is a selected summary of their comments:

"Yes: they are aware because they are part of the society and do experience the conflicts themselves: a) Muslim-Christian conflict, b) land conflicts, c) inter-clan wars, especially in boundary communities or towns (example is the Ikom crisis that led to the visit at State House, Abuja)"–Mba Idika.

"Yes, they are aware but there is a lack of teaching of the basics of the Scripture. Some conflicts are started by Church members against their fellow members because of land boundaries, etc. Few examples are: Ohafia-Biakpan, Mary Slessor Hospital, Ikwun-Okon-aku and Nguzu land crises" – A. A. Otu.

"Yes. The PCN is aware, but has no standing organ to respond creatively to religious and social conflicts. PCN response to HIV/AIDS is good"– E. M Uka.

"If this (question) refers to the posture of Islam with its politics against Christianity with its live-and-let-live posture, then I say PCN membership is aware. Through CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria), PCN has been responding to the conflicts especially in the northern parts of the country"– U. U. Mbonu.

"…PCN membership is not skilful enough to discover the truth about living together with political or ethnic differences, e.g. the conflict in Igbere and Isu communities in Abia State and Itu in Akwa Ibom State" – O. Ukariwe.

Since respondents indicate that the members of the Church are aware of the conflicts in Nigerian society but lack the skills to deal with them, what then should the Church do in providing the necessary strategy?

4.2.3.8 What role do you think dialogue can play in dealing with the conflicts within the Nigerian Church and the larger society?

Relevance to study: The question is designed to determine if the respondents who are leaders in the PCN and in their various communities see a need for dialogue in the face of conflicts in the mission of the Church and in the context of broader society.

Interpretation of response: All the respondents were very positive and also gave different views about the role of dialogue in dealing with conflicts. These views ranged from the definition of dialogue to its application. These are few of the pertinent comments:

"Dialogue is an invitation. It is an invitation to reject ignorance, arrogance and pride. It is an invitation to break through our isolation, our self-centredness and our self-sufficiency. That is the role dialogue can play in Nigerian Church and society" – I. O. Uka.

"Dialogue in conflict resolution within Church and society is democracy in action" - J.U.U.Otong.

"Whereas dialogue promotes talking together, diapraxes promote working together" – E. M. Uka.
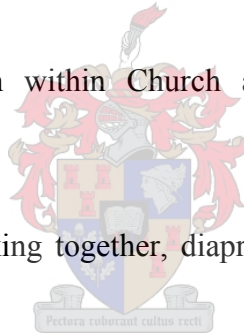
"Dialogue is the means by which our Church and society can achieve our goals. Embracing dialogue will make our parishes, presbyteries, and synods in the Church to be better for all of us. Dialogue will enable the PCN to play a leading role in social transformation as has been prophesied" – O. Ukariwe.

4.2.3.9 Have you been involved in any intra or inter-communal conflict resolution process in the past twenty years? How did your Christian witness impact on your experience then and now?

Relevance to the study: This question seeks to determine the degree of involvement of PCN members in conflict resolution processes. Results of this enquiry can be used to develop strategies for and model training programmes relevant to the Church's mission in Nigeria.

Interpretation of the response: Apart from two respondents (Otong and Ukariwe) who said they had not been involved in any intra- or inter-communal conflict resolution processes in the last twenty years, the remainder of the respondents recorded memorable experiences. What is important is that they were given the responsibilities because of people's trust in their integrity. In biblical terms, by their fruits they were known, recognized as people who could work for the peace of their groups and communities.

4.2.3.10   What are your suggestions on the PCN's engagement in mission through dialogue?

Relevance to the study: This question sought to test the views of the respondents on the role of dialogue in the overall mission of the Church.

Interpretation of the response: The following comments were made by all the respondents. These views on the role of dialogue in the mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria are very important to the findings of this dissertation.

Following are the respondents' constructive and insightful responses:
  I.   "It is good for the PCN to use dialogue; but the people must be trained to use dialogue in conflict resolution…. They must be people of integrity, whose ministry is accepted by the community." - Mba Idika
  II. "Jesus knew that there would be resistance to the Gospel message, hence He gave this injunction to His disciples: "When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another" (Matt.10:23). This did not mean complete abandonment of the community, for elsewhere..." – I.O.A.Ude.
  III. "PCN should adopt more pragmatic ways in mission strategy and conflict resolution through dialogue and use of local membership and religious leaders as well as paramount rulers to achieve success in her missionary efforts." - O. Ukariwe.
  IV. "PCN mission through dialogue can only be effective through existing bodies like CAN and CCN" – E. M. Uka.
  V.   " I suggest PCN engages in mission through dialogue and conflict resolutions to achieve:
       a) Peace
       b) Justice
       c) Renewed relations of the parties in conflict, and
       d) Forgiveness…" A. A. Otu.

VI. "We must accept the fact that conflict resolution is financially expensive and time consuming. It is a job that volunteers will do very well if finance is available. Since the Federal Government has set up a committee to dialogue on matters of possible conflict, the volunteers must be nominated into the committee through the CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria).The PCN must contribute its quota to the committee's fund or budget to enable it work…." – U. U. Mbonu.

VII. "The PCN should engage herself in mission through 'dialogue of life.' …Ethnic, religious and political tensions and conflicts may disrupt our dialogue of life, but we must journey together by building bridges of creative interaction…Dialogue is an important aspect of the Church's mission of evangelization, PCN should engage in authentic dialogue which is witnessing and true evangelization accompanied by respect and listening to one another." –Ibe O. Uka.

VIII. "… Should be encouraged by all and sundry…" - J. U. U. Otong.

With these closing words from Nigeria that dialogue should be encouraged by all and sundry, I travelled across the ocean to listen to other voices from Canada and the USA.

4.2.4   Questions to and responses from Canadian missionaries connected to the PCN

4.2.4.1 When did you assume duty as a missionary in Nigeria?

Relevance to the study: The purpose of this question is to ascertain when the respondent became a missionary in Nigeria.

Interpretation of the response: Canada's official contact with the Nigerian Church was in 1954 (6 years before Nigeria's Independence from Britain). During this period (1954-1960), only three of the respondents had arrived in Nigeria. The majority of the respondents reported for missionary assignments after Nigeria's political independence, when the euphoria of the fledging republic was fresh in the air but the clouds of the military coup and subsequent civil war had also started gathering.

4.2.4.2 Where were you located and how long did you serve as a missionary with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

Relevance to study: Geography has much to do with missiology and theology. The question was therefore designed to understand how the geographical location of a respondent in a particular part of the country influenced his or her missionary practice. Secondly, it is important to know the duration of the respondent's assignment in that location and to what extent the respondent was involved in the life and mission of the Church.

Interpretation of the response: While some missionaries served for shorter terms (like a year or two), others worked for longer periods (three to four years, or more). Again, while some served only in the East where the PCN has membership stronghold among the Efik/Ibibio and Ibo, there were few Canadian missionaries who served both in the East and non-eastern regions of Nigeria like Lagos (West) and Kaduna (North).

These exposures meant different experiences and led to varying responses from the missionaries, as will be demonstrated in the questionnaire analysis.

4.2.4.3 What position(s) did you hold in the Church?

Relevance to study: In the questionnaire, questions 3 and 4 were combined. But I have decided to separate them here for ease of analysis. The purpose of this particular question (3) therefore is to see how involved the missionaries were in the leadership activities of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria and how that influenced their output in the ministry.

Interpretation of the response: Many came as teachers, others as ministers in congregations, and a few were involved in infrastructural areas like architecture. It is noteworthy that at the inception of the Canadian missionary engagement, there was a deliberate policy to minister to the youth. Of particular mention is the deployment of Miss Agnes Golan who founded Christian Girls Club (CGC), now known as the Christian Girls in Training (CGIT).

4.2.4.4 What were your primary assignments?

Relevance to study: This question seeks to ascertain if the missionaries had clearly defined goals before leaving for Nigeria or whether they were given their primary assignments by the Nigerian Church leaders.

Interpretation of the response: Generally speaking, most of the Canadian missionaries were invited to face the challenge of a growing urban ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, a task their Scottish counterparts were either unwilling to do or for which they were unprepared. Just to cite two examples:

> In his response to the questionnaire, John A Johnston knew his mission agenda when he was invited by the then Governor of Eastern Nigeria (Elder Akanu Ibiam) to:

"a) provide leadership for the eastern Nigerians living in the capital, Lagos,

b) develop Presbyterian outreach programs with Lagos as the hub, and

c) teach history/ religion in the university of Lagos which later developed into teaching religious education at the Anglican/Methodist theological (Immanuel) College, Ibadan. Official responsibility: minister of Lagos Presbyterian Church and tutor at Immanuel College, Ibadan."

On the other hand, Walter McLean arrived in Nigeria to be saddled with ministerial portfolios as

"Interim Minister – Abakaliki;

Founding Minister – St. Andrew's Presbyterian. Church, Enugu;

Chaplain, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus; and

Interim Minister, Lagos Presbyterian Church."

As already pointed out in this chapter, it is noteworthy that at the inception of the Canadian missionary engagement in Nigeria, there was a deliberate policy to cater for the interests and yearnings of the youth. This was demonstrated practically by the arrival of Miss Agnes Golan who worked among women and girls and later founded the Christian Girls Club mentioned earlier. It was also through her efforts that the Women's Guild assumed the prominent position that has made it the very backbone of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria today. The responses also show that many women who accompanied their husbands to Nigeria were teachers in different schools which acted as incubators for the training and upbringing of young Christian students – people who were expected to be "proud", primarily of their Christian identities, and secondarily, their Efik/Ibibio or Ibo ethnic identities.

4.2.4.5 How would you describe the ethnic relations between the Efik/Ibibio and the Ibo groups in the PCN?

Relevance to study: Since many of the Canadian missionaries came to Nigeria when tribal and ethnic cards were already being played, this question aimed to ascertain whether the respondents were discerning enough to detect these signals in the Presbyterian Church system.

Interpretation of the response: Some respondents believe the tensions were not there; others said the tensions were really there and yet one respondent thinks the tensions could have been there but were subdued. Here is the summary of their comments:

"Not evident in city/university ministry. Presbyterians were a minority compared with the Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists" – W. McLean.

"I was not aware of any tension, perhaps some resentment from Efiks against the Ibo – (because of) their strength and influence." – J. A. Johnston.

"They got along well. They had to as they studied together (and) were trained together. PCN was bi-lingual" – A. Golan.

"Tensions were present but subdued" – G. Johnston.

4.2.4.6 During your stay in Nigeria, a) Were there manifest cases of ethnic tension or conflict in the Church that you could recall? b) What were they about?

Relevance to study: The purpose of this question is to understand how the respondents experienced conflicts during their mission in Nigeria and which issues were really at stake.

Interpretation of response: During this period of missionary work in Nigeria, the intra-ecclesiastical conflict in the Presbyterian Church coincided with a mismanaged national crisis that spiraled into a civil war that would ultimately spare no part of the country. Thus, if other institutions in the country were badly affected by the ethno-religious conflicts, the PCN's crisis was compounded by its own Efik/Ibibio and Ibo "cold war". Former minister in Lagos Church, John Johnston reports:

We were in Lagos at the earliest beginning of what became the Biafra War. No overt tension was ever expressed at Session between Eastern tribes although I was warned by Efiks not to be involved. I had organized a Sunday afternoon Christian Service of Reconciliation with Anglican Bishop, Baptist, Methodists, RC, in the Casino Cinema where Presbyterians worshipped every Sunday morning. A tension mounted, we were picking up Ibos in the evening and letting them

sleep in the Manse overnight, then driving them to work in the morning, so they could not be fired for non-attendance. These were all top executive Ibos.

b) What were they (the conflicts) about?

The respondents believe that because there was little or no trust between the Efik/Ibibio and the Ibo groups; people only trusted members of their own ethnic group and were prepared to defend of even die for the group. Indeed, some members of the Church became veritable vehicles of ethnic nationalism and instruments for advancing their group's ideology:

"At a staff meeting (as war clouds were gathering - 1965-1966), I was shocked to hear an Ibo colleague speak with great passion as an Ibo nationalist" – Mary Don Johnston.

"At this stage, differences of ideology appeared. Most Easterners felt the oil revenue was only benefiting the West (the Yoruba) which was unfair, while many Ibos wanted the revenue for Iboland, not necessarily the whole eastern region." – John A. Johnston.

Russell T. Hall, one time Synod Moderator of the Church captures the burning issues in the PCN in his submission. He states inter alia:
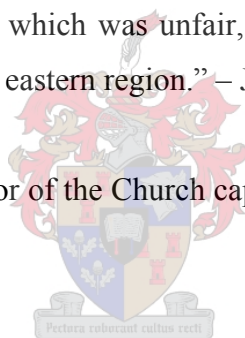
"a) There were manifest conflicts both in pre-civil war and post-civil war periods. In pre-war Lagos, influence of Ibos was greater; in Enugu, there was Dr Akanu Ibiam's influence. By start of civil war, all Ibos had returned home…
b) (Another source of conflict was) the location of Synod treasurer's office; Clerk's office had been moved to Aba. As Moderator, I was called upon to defend the Church's decision to move the treasurer to Aba".

In the Nigerian polity, the "Igbo factor" is a frightening element. In the PCN, it was exacerbated by the agitation to move the office of the treasurer from Calabar (an Efik area and the cradle of Nigerian Presbyterianism) specifically to an Ibo area. Location of the administrative offices in the PCN was not just a divisive issue but one that seemed to threaten "the very unity of the Church and its essential existence" in Nigeria. We will revisit this issue later in this chapter.

4.2.4.7 How did the ethnic factor affect your ministry in Nigeria?

Relevance to study: This question was designed to assess the impact of ethnocentrism on the missionary activities of the respondent during his or her tenure in Nigeria.

Interpretation of response: There were some missionaries for whom ethnocentrism in the Church had little or no effect on their activities. Examples are Geoffrey Johnston and the wife, Mary Don Johnston. But there were others whose ministries were seriously affected by ethnocentric tendencies, as illustrated in their reminiscences:

> "The ethnic factor affected our ministry a great deal. My ministry was in English which was the common language for the various Eastern tribes. Many left other denominations when we opened our doors in order to join Lagos Presbyterian Church. A thousand communicants were placed on the roll, many from other denominations. Lagos Church was the church for (a) Presbyterians and (b) for Eastern Nigerians. As a result, almost no Yoruba attended Lagos Church." – J. A. Johnston.

If the ethnic factor was detrimental in Johnston's ministry, it was advantageous for McLean who testified that it:

> "[It] became a "plus" for me – I went home to village with Enugu elders for special occasions."

Still others needed wisdom to navigate through the policies and the ministry terrain made dangerous by the ethnocentrism in the system. For example, Russell T. Hall said:

> "I tried to be even handed in all appointments, scholarships, decisions.
> Ted Johnson believed that Biafra was a people's movement – [that] would make a strong viable state."

4.2.4.8 In your opinion, were there ways in which the policies or practices of the expatriates / missionaries or their sending boards contributed to the tension or conflicts between the groups in Nigeria? Please explain.

Relevance to study: This question seeks to understand how missionary policies fuelled or abetted ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Interpretation of the response: One respondent answered nothing, another said "no", but most of the respondents believed the missionary policies did contribute to the ethnic problem in the PCN, borne out by the following comments:

> "[The] Church of Scotland was reluctant to enter into city / university ministry or relate with [the] British Council or CUSO programme. I was encouraged by E. H. Johnson to direct the new CUSO programme for young teachers, doctors, nurses who came for two year assignments" – W. McLean.

> "The Church of Scotland was in the bad books of Presbyterians in Lagos because no Scottish missionary was sent to Lagos as it was considered outside the traditional geographical area allotted to Presbyterians. Anglicans went to Calabar which was a Presbyterian area but Scotland was unwilling to go to the capital even when the missionary policy was no longer respected by other missionary bodies" – J. A. Johnston.

And when the war broke out, the missionaries and officers of their sending bodies were divided. Perhaps, this explains why "Ted Johnson believed that Biafra was a people's movement – [that] would make a strong viable state." He therefore supported the cause of the Biafrans who were mostly Ibo.

4.2.4.9 If you were to repeat your missionary journey to Nigeria, what would you do differently or in a new way? Why?

Relevance to the study: This question was designed to know if the respondent perceives an "unfinished agenda" and whether there is a desire to return to Nigeria to complete it, were that opportunity to arise.

Interpretation of response: With the exception of one (who did not answer this question), the rest gave insightful responses that are worth listing:

> "I would try harder to learn the local languages. My aim was always to hand over to the Nigerians" – A. Golan.

> "No. I played *my role* the first time. I would the second" – G. Johnston.

"I would have learned more Efik while in Calabar and more Ibo while in Umuahia. Then I would know more about their cultures and their deeper feelings" – M. D. Johnston.

"Missionary wives had no status. I would like it to change" – M. Ross.

"No. I regret the lack of serious presence of Canadian partners in Nigeria today" – W. McLean.

John A. Johnston tabled an exhaustive list of desired accomplishments, namely to:

"a) learn Yoruba,

b) organize local ecumenical body for fellowship (not for business),

c) push for educational facilities for theological students,

d) insist that Nigerians who receive scholarships from abroad (WCC etc) agree to return to Nigeria after studies,

e) seek higher educational standards for ministers, much higher stipends for ministers,

g) transportation grant provided for ministers,

f) seek to develop relations with Muslims through the local imams."

4.2.4.10   What are your practical suggestions to the PCN on intentionally doing mission through dialogue and conflict resolution in Nigeria?

Relevance to the study: This question was to test the respondent's view on the role of dialogue in the mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Interpretation of response: Some respondents think that dialogue should become part of the mission statement of the PCN:

"It is recommended that the PCN in its mission statement state that each member see / treat all Nigerians as brothers and sisters and act / live accordingly" R. T. Hall.

To achieve the desired benefit of dialogue in mission, John A. Johnston thinks the Church would need to overhaul its theological education and liturgical machineries:

"a) My impression is that the Church in Nigeria has a very shallow theological understanding of Scripture, so that emotionalism fills the vacuum. b) [PCN should] emphasize systematic and dogmatic theology [and] develop African hymns and African sound."

In practical terms, W. McLean suggests the PCN should

"Get serious in talking with Anglicans and Methodists.
Begin serious study of Islam.
Use [the] World Church network to challenge the image of Nigeria as a corrupt nation perpetrating scams, etc."

In this connection, behavioural change and attitudinal turn-around among the PCN members should be paramount. They must learn to

"Be tolerant in dealing with one another" – M. Ross.

and

"Be patient. Ethnicity is durable" – G. Johnston.
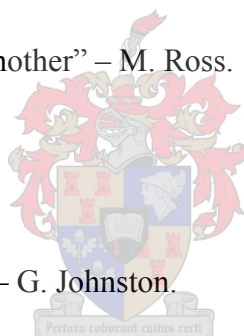
Tolerance and patience are very crucial virtues in every relationship including Church partnership. These virtues help us to learn to listen to different voices articulating different perspectives.

4.2.5 Questions to and responses from Doug M. Welch (PCUSA missionary and Coordinator for Central/West Africa, now for the whole of Africa w.e.f. 1/5/2006)

Doug Welch and I first had some discussions on the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, after which I gave him three written questions. Following are the questions and summary of his written response.

4.2.5.1 For the period you have been in this position as the Coordinator of Central/West Africa, what are your general impressions about the PCN regarding the ethnic relations between the Efik/Ibibio and Ibo in the Church?

Relevance to the study: Welch assumed the position of coordinator for Central and West Africa in 1998 and has since visited Nigeria several times. He has also interacted with Nigerian Presbyterians as individuals and in group meetings. The purpose of this question sought to elicit his observations about the group dynamics and the ethnocentric tendencies among different ethnic groups in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Interpretation of response: The following response is self-explanatory.

"I understand that there are historic tensions within the PCN relative to these [ethnic divisions]. Where this has been brought more clearly to me is in relation to theological training. The PCN expresses the difficulty it has in running its theology schools and request help in doing so. When asked the question about a specific focus the PCN explains that there are two institutions because of the two ethnic groups not wanting to give up "their" school. This makes it difficult for the partner to discern how to best walk with the PCN in this ministry since the decision of which institution to help is left to the partner. What is the priority? The PCN needs to find a way to use its limited resources in the most productive manner and having two institutions because of two ethnic groups seems – at least to an outsider – to be less than a way to operate. This issue is not only in the PCN but in other parts of Africa where I work as well. How does the Gospel bring people from different backgrounds to be free to share in ministry trusting the other to do what is best for all?"

4.2.5.2 Have you noticed any manifest tensions between the two groups and what are they about?

Relevance to study: Anticipating that ethnic tensions could rise in PCN meetings, the question sought to establish whether he had witnessed any of those occurrences, and what his reaction had been.

Interpretation of response: He admitted he had not experienced any of those tensions:
"I am aware of the historical nature of this problem but I would not say that I have experienced this in a practical sense other than what I explained in number 1."

This response necessitated a follow up question on the way forward for the mission of the PCN.

4.2.5.3 What can you suggest as the way forward for effective mission in the Church and partnership with the PCUSA?

Relevance to study: This question is important in finding new and effective strategies for the mission of the PCN in the 21st century.

Interpretation of response: The response touched on the theological cornerstone that underlies the strategy proposed in this dissertation the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria - to shift from an institutional organization to a missional movement. Welch writes again,

> "…I already asked the critical question – How does the Gospel speak to this situation? How should the PCN address it? … its training of pastors would be one place – explore tribalism and its effects on the Church and its witness. The pastors would then be able to deal with this in their congregations. Perhaps the PCN could also make sure there were other ways in which people of the PCN mixed cross-ethnically in ways that helped to break down these barriers. Does any one sector of the Church do this well – the youth? The women? If so then ask for guidance from them on how to move towards a more open Church with ALL seeking the furtherance of God's kingdom without regard to ethnic background.

> One of the strongest aspects of opportunity for partnership between the PCUSA and the PCN, in my experience, is through the women. The PCN women are energized for …partnership and I have worked to help the PCUSA women to reciprocate. As the PCUSA goes through dramatic change over these years, all aspects change with it. The PCUSA women are experiencing great change and, I believe, that a close relationship with PCN women will be of great help and inspiration for us. The PCN and the PCUSA have to find a way to bring the communication between them to a higher level. We are both so heavily occupied that a more regular communication is not established. The PCUSA West Africa Liaison has begun to make this link stronger. There are many in the PCUSA who feel strongly about sharing the Gospel with unreached groups and with communities of people in other faiths – Muslims. I perceive that the PCN is largely the same in this regard. We need to make the links between them and find ways to support opportunities for our constituencies to collaborate in mission."

4.3   SOME COMMENTS ON THE RESPONSES

4.3.1   Comments on the Nigerian responses

From the responses to the questionnaire and the discussions I had with many members across the wide spectrum of the Church, the reality of ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is a fact that every member knows but to which the whole Church does not yet seem ready to face. In fact, our attitude still hovers between recognition and denial. Even those of us who accept ethnocentrism as part of our inherited distorted missonal identity are uncomfortable discussing it, except when it serves as an instrument of blame or playing up to ethnicism. Hence, the problem has remained with us, sapping energy and hindering the missional progress that could have been made over the years.

In the post-civil war era and with the PCN still carrying the ethnocentric baggage and scars of that war, the question becomes: is it not time for us to develop a new missional identity that truly reflects our identity in Christ?

4.3.2   Comments on the non-Nigerian responses

It is very clear that partners, especially those missionaries who worked in Nigeria, did not have a common stand on the issue of ethnocentrism in the PCN. For reasons of geographical and / or social location, each person adopted a pragmatic strategy conforming to the prevailing opinions within their respective environments. In some situations where a missionary knew about the ethnic problem, it was considered safer not to raise the issue. Arguably then, a tacit "conspiracy of silence" existed in the mission field. For instance, when John Johnston was serving in Lagos Church, he said: "No overt tension was ever expressed at Session between Eastern tribes, although I was warned by Efiks not to be involved." Also, even when Russell T. Hall was the Moderator of Synod, the issue of ethnocentrism in the Church was not squarely faced and discussed though it reared its head in the attempted movement of the treasurer's office from Calabar.

This tolerance of ethic schisms meant that there was, and still is no theological response to the realities of ethnocentrism and its effect on the mission of the PCN. In the absence of that theology, there has been no proper strategy that could lead to true reconciliation of its members, especially since after the civil war.

This empirical research has brought to the fore a number of issues that must be addressed in order for the PCN to have a new identity that fosters God's mission in the Church and the entire Nigerian society. The following section highlights some of those issues.

4.4 SIFTING THE VOICES: A HIGHLIGHT OF THE ISSUES RAISED ABOUT THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND THE PEOPLES IN THE NIGERIAN NATION

This section highlights recurrent trends that were picked up in the evaluation of the responses. It is hoped that they would shape our subsequent discussions and elicit some suggestions on the way forward for the PCN mission in Nigeria.

4.4.1 A fairly old but "small" church

As stated previously, the Presbyterian Church has been in Nigeria for about 160 years. It started with the arrival of the first missionary team on the shores of Calabar in 1846. For many years, the mission work was concentrated around the Cross River basin and the target audience was the Efik ethnic group. Geoffrey Johnston (1988) had told us that one of the marks of early Presbyterianism in Nigeria was that the Church was a small one. It is assumed that this "smallness" refers to the number of members and the geographical spread of the Church. And if that is the case, the follow-up question is: have the factors responsible for this "smallness" changed over the years? If not, why?

In his sesquicentennial article, *The Game of Numbers,* on the mission of the Church, Kalu (1996:134) reminded the PCN that "the overall growth of the Church had not been very encouraging… The bottom line is that the PCN can boast of only 150,000 members after 150 years' of enterprise in Nigeria". He therefore concluded that "it will be invidious to compare this with the size of the Methodist" (1996:135), who arrived almost at the same time with the Scottish missionaries in the 1840s.

If the past sesquicentenary witnessed slow growth, it seems the new one is going to be different. From every indication, it appears 1996 was the beginning of the new awakening in the mission of the Church. The early signs of this new movement are expansion to new ethnic groups and a dramatic growth in Church membership. Although there is yet no reliable official record of the numerical strength of the Church today, Dr Mba Idika, the immediate past Moderator of the General Assembly in a press

interview in 2002 (http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/001/18.23.html accessed: 30/06/2006), was said to be the "head of four million-member Presbyterian Church."[75] This is highly commendable when compared with the pre-sesquicentenary figures. But Kalu (1996:135) strongly opines: "statistics are malleable; …vital statistics may explain certain level of growth but it could well be that adjusting our sails to the Word of God may have spelled obedience and growth."

The PCN may have started taking the missional mandate in Matthew 28 verse 19 ("…go and make disciples…") more seriously, and this has resulted in the "growth" of recent years. But the contention here remains that the ethnic factor has been a stumbling block in the mission of the Church and has negatively affected its growth. In a nation of more than 120 million people, the PCN cannot confidently boast of four million members after 160 years of its missionary enterprise. Perhaps, there is a critical need to look at the type of leadership that the Church has had over the years.

4.4.2   Missionary versus ethno-local[76] leadership in the Church

The critical role of leadership is common knowledge. And the axiom that no organization rises above its leadership is indisputable even in ecclesiastical circles. It follows therefore that, if we are to understand the developments in the life and mission of the PCN, we must necessarily understand the kinds of leadership that had shaped its ideas and identity over the years. Periodically, this leadership can be divided into the missionary and the non-missionary eras. While the first era was dominated by the expatriates, the later period was and still is being controlled by Nigerians.

In the assessment of these eras, there is a certain school of thought that believes that things were better in the Church under the leadership of the missionaries. At least, then, "discrimination on ethnic ground was unknown." One of the proponents of this view, Mbonu affirms: "With the PCN becoming Independent and the civil war on, there was withdrawal of foreign missionaries and the administration fell on the laps of the Nigerian clergy from various ethnic origins. Sensitive posts were by compromise ethnicized to avoid fear of domination… This was the political pattern in Nigeria."

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[75] This figure may be an assessment of the average Sunday attendances in the different congregations of the Church. As I have said, we do not as yet have the official records of the General Assembly showing this figure.
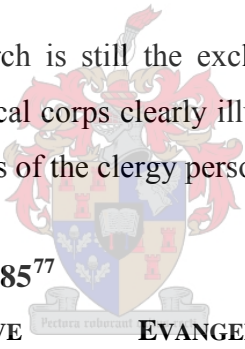
[76] This is a coinage from the researcher to explain the concentration and/or the localization of leadership within one or few ethnic groups in the Church. This seems to be the trend in the PCN where Church leadership has, for most times, been swinging between the Efik/Ibibio and Ibo groups.

This argument, though valid in its own right, is similar to the opinion of some political observers who try to romanticize the colonial era as if all were well then. While we admit that things are not as they ought to be under indigenous leadership in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, we only need to do a critical rereading of our history to see that Africans are not totally to blame for all their present social-political and economic woes. In many cases, the seeds of our socio-political malaise were sown by the powers and authorities of the past eras (see Boesak 2004, 2005; Mugambi 2004, Maluleke 2004).

This is why I wish to strongly submit that the real problem of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is not because the leadership is in the hands of indigenes; rather, the problem lies in the fact that leadership is being monopolized by the two rival ethnic groups in the Church. This is what I have called the ethno-localization of ecclesiastical leadership which allows no diversification of ideas from the different ethnic groups of Nigeria. Other groups have not been contributing to the leadership processes in the PCN because they are yet to be deliberately mainstreamed into the leadership structures of the Church.

As of today, the leadership of the Church is still the exclusive preserve of the members of these dominant groups. The picture of the clerical corps clearly illustrates the leadership lopsidedness in the PCN. Below is a comparison of the origins of the clergy persons/evangelists for two periods:

Table 4.1 Origins of PCN Clergy, 1985[77]

PRESBYTERY	RETIRED CLERGY	ACTIVE CLERGY	EVANGELISTS	TOTAL
ABA	0	1	1	2
ABAKALIKI	0	15	15	30
ARO-OHAFIA	9	39	30	78
CALABAR	1	8	12	21
ITU	5	21	18	44
OGOJA	2	9	21	32
LAGOS	0	0	0	0
NORTH	0	0	0	0

Analysis of the above records shows that as at 1985, all the official workers of the Church were from the Eastern and Southeastern Nigeria: Aba, Abakaliki, Aro-Ohafia (110 staff from Ibo- speaking areas); Calabar, Itu and Ogoja (97 workers from Efik/Ibibio and Ogoja areas). The Church had not by this time produced any indigenous worker either from the West or from the North.

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[77] This table is from Ogbu Kalu's *The Game of Numbers* (1996:131).

Table 4.2 Origins of PCN Staff, 2005[78]

SYNOD	RTD CLERGY	ACTIVE CLERGY	TENT-MAKERS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
AKWA	6	136	3	145	18.4%
CALABAR	6	72	15	93	11.8%
EAST	13	318	2	323	41.0%
EAST-CENTRAL	0		1	24	3.0%
MID-EAST	5	71	0	76	9.6%
NORTH	1	5	0	6	0.8%*
SOUTH CENTRAL	3	5	8	16	2.0%
UPPER CROSS RIVER	4	92	1	97	12.3%
WEST	0	6	3	9	1.1%*

By 2006 the presbyteries of 1985 had metamorphosed into synods (Table 4.2). Except for the North, West and Aba that still maintain almost the same geographical boundaries as synods, the rest have been divided into more synod areas. Thus, the 1985 Aba presbytery is now South Central Synod; Abakaliki, now East Central and Mid East Synods; Aro-Ohafia, now Synod of the East; Calabar, now Calabar and Upper Cross River Synods; Itu is now known as Akwa synod. That names have changed is a sign of administrative growth, but only little has changed in terms of the geographical distribution of the membership and workers in the Church. Out of the 789 people in the PCN workforce, only 15 are from outside the Efik/Ibibio or Igbo-speaking areas of Nigeria: 6 (r 0.8%) from the North and 9 (1.1%) from the West. Over 98% of the human resources of the PCN still come from the dominant ethnic groups. The above suggests that, in terms of the real missional growth of the Church leadership, little has changed over the past two decades.

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[78] The information in table 4.2 came from the Church Statistician, Rev. Kalu U. Eme and the former Personal Assistant to the Principal Clerk, Rev. Obinna Elijah as well as the 2005 Diary of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria published by the Publications Department, Board of Faith and Order, The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

* The asterisk is to show that these two synods belong to the non-dominant ethnic groups in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

This explains why, to some people, the PCN can at best be described as a bi-ethnic[79] Church. The Church is still recognized and known by many Nigerians as the Efik or Ibo Church. And except during the missionary era when the expatriates were in control of the Church, no non-Efik/Ibibio or non-Igbo has ever been the moderator or the principal clerk[80] of the Church. Yet, when the opportunity came in August 2002 for a candidate from outside the dominant groups to be the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly, the Church almost ended in schism. Those who attended the 2002 General Assembly would still remember the drama of electing a new Principal Clerk in Hope Waddell Chapel, Calabar. We had earlier shown that never has the problem of ethnocentricism been so glaring and threatening to the corporate existence of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria as the election of the incumbent Principal Clerk of General Assembly[81]. It was an occasion that really tested the readiness of the Church to make a paradigm shift in its leadership. The rest of the story is history. But the fact is: the battle for the soul of the PCN has remained a fierce one between the Efik/Ibibio and Ibo especially at the leadership level. The submission in this dissertation is that unless there is a fundamental change from this ethno-local status quo in PCN leadership, every other thing including, ministerial vocation, theological training and ministry location will remain under siege for a long time to come.

4.4.3 Ministerial vocation, theological training and ministry location in the PCN

From the responses, it is clear that ethnocentrism has affected different aspects of the life of the Church including ministerial vocation, theological training and ministry location. This means that if the Church is going to make the needed difference in the society, it must have servant leaders who lead the flock by example. This also implies that such leaders must have a sense of vocation and be prepared to serve in whatever location the Lord through the Holy Spirit and the Church may deem fit. Consequently, it also means that our theological education will be such that, in content and context, empowers the people to fulfil their relevant vocations in lives. These points have been well articulated by a

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[79] If we separate the Ibibio from the Efik, we will have three contending ethnic groups in the PCN. But the trend had mostly been that when crucial decisions are taken in the Church, the Ibibio would align with the Efik, so we are here putting them together as one ethnic bloc which often rivals the Ibo in the ecclesiastical affairs of the PCN.

[80] The highest that had happened in this direction was when Rev. Cheetam West, an indigene of Rivers State which is part of the Niger Delta region, was appointed assistant Synod Clerk in the 1970s.

[81] I, the researcher, Rev. Uma Onwunta was the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly after whom the Church elected the incumbent – Rev. Dr. Benebo Fubara Fubara-Manuel.

Conference for representatives of Christian theological and tertiary institutions which held from 26th to 28th September 1998 in Naro Mooru near Nairobi at the foot of Mount Kenya. Part of their report reads:

> At the end of the meeting the results as regards educational systems and for the Churches were summarized as follows: motivated by an ecumenical vision, the participants and their Churches felt committed to promote a kind of theological education which is economically viable and conducive to ecumenical cooperation and empowers students to bear witness in an authentic way. The concrete objectives are to train ministers who are both academically well educated, spiritually stimulating, creative and well-versed in ethical issues, who have acquired management skills, competence in ministry and leadership qualities: 'Our aim must be to produce servant leaders'" (Engel 2004: 87).

Clearly, this aim is a lofty one for any church, yet, this is the way Jesus, the Master of the Church expects us to go. In our Nigerian context, servant leaders would mean de-tribalized or de-ethicized leaders who show others how to live out the ethical demands of Jesus in word and deed. It would mean obeying the command to "love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:33-35). This is the antidote to the prevailing scenario in the Church in which "ministers frowned at postings to ethnic areas outside their language group." This is also how the PCN can start demonstrating faithful stewardship of God's talents and resources in our time.
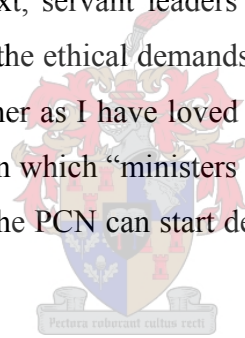
4.4.4   Stewardship: Using limited resources in most productive ways

One of the evil effects of ethnocentrism in the Church is the ethnic coloration that has often marked the decisions of the Church even in the use of its human and material resources. Virtually all important decisions of the Church have carried with them ethnic or tribal emphases. The result is that certain resources are under-utilized as merit or giftedness is de-emphasized. It is the realization of this stark reality that prompted the incumbent Principal Clerk of the General Assembly (GA Report 2005:225-226) to seek for a new vision for the Church and to promise:

> It is one aspect of our vision to seek for ways to further unite our Church and to de-emphasize all the existing roots or tendencies towards tribalism. It is our goal to do all to place before the younger generation of our ministers the oneness of the Church and to call upon all to seek this

unity. To realize this vision, we shall progressively see to it that we underemphasize the tribalistic notes and the undertones that sometimes lurk behind our Church's decisions and work towards taking decisions on merit, or rather on giftedness.

The reality on ground is that while playing the ethnic game, the PCN keeps demonstrating a poor sense of stewardship as limited resources are employed in the most unproductive ways. "Where this has been brought more clearly to me", Doug Welch observes, "is in relation to theological training." Recalling his words, the troubled Welch continues:

> "The PCN expresses the difficulty it has in running its theology schools and request help in doing so. When asked the question about a specific focus the PCN explains that there are two institutions because of the two ethnic groups not wanting to give up 'their' school. This makes it difficult for the partner to discern how to best walk with the PCN in this ministry since the decision of which institution to help is left to the partner. What is the priority? The PCN needs to find a way to use its limited resources in the most productive manner and having two institutions because of two ethnic groups seems – at least to an outsider – to be less than a way to operate. This issue is not only in the PCN but in other parts of Africa where I work as well. How does the Gospel bring people from different backgrounds to be free to share in ministry trusting the other to do what is best for all?"

Lack of trust is the issue in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Leaders do not trust their members and vice versa. The same situation obtains when we look at the inter-group relations especially between the dominant ethnic groups in the PCN.

4.4.5 The Ibo and their neighbours – a missionary burden on the PCN

As part of his response the questionnaire, Ude laments the undesirable relations between the Ibo and their neighbours. In his assessment, the situation adversely affects the mission of the PCN in many ways:

> "The bulk of PCN members are Igbos who seem to have no friends among the other ethnic groups. An overwhelming majority of our workers are Igbo. The snobbery with which they are

treated militates against their missionary zeal in reaching out to non-Igbos, no matter how sincere."

Reminiscing on his visit to Nigeria and the experiences with the Ibo and their neighbours, the Canadian missionary, J. A. Reosch[82] (1969:2), writes:

> Ibos are not the only tribe in the former Eastern Region. About half of the people belong to an assortment of minority tribes. About half of our Presbyterian Churches are among two of these tribes – the Efiks and the Ibibios. I lived four months with Ibibios in the Uyo area and one and a half months with Ibos in Enugu area, both places being on the Federal sides of the lines. I think it would be helpful to say or two things about the minorities. Most of these people dislike the Ibos, are opposed to Biafra, and support the Federal side. They feel they could have a better chance of getting a fair deal in a Federal Nigeria than in an Ibo-controlled Biafra. They paid for this attitude with their blood. The Ibibio were not reluctant to tell me what life in Biafra was like and of the atrocities committed against them by Biafran troops – a catalogue of evil in the same class as better advertised as Nigerian crimes. It is also worth noting that almost all the oil is located in the Niger Delta, a region now called the Rivers State where Port Harcourt is located and a region that is indigenous to the minority peoples, not Ibos. The land indigenous to the Ibos is not a viable piece of real estate.
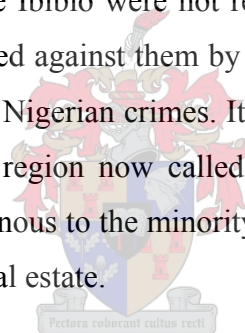
The above ethnographic reflection on the Ibos and their neighbours is quite poignant, especially from an outsider. The question may then be asked: what is the origin of this 'Igbophobia' and what are the reasons for it? The celebrated writer and social analyst and critic, Chinua Achebe (1983:46) explains:

> The origin of the national resentment of the Igbo is as old as Nigeria and quite as complicated. But it can be summarized thus: The Igbo culture being receptive to change, individualistic and highly competitive, gave the Igbo man an unquestioned advantage over his compatriots in securing the credentials for advancement in Nigeria colonial society. Unlike the Fulani/Hausa he was unhindered by an unwary religion and unlike the Yoruba unhampered by traditional hierarchies. …This kind of creature, was custom made to grasp the opportunities, such as were, of the white

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[82] J. A. Reosch, 1968 A *View of the Nigeria/Biafra Situation as it affects our Future Overseas Missions Program.* Presbyterian Church in Canada: Overseas Mission. This is one of the materials I retrieved from the archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada during the research trip in November 2005.

man's dispensation. And the Igbo did so with two hands. Although the Yoruba had a huge historical and geographical head start the Igbo wiped out their handicap in one fantastic burst of energy in the twenty years between 1930 and 1950.

In his book, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria,* Okwudiba Nnoli (1980) (in Okafor 1997:25) supports the above views expressed by Achebe. Here Nnoli traced the rise of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria to the socio-economic conditions of the colonial urban centres especially in Lagos. In this city, the influx of the Ibo "threatened the Yoruba who were already well-entrenched in the professions and bureaucracy because of a headstart in acquiring western education" (Okafor 1997:25).

At the risk of sounding stereotypic, the Ibos are said to be enterprising and daring. They are said to have a penchant to use their intellectual and physical energy in many ways and sometimes for not-too-rewarding-ventures. Perhaps, this misdirection of energy led them (the Ibo) to opt for the civil war in which they and their allies became the ultimate losers. And for reasons of having most of its dynamic membership among the Ibos, the PCN has, very unfortunately, been carrying this Ibo burden and the antagonism of their neighbours for a long time – a burden that has continued to militate against the mission of the Church till today. This situation raises some ideological issues for which the Church must have an adequate and honest response.

4.4.6 The PCN: a vanguard of the Gospel ideals or an incubating site for ethnic differences and ideologies?

In every generation, the Church faces the temptation of either being faithful to the Gospel or becoming an instrument of propagating the human ideologies of its time. The early Church faced similar temptations with sexism, classism, and even racism (compare Galatians 3:28) but had to remind itself that Christ transcends all those power structures.

Our contemporary world has many of these ideologies and powers that are being propagated by all kinds of people in all kinds of places including the church. Ethnocentrism is one of them. This is one of those principalities and powers of our time that the PCN must name, unmask and engage (Wink 1984, 1986, and 1998) if the Gospel is to take its rightful place in Nigeria. The PCN has a duty not to allow itself to be used as a vehicle for conveying any ethnic ideologies either in its policy formulation or the implementation of those policies. In a time like this, the task of the church is to theologically equip and

empower the members to confront forces like ethnocentrism which hinder its mission in the Nigerian society.

4.4.7 The politics of administrative headquarters

After years of debate about the viability of running a four-tier system of government, the then Synod of the church finally adjusted the administrative structure to allow for the General Assembly structure in 1987. In that committee that eminent and distinguished Presbyterians served, the aim had been to put in place a comprehensive management structure that would be a catalyst for missional transformation in the church and also strategically position the church for the challenges of the times. But in the heat of the debate, the General Assembly was established without detailed machinery of the operation suggested. So the persistent cry has remained how to: a) Acknowledge the historicity of Calabar and yet, b) bring all administrative arms together under one roof (Kalu 1996: 131).

The attempt to move the Treasurer from Calabar to Aba where every other arm existed was strongly resisted by Calabar women (Kalu 1996:131; Aye 1987). The threat of schism deferred further discussion. But that was only for a short time. By the Abuja General Assembly in 2000, the Church had reopened serious discussions on the issue and had decided that there is need to keep all the key officers of the Church under one administrative roof. Thus, the argument was no longer to move to Aba (an Ibo area) but rather to Abuja, the new administrative capital of the nation. Because many people from both ethnic divides of the church gave their consent to this decision, the understanding was that, at last, "the miracle of the unity in purpose and mission of the church" has appeared. The present administration of the General Assembly of the church cashed in on this situation and embarked on grassroots mobilization of people and other resources for the movement to Abuja. Remarkable successes were made. In presenting the report sheet to the 2006 General Assembly meeting in Calabar, the General Assembly Executive Committee (GA Report 2006:106) called the attention of the General Assembly to:

1. The rallies for the movement to Abuja at Port Harcourt and Lagos and approximate amounts so far raised.
2. Efforts made so far towards the movement to Abuja in terms of office and residential accommodation and the inauguration of the Business Development Committee, as well as the

ongoing project of the committee, namely, the Kado bungalows to be pulled down for the Guest chalets and the Gwarimpa land to be used for the church office and staff dwelling buildings.

3. The magnanimous donation of Elder Ojo Maduekwe, National Secretary of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who offered to the Church free of rent for a period of two years, one detached 5-bedroom duplex with 2-bedroom guest wing and 2-room servants quarters in a premises in Gwarimpa II provided with a borehole for use from July 2006. This is in addition to the one million Naira (N1m) already received by the church.

4. The rent already paid for three two-bedroom bungalows for two years to accommodate some staff of the General Assembly.

5. The fact that some documents and files have already been moved by the Principal Clerk from Aba to Abuja as initial efforts towards relocation of the office.

One would have thought that with the above achievements, the PCN was set to move to Abuja. But this was not to be. The barrage of protests that attended this move in 2006, shows the church is not yet ready for this geographical relocation in the nearest future. This sentiment is betrayed by the contents of the protests recently received by the General Assembly Executive Committee. Here is a list from the General Assembly (GA Report 2006:17):

1. "A protest was received from Calabar Synod against the movement of the Headquarters of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to Abuja titled: "Movement of the PCN Headquarters to Abuja." The letter argued that going by the Synod resolutions of 1983, 1984 and 1985 as well as General Assembly resolutions of 1989, 1993 and 1998, "Calabar remains the headquarters of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria."

2. A protest letter by Elder Mrs. Ekei Okon Ita against the movement to Abuja titled: "Movement of the Presbyterian Church Headquarters to Abuja."

3. A Protest letter by Elder Dr. Ita Ekpott against the movement to Abuja titled: "Persecution of PCN Historicity."

4. A petition signed by 105 members made up of the clergy and laity under the aegis of "Concerned Presbyterians in Calabar Synod" against the movement to Abuja titled: "Our Church, Our Heritage and our Headquarters."

When one looks at the whole scenario and the politics of the administrative headquarters, one is forced to ask: whose agenda is being served in the PCN – that of God or of people? Until we fight

ethnocentrism to its end and until we get the cohort of leaders whose sole mission is to serve the kingdom of God and cater for the welfare of the people, PCN will continue to be a platform for ethnic politics and individuals driven by egos.

4.4.8 The Imperativeness and urgency of dialogue in PCN Mission

All respondents agreed that dialogue has a crucial role to play in the mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. In an atmosphere of suspicion, ethnic mistrust and acrimony, behavioural and attitudinal change among the PCN members is not only imperative but urgent. In this regard, tolerance and patience are two crucial virtues we need to cultivate so as to start learning to listen to voices that sound different from ours. In pursuance of this new direction in mission, I would agree with R. T. Hall that PCN in its mission statement should state that each member is to "see/treat all Nigerians as brothers and sisters and act/live accordingly." This indeed, is a great task that would require an overhauling of the Church's theological education and liturgical machineries.

4.5 ETHNICITY AND THE PCN: THE THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

The analysis of the responses on ethnicity, mission and dialogue provides evidence that Presbyterians – both Nigerians and non-Nigerians – respond to the issue of ethnocentrism in many different ways. Some of these responses may have important implications for shaping the ethnic behaviors of individual members and should, therefore be the subject of more rigorous inquiry. For example, it is not clear from these analyses whether leaders discuss the issue of ethnocentrism in sermons and bible studies. Leaders may have been speaking about the need for unity in the body of Christ, but what really hinders unity in the PCN, in this case, ethnocentrism, does not seem to be sufficiently named, unmasked and engaged as a clear example of principalities and powers. The bottom line is that the Church in Nigeria has a very shallow theological understanding of Scripture with little emphasis on systematic and dogmatic theology, African hymns and African sound. The consequence is that, most times, as John Johnston acutely observed, "emotionalism fills the vacuum."

As things are, the theological question we should be asking is no longer about whether ethnicity is part of our humanity. Rather, it is a question about "Who do you say that I am?" This question is certainly about God as much as about the identity of the Church. It is about our new missional identity in present

context. Can the Church be a community in the world that can, in the words of De Gruchy (2000) "see things differently?" In this connection, this question leads us to ask another question: "does ethnocentrism have to continue the way it is in the Church and is there no theological response to it?

If we accept that the Church is a new community in Christ called to mirror the love of God to the world, then something has really gone wrong with our "Gospel" which tolerates such incongruence as ethnocentrism. This "ethnocentric gospel" needs to be redeemed. There is no other place to search for redemption and a way forward than in the egalitarian traditions of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ and the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Can the PCN be said to have made any effort in this regard? The next point will tell us.

4.6   FLICKERING RAYS OF HOPE? PRAYER, PENTECOST AND POWER IN THE PCN

In an attempt to refocus the mission of the Church and give space to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the PCN, there has been some interface between Presbyterianism and Pentecostalism in Nigeria. According to Ogarekpe (1996:232) the rise of Pentecostalism in Nigeria is a post-civil war "wind of God". The classic Pentecostal and Holiness groups that have entered Africa between 1906 and the 1940s suddenly came alive during the 1970s (Kalu 2005:41), benefiting from the youthful revivals. Women featured prominently in these organizations and churches were compelled to create a space for charismatism or otherwise lose their members to new-fangled Pentecostalism. The Presbyterian Church of Nigerian was not left out of this challenge.

Like many other religious movement, Pentecostalism has been undergoing some changes over the years. According to Kalu (2005:41), "this form of Christianity has changed shape in every decade, absorbing American prosperity preaching in the 1980s and reverting to holiness and intercessory traditions in the 1990s." For many different reasons, Pentecostal charismatic influence is generating rapid growth in Africa. Again, Kalu (2005:41) says the reasons include:

> "the cultural 'fit', which makes them bring the resources of the Gospel as answers to the questions raised within the primal worldviews. Consequently, healing and deliverance feature prominently. And as an instrumentalist response, they provide coping mechanisms in the midst of economic collapse. Therefore, the 'religious dimension' is the inexplicable power of the Holy Spirit in Africa that has set the missionary message to work."

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Considering the interaction between Presbyterianism and Pentecostalism in Nigeria, one could safely say that Pentecostalism has changed the face of Nigerian Presbyterianism immensely. Beyond the quantitative growth, there is much evidence of the relative deepening of the Gospel in the lives of the people who would have been lost to secularism. One name that stands out as a leader in the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is the Very Rev. Dr. James Udogu Ukagebu. According to Eme (2005:107-108):

> "Very Rev. Dr. Ukaegbu is prominently known as the progenitor of contemporary evangelism and missions in the PCN. In the book entitled *Evangelism on the Presbyterian Agenda,* he is described as the father of modern evangelism in the Church….As an ardent believer in the power of the Holy Spirit, he introduced, amidst opposition, the popular Holy Ghost Congress at Yaba, Lagos in 1985. This contributed to a firebrand Pentecostal influence in the Church. He planted many new churches in different parts of Nigeria to God's glory."

It is important to point out here that the emergence of this movement has not been without conflicts in the Church. To stem the tide of this conflict, the Faith and Order Board of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria published two booklets (Ogarekpe 1996:234):
1. Guidelines for Conduct in an Age of Pentecostalism, and
2. A Catechism on the Holy Spirit
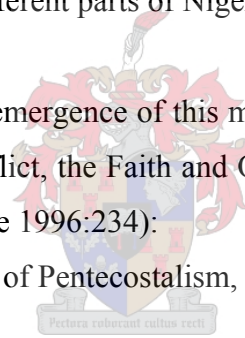
Whether these documents achieved the intended purposes or not, is a discussion outside the scope of this dissertation. But it needs to be observed that for some Presbyterian Ministers who claimed to have received a neo-pentecostal experience, some guidelines were given, so that they do not, particularly in the context of an ethnically-divided Church like the PCN, miss the essence of the Gospel. The belief was that the charismatic experience and practices of the ministers will be far more acceptable to the Presbyterian Church

> "…when your service to your parish is to all of its members of whatever ethnic background or spiritual level, and not only to those charismatically minded…" (Ogarekpe 1996:235).

Our concern here is that in spite of the welcoming of Pentecostalism into Nigerian Presbyterianism, the power of ethnocentrism continued to dominate the life and mission of the Church. And this is where the

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challenge lies for the whole Church: How can the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria be a truly missional Church that uses the gifts of the Holy Spirit to minister to people of different backgrounds other than just the Efik/Ibibio and Ibo of Nigeria?

4.7   PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the responses from Nigerian members and expatriate missionaries who had been involved in the life and ministry of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. The empirical survey has shown the missionary enterprise of the past did not only bring blessings; it also left some burdens in its wake especially among the ethnic groups that make up the bulk of PCN membership. The research was not meant to be a comprehensive report on the ethnic groups in the PCN, but rather an insight into the menace of ethnocentrism and the ethnocentric tendencies in the Church.

From the findings, a number of issues emerged:

- Ethnocentrism is a real fact in the life and mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Its impact is felt to differing degree depending on the geographical location of a particular congregation.
- Indisputably, the mission of the Church has suffered some setbacks as a result of ethnocentrism tacitly driving the Church's policies, programmes and projects.
- Therefore, ethnocentrism raises the theological question about the identity of the Church as a bridge builder among different ethnic groups.
- Considering the prominent position and the key role that the church plays in society, it is important that the role of church members and leaders in responding to the challenge of ethnocentrism be carefully considered.
- The question then is: how does the Church address a social issue like ethnocentrism that constitutes an obstacle to its witness and ministry?
- In the context of ethnic rivalry and conflicts, is the PCN ready to adopt dialogue in mission?

The challenge of theologically understanding the meaning and role of dialogue and community in the mission of the Church is the focus of the next two chapters. But we will first deal with the issue of community and other missional metaphors in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE **MOVING THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FROM AN INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH TO A MISSIONAL ONE: A CHALLENGE TO PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL ECCLESIOLOGY**

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided an overview of Presbyterianism in Nigeria highlighting the origin of the various streams that have come to shape the Church as it is today. Chapter 3 dealt with the reality of ethnicity in the Church and society in Nigeria while chapter 4 focused particularly on the effects of ethnicity on the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria. These chapters thus underscore the reality of ethnicity and its impact on the Presbyterian missionary endeavours. But what should be the responsibility of the Church in a situation where ethnicity hinders rather than enhances mission? Is there a practical ecclesiological approach that can address the challenge of ethnicity in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

This chapter argues for a practical missiological ecclesiology that addresses the contextual character of the Church. It hinges on the assumption that "the Church has the inherent nature to translate the eternal truths of God into relevant cultural forms within any context" (Van Gelder 2000:41). The implication of this statement is that the PCN is to be a practical medium and an effective agent of God's love and reconciliation to a divided people. It should translate and contextualise the gospel by being intentionally missional. For this reason, there should be an ecclesiological model that moves the Church from the present institutional trappings that hinder its calling, to one that is missiologically contextual.

In relating the gospel to real-life issues, the Church should embody the image or the metaphors espoused in the Scriptures. Scripture should be used to address the inherent ethnocentrism in the identity of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Bearing in mind that the interpretation of Scripture is made possible by the Holy Spirit's guidance in the mission of the Church, the PCN should depend on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit to accomplish its task holistically. Thus, within the present context where conflicts cloud the message of the gospel among the people of Nigeria, the PCN can change through a new ecclesiological re-orientation that understands the importance of a systems approach. In order words, the Church should become a horizon where Word (theory and reflection) and action or praxis merge, i.e. having mutual love and unity within the body (Church). In this context,

systems thinking has much to offer the Church in Nigeria. McLaren (2000:45) introduces systems thinking this way:

> There is something in all of us that loves to put together a puzzle, that loves to see the image of the whole emerge. The beauty of a person, or a flower, or a poem lies in seeing all of it. It is interesting that the words "whole" and "health" come from the same root (the Old English *hal*, as in "hale and hearty"). So it should come as no surprise that the unhealthiness of our world today is in direct proportion to our inability to see it as a whole. Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static "snapshots." …And systems thinking is a sensibility – for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character. Today, systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexity… Systems thinking is the cornerstone of how learning organizations think about their world.

One of the critical values of this type of problem solving at a group level is that it helps us to see the natural interface of several disciplines in a human situation. According to Louise Diamond (http://www.gppac.net/documents/pbp/part1/6_multit.htm accessed: 01/09/2006):

> This kind of relational awareness is critical…, for it encourages the kind of connections, bridges, alliances and networking that are essential to the ongoing support of the change process. Stepping back and seeing the whole picture especially that of the evolutionary moment in which we stand, allows us to hold the gate open for a new range of possibilities. It also allows us to affirm the positive view that, despite all the problems in the way, peace (wholeness) is indeed possible. In this way we energize the potential rather than the despair, and keep hope, that precious and fragile flame, vibrant and alive.

It is important for the Church to understand that as a community of people, it does not exist in a geographical vacuum but rather thrives in a space with different and sometimes divergent connections. This is also important as we deal with the Church's missional vocation in Nigeria. Nigeria, as it is, should be understood as a geographical puzzle, the beauty of which cannot be seen and realized unless we see the interrelatedness of the various parts that make up the whole. The people in the nation are part of the living systems in this geographical puzzle. Clearly the task of any relevant theology of mission, which is our primary concern in this chapter, is to unveil the theological basis for a Church

systems approach (i.e. *koinonia* practice) which demonstrates how the Church as a learning organization thinks about the world as a whole.

Thus the following question should be posed: What is the theological basis for an understanding of the Church and how should that understanding be implemented within a conflict ridden situation such as Nigeria? How does the Scripture capture and stress Christian responsibility towards the members of the Church and towards society. How can this be applied to reconcile and unite people for whom daily experiences of violent conflicts have become the rule rather than a rarity? What are the implications for an ecclesiology that is focused on the desperate situations facing the Church and the communities in Nigeria and the continent of Africa?

5.2 THE UNDERSTANDING OF CHURCH WITHIN A PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

5.2.1 Definition and description of Church (ekklesia)

Christians trace the beginnings of the Church to the origins of Israel – the call to Abraham to embark on his journey of faith. This was the first step in God's mission (*missio Dei*) to redeem the world and to liberate his (Abraham's) descendants from bondage in Egypt (de Gruchy 1994:126). It was the event that constituted Israel as the people of God, and revealed God's (Yahweh's) character and the historical significance of God's mission (de Gruchy 1994:126). Thus, "People of God" is a covenantal term, in which Israel's bond with Yahweh, and Yahweh's life, as expressed in that community, are denoted (Isa. 63: 8-9). The Hebrew term '*qahal*' YHWH' was often found in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures) as *ecclesia kuriou*, 'the Church of the Lord' (e.g. I Chronicle 28:8) and Micah 2:5).

The Greek word *kyriakon*, which means "that which belongs to the Lord" was also used once in the New Testament to designate the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians11:20), and once in speaking of the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10). But "Church" is especially used to translate another New Testament word which is closely related to the idea of "that which belongs to the Lord". It is the word *ecclesia*, from which we have the word "ecclesiastical", which describes the "people who belong to the Lord." According to Miller (1957:12),

"The basic meaning of this word was merely a gathering of citizens summoned, or "called out" by a herald to meet in a public place, for some special purpose. It later came to be used loosely of any public assembly of people for any reason. The New Testament, however, gives to this word a very special meaning. It uses it not merely to describe *an* assembly of people but quite consistently speaks of *the* assembly."

It is important to underline that *ekklesia* does not refer to the building but to an assembly of people (Hill 1988:186). The Latin *corpus*, meaning "body" or the uniting of many members into one whole, gives us the English word 'corporate' which best describes the "*E Pluribus Unum*" which is the Church (Miller 1957:17). Besides, the Church as described in the New Testament, is in continuity with Israel (Rom. 9-11), and yet it is understood as being fundamentally reconstituted as a result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.[83] An important distinction between the Hebrew *qahal* and the Christian *ekklesia* (used to translate *qahal* in the Septuagint) is that the former is constituted ethnically, whereas the latter refers to a people bound not by national ties but by Jesus Christ (de Gruchy 1994:126). The New Testament Church saw itself as commissioned to address the gospel to all the people, and therefore to embrace all people within its fellowship (Acts 1:8).

Kalu (2005), in the article *The Shape and Flow of African Church Historiography,* submits that there are many images of the Church in the New Testament of which we should be aware. In his words, "There are over 96 images in the New Testament covering a wide range of metaphors drawn from the physical structure of the human body, from the mineral world, the animal world, the vegetable world and the world of nature. These, Paul Minear (1960:26) reminds us, "are modes of perceiving afresh that mystery of eternal life which God shares with his people, as reminders of its neglected role as the body of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." As such, images are precisely what the word indicates – products of the imagination of primitive Christian communities as they sought to express their identity.

It is important to point out that beyond the biblical images of the Church are the myriads of denominations scattered in many places across the world. "The ecclesiological map looks like the shell

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[83] Pentecost (Acts 2) marks a new beginning for the people of God, a new phase in their participation in God's mission to the whole inhabited universe (*ecumene*) and a new empowering in order to fulfill that task (de Gruchy 1994:126).

of a tortoise! (Kalu 2005:14)." In clarifying this ecclesiological map, Van Gelder (2000:14) in the *Essence of the Church* states:

> Certainly the Church is more than a physical structure. It is more than a programmed event that we attend every week. It is more than a set of policy choices that define how resources are allocated and more than one's personal relationships with other believers. The Church is more than a historical denomination, more than a particular type of organizational structure, and more than a set of communally affirmed confessional beliefs. The Church exists in relation to these meanings. It is more than any one of them, and, in fact, more than all of them combined. When we encounter the Church we move into spiritual realm that occupies earthly terrain.

The Church has the transcendental and the immanent dimensions, both of which must be held in tension and not separated. This is the way it is in the scripture and also how God intends it to be. The Bible, especially the New Testament, has several images of the Church which attest to these paradoxical traits. Unfortunately, the images of the Church in Africa, as in many other parts of the world, have been tinted and tainted by colonialism and imperialism (Mugambi 2004:156). Consequently, the various forms of denominations in Africa, with all their inherited colonial baggage, give the impression of the Church as mere earthly institutions, thus diverging from the biblical images of the Church. The result is that we are faced with the danger that people in the Church see themselves not as followers of Christ, but "the products of warring confessional groups in Europe (Kalu 2005:14)". Our missiological task, therefore, is to rediscover the biblical images of the Church that express the missional vocation of the *ekklesia.*

 Kalu (2005:14) underscores the importance of this rediscovery:

> The biblical images pay more attention to a people who have discovered something precious and are joyfully sharing, proclaiming and publishing the good news. They are the people of God, the body of Christ, a band of pilgrims, a leavening of yeast, salt of the earth, a light on the hill. These images purvey openness, dynamism, uncloistered and unsequestered existence, unclustered with pomp and hierarchy. Indeed, they suggest a non-institutional, critical prophetic voice (Kalu 2005:14).

Our commitment today should be in quest of a missional Church that is open and prophetic. For a truly missional Church, among other things, is a community always looking beyond itself. In the words of

McLaren (2000:36), "the ultimate community (that is, the community for which the Church as a missional community exists) is not just the Church itself....The Church is a catalyst of a larger reality, which Jesus calls the Kingdom of God." But this is not so with the institutional Church. The institutional Church, on the other hand, is most times inward looking thereby losing that sense of "being there for others."

The battle cry is for the Church to be a veritable instrument through which the living God encounters a broken, bruised, suffering and dying humanity. But this ideal is only realizable in a missional Church. That is why this chapter argues for the movement of the Church from the institutional to a missional one that musters the spiritual resources at her disposal to occupy earthly terrain - especially in Nigeria. Put another way, our concern here is the function of the Church – that is, how the community of believers functions in our world, especially in a situation that is riven with ethnic conflicts and tribal hostilities.

When talking with the disciples, Jesus spoke of *agape* love through the descriptive medium of self-givingness. "By this (everyone) will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). Following Jesus' missiological injunction, in contexts where self-sacrifice for the sake of others is missing, the Church should demonstrate the nature of God by being a hermeneutical community that lives out God's self-giving love (Shaw and Van Engen 2003:39). This is how we encounter the living God in the midst of humanity and move into spiritual territory to occupy earthly terrain (Van Gelder 2000:14).

Moving into spiritual territory to occupy earthly terrain will lead us into exploring the contextual missional praxis and function of the Church through a practical theological perspective.

5.2.2   Praxis and Practice: a practical theological perspective.

In the article, "A mission of questions – A question of missions", J. N. J. Kritzinger (2002:149) explains that "'praxis' is not simply a synonym for 'practice' or action. It refers to action that is collective, transformative, and that integrates thinking and acting, praying and working." Johannes Van Der Ven (1996: xi) believes that this praxis is possible when it is developed in a practical-theological perspective within a contextual ecclesiology, undergirded by a 'transformatory orientation.' Karl Barth, whose voluminous Christocentric theology might seem abstract, stated that his focus on Christ as the

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centre of existence could be understood only as a "theory which has its origin and goal in praxis" (Barth, Church Dogmatics 4:1955-1961:79). The attempt to divide the theoretical from the practical he called a "primal lie" (Barth, Church Dogmatics 1:2 1955-1961:787). Theology must therefore be defined as praxis.

In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer stated: "only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes" (1995:63). The challenge in a cross-cultural situation is that we realize that "obedience is part of our hermeneutics" (Dyrness 1992:52). Thus, we must connect faith and action while realizing that our actions are somewhat dependent on our interpretation of faith.

In this respect, some theologians (Hendriks 2004:21, 22, 31) have contended that the criterion for authenticity for a Christian community is not orthodoxy but *orthopraxis* (authentic transformatory action). However, by this they mean more than just analyzing theology by Christian *practice*, for then it would be easy for theology to degenerate into a form of a pragmatic sociological analysis. For this reason, we must see praxis as including *teleos* which looks to the final purpose of the action. It is a praxis that includes a focus on the Kingdom of God (*teleos)* which looks at the final purpose of the action. As part of the methodology being used in this dissertation, we emphasize the Kingdom eschatology in mission as the magnetic force that pulls us towards God's desired or preferred future. Here again, however, the *teleos* itself is only discovered through action.
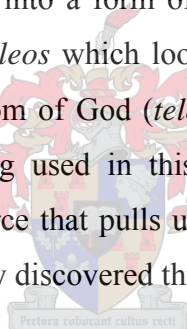
> Praxis is an action that includes the *teleos*, or final meaning and character of truth. It is an action in which the truth is discovered through action, not merely applied or "practiced". In praxis, one is guided in one's actions not by the intention of realizing the *teleos,* or purpose; but by discovering and grasping this *teleos* through the action itself (Ray Anderson 2001:49).

The question then is: How can practical theology prevent itself from drifting into theological musings or sociological pragmatics? This can only be accomplished if a strong link is maintained between theory and practice. Thus, theology as praxis assumes that theory must be part of theological reflection which is integrated in, or with, obedient participation in a missionally driven action. This is part of our methodology in this research process (see chapter 1.6).

Herein lies the call of missiology as

a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency, opposing every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, every desire to stay where we are, every inclination toward provincialism and parochialism, every fragmentation of humanity into regional or ideological blocs, even exploitation of some sectors of humanity by the powerful, every religious, ideological, or cultural imperialism, and every exaltation of the self-sufficiency of the individual over other people or over other parts of creation (Bosch 1991:496).

In a missiological ecclesiological context, praxis takes seriously the question "Why mission?" and implicitly also, "Why the Church?"[84] and "Why even the gospel?" Praxis creates the link between missiology and practical theology, so that theology as a whole is not just seen as an ivory tower venture, done in splendid isolation (Van der Ven 1998:23). For without praxis, which brings out the missionary dimension of practical theology, "practical theology becomes myopic, occupying itself with the study of the self-realization of the Church in respect of its preaching, catechesis, liturgy, teaching ministry, pastorate, and diaconate, instead of having its eyes opened to the ministry in the world outside the walls of the Church, of developing a hermeneutic of missionary activity, of alerting a domesticated theology and Church to the world out there which is aching and which God loves" (Bosch 1991:496). We must also add here that without the intentional dimension of mission confronting the realities of our time, it is impossible for missiology, and practical theology to reflect holistically about the challenges of inculturation, liberation, dialogue, development, poverty, absence of faith, and the like in different parts of the world - particularly in a divided and dividing world like ours.

This could be why James Cone (1997:215) in "Reconciliation: Black and White" has argued that "reconciliation is not only justification, God's righteous deliverance of slaves from bondage; it is sanctification, the slaves' acceptance of their new way of life, their refusal to define existence in any other way than in freedom. Reconciliation is not simply freedom *from* oppression and slavery; it is also freedom *for* God. Thus, the objective reality of reconciliation cannot be separated from its subjective appropriation. They both belong together as different moments with a different bearing of the divine act of reconciliation. God did not simply deliver Israel from Egypt and let it go at that. 'If you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples' (Exodus 19:5 RSV).

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[84] In terms of the Church, Ray Anderson goes on to define ecclesial praxis as a "dynamic process of human critical reflection carried out" (2001:51). He states that, "in praxis, God's truth is revealed through the structures of the reality by which God's actions and presence are disclosed to us through our own actions. It is not human actions that constitute the praxis of God. Rather, God's acts through our human actions reveal the truth" (Anderson 2001:51).

Yahweh demanded obedience. Israel must live as liberated people. To marry the objective with the subjective is the challenge before theologians of all strands.

In this regard, Cone (1997:213) has further alerted us to the fact that theologians write these days about reconciliation, explaining its relationship to justification and sanctification, but they seldom get to the core of the issue.

> New Testament scholars can tell us whether Jesus uttered this or that saying, and whether it is a variation of an earlier saying in Deuteronomy, Psalms or Second Isaiah. That is good. Systematic theologians can tell us about philosophical influences in this or that theology from Justin and Origen to Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. And that too is to be commended. But they seldom seem to be able to get to the point that makes the gospel the gospel, in the light of which all of their scholarly investigations must be evaluated. I want to know why they spend time writing about these things, and what it means in the light of the cross and the resurrection. Specifically, I want to know how reconciliation relates to …Africa … and other parts of the globe where people are oppressed socially, politically, and economically (Cone 1997:215).

The importance of Cone's probing statements lie in the fact that the praxis of mission, or any other theological enterprise, means little or nothing if ecclesiology, or academic theology for that matter, does not translate into the concrete transformation of human situations in the world. The point that is being made here is that our academic setting for the study of theology has been too far away from the real world, too far from congregations and too far from the "laity", who should be doing theology in real life situations. This means our academic setting for the study of theology must be readjusted. It calls for an overhauling of our process of theological discernment. This is an arduous task that requires our faithful engagement in the process and the critical examination of the relationship between missiology and other theological disciplines. It is a challenging call and an invitation for us to reckon that in the entire Christian community, the world over, missiology means globalization (Bosch 1991:496). But this globalization needs specificity, concretization. For it is only by means of a *missiologia in loco* that we can render service to *missiologia oecumenica* (Bosch 1991:496).

Following the discussion above, the question may be asked: How did we come to be in this situation that Cone has described, and how can we wriggle ourselves out of it? The fact is that we missed the point when theology became an enterprise for the professionals and for the elite. Something went

wrong when theology was "hijacked" from the congregations[85] and the "laity", who do theology in real life situations. In a way, our setting is quite far apart from the settings of "real theology." Therefore we need a readjustment of our discernment process. We have to adopt a *congregational* approach to the study of theology, especially in Africa.

To sum up our views on missiological praxis, Kritzinger's input is very helpful:

- Adequate missiological praxis needs to be *collective*. Individualist answers, which have become customary due to the influence of the Enlightenment (Bosch 1991:267, 289) and of later Pietism (Bosch 1991:255), are not an adequate response to the missiological questions of our day. Effective praxis requires a group of people who wish to think together, pray and work together, to make a difference to society.

- This leads us, secondly, to the *transformative* nature of praxis. One of the key features of the Christian tradition- in its better moments- is its world-formative and world transformative power.[86] The import of the vocation of the Church is in its commitment to be an agent of change and transformation in the world.

- Thirdly, praxis is *holistic* or *integrative* in nature. There is a delicate balance, or interplay, between the dimensions of identity/involvement, social analysis, theological reflection, spirituality and planning. If one or more of these dimensions are ignored or neglected, one gets missiological "short cuts" with negative consequences on our ecclesiology.

The collective, transformative and holistic nature of missiological praxis requires a clear understanding of the interplay between ecclesiology and missiology.

5.3   UNDERSTANDING ECCLESIOLOGY AND MISSIOLOGY

The concepts of Church and mission are two important ways of thinking about the work of God in the world. The development of the understanding of the *Church* has a long history as has been shown above. Through the centuries, the Church has developed various understandings of its life and ministry

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[85] Among other scholars, Robert Schreiter in *Constructing Local Theologies* (1986) has tried to address this theological pitfall by suggesting how professional theologians can partner with the congregation as theologians by their own right.

[86] Nichloas Wolterstorff has developed this in the chapter "World –formative Christianity" in his *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* (Wolterstorff 1983:3-22), with special reference to the 'restless disciplined reformism' characteristic of the social piety of early Calvinism.

in the world. These views, or self-understanding of the Church, are known as ecclesiologies. Ecclesiology is understood to be a theological theory of the Church (Van der Ven 1996: x). Essentially, ecclesiology is particularly concerned with the dialectical relationship between the Church as sociological and theological reality (de Gruchy 1994:125). An *ecclesiology* therefore is a summary of what the Church, working within a particular historical context, believes the bible to teach about the purpose of the Church in relation to that setting (Van Gelder 2000:28-29). For this reason, the ecclesiology that this dissertation pursues is both missional and practical. It develops a methodology on how to be a contextual, missional Church (Hendriks 2004:21).

On the other hand, the concept of mission has a different heritage. Its role in the New Testament is clear from the story of the expansion of the Christian movement in the first century world. The Church also engaged in missionary activities throughout the various periods of the Church's history as the Christian movements spread into new areas. The study of these activities and movements is what scholars call *missiology*.

According to Van Gelder (2000:31), ecclesiology and missiology are not separate theological disciplines, but are in fact, interrelated and complementary. Both ecclesiology and missiology share much in common in their understanding of God's work in the world. However, those who start with a theology of the Church and then proceed to mission usually make mission a function of the Church (Van Gelder 2000:32). This is especially true of Churches influenced by the modern missions movements. Within this movement the Church is viewed in institutional terms, with mission being one of several tasks that the Church undertakes on God's behalf. On the other hand, those who start with a theology of mission and then proceed to the Church usually approach the Church as something developed through the work of missionaries. Winning lost persons and mobilizing the Church become the top priorities. This perspective often fails to incorporate an adequate understanding of the historical existence of the institutional Church (Van Gelder 2000:32). If the Church is to fully understand itself and its vocation, then a clear understanding of mission is imperative.

5.3.1 Mission – A Definition

In attempting to define the term "mission," it is important to say that, as a result of several changes in human history, defining mission is by no means easy. Even missiology itself is notoriously difficult to define. Nevertheless, David Bosch (1991:9-11) has given us thirteen definitions of mission and the list is, to say the least, still inexhaustive. Hence, he has wisely cautioned that "we may never arrogate it to

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ourselves to delineate mission too sharply and too self-confidently. Ultimately, mission remains indefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our predilections. The most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about".

Formulating these approximations will require an understanding of the realities that are encountered while doing mission. The reality is that mission has come to mean different things to different people and has also been practised in various ways. Today, the word "mission" has become public property gaining currency even in non-religious vocabularies (Thangaraj 1999:28). Both in religious and non-religious circles it is common knowledge that the term "mission" is frequently used in private and public discourses. It remains a fact, however that mission owes much to Christian theological thought both in origin and content. Accordingly, in this dissertation, our point of departure in defining mission is Christian theology.

Guder (1998:4) states that "Mission" means "sending" or "being sent". The New Testament word *apostello*, which means, "to send," has been significantly influential in shaping the meaning of the term "mission" within a Christian context, over the centuries. (Thangaraj 1999). In this regard, mission therefore can be viewed as the "central biblical theme describing the purpose of God in human history" (Guder 1998:4). It is the redemptive activities of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout the world geared towards bringing the Kkingdom of God into existence (Verkuyl 1978: 5). David Bosch has remarked that: "Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world, particularly as this was portrayed, first, in the story of the life of the covenant people of Israel and then, supremely, in the birth, life, death and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ" (Bosch 1991:9). Thus, the task of the Church is to continue telling the story of God as epitomized in Jesus of Nazareth. This also means that the Church's role in the world is not *ecclesiocentric*, but *theocentric*. The Church is essentially missional and its task is determined by the *Missio Dei* (Guder 1998:81-83; Bosch 1991:389-393). Our praxis, therefore, is influenced and directed by God's praxis.

This shapes our understanding and actions within Practical theology. Thus, Anderson (2001:53) puts it pertinently:

> Practical theology is an ongoing pursuit of competence through critical theological reflection. This competence does not arise merely through repetition and practice of methods but is gained through participation in the work of God in such a way that accountability for the judgments

made in ministry situations are congruent with Christ's own purpose as he stands within the situation and acts through and with us."

It then follows that a missional Church gives expression to the relationship between God and the world. This is a Church that has some marked and essential features. Guder (1998:11-12), has identified, among others, five characteristics of a faithfully missional ecclesiology. They are:

- **Biblical** – Whatever we believe about the Church needs to reflect what the bible teaches. Biblical witness should be sufficient testimony to God's mission and the formation of God's missionary people as instruments and witnesses of that mission.

- **Historical** – Our ecclesiology must take into account other ecclesiologies, both past and present, local and global. For no one is an island.

- **Contextual** – Mission and theology should be developed within a particular cultural context. This means being incarnational in concrete situations. The Church must not be transplanted from one context to another.

- **Eschatological** – The doctrine of the Church must be developmental and dynamic in nature. It should move towards God's promised consummation of all things with strong confidence in Christ who is the hope of glory (Col.1: 27), and

- **Practical** – This means that whatever we believe and teach can be practised. Theology therefore, should be missional in the sense that it equips God's people for the *missio Dei* (compare Ephesians 4:11-16; Matthew 28:19-20)

Guder's checklist in the *Missional Church* (1998) is commendable. However, it has some weaknesses. It lacks two important characteristics which are part of the methodology that is being used in this dissertation. These are identity and discernment[87]. Though he (Guder) seems to have taken up these two points in the *Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Guder 2000), their importance is understated in re-inventing a missional Church. This is why Hendriks' (2004) analysis of identity and discernment in the missional theological engagement is very persuasive. Our understanding is that a missional ecclesiology is an ongoing process that seeks to understand who we are and what we are called to do in God's world. In essence, it is a holistic approach that seriously engages in discernment in order to produce a missional identity in an institutionalized Church like the PCN. Thus, if the PCN is to move from being an institutional Church to a missional one, it would need to have, in addition to Guder's

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[87] Understanding identity is very crucial to understanding and doing mission in context. And a Church that is missiological is always in a state of discernment.

identified characteristics, an ongoing process of discernment and identity re-formation taking place at different levels of its life. This is very crucial and we understand that it can only happen when the Church knows what mission really means.

This then leads us to the challenge of looking at the various concepts of mission.

5.3.2   Concepts of mission

Concepts are important because they are principles that determine the direction of any meaningful engagement in any intellectual endeavour or human enterprise. So they are no less needed as we seek to understand how an ecclesiocentric paradigm has overshadowed the theocentric dimension in the mission of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. As a point of emphasis, our methodology (see chapter 1.6) requires that we understand who we are, what we are called to do, as well as how to do it. To assist us in this task, four concepts or principles of mission will be considered here, namely: *missio Dei, missio ecclesiae*, *missio humanitatis and missio hominum.*

5.3.2.1   *Missio Dei*

Within the ecclesial circles, *missio Dei* is a very important concept for missiological explorations. It is an ancient term, which gained much currency during the Trinitarian discussions. Karl Barth was one of the theologians to articulate mission, not in the context of ecclesiology or soteriology, but in the context of the Trinity (Hendriks 2004:25). Since Barth made this proposal of *missio Dei* (the mission of God) as the proper way of talking about the Church's mission during the Brandenburg Conference in 1932, there has been a renewed interest in the subject (Thangaraj 1999: 38). The world missionary conference held in Willingen, West Germany in 1952 also placed emphasis on this very ancient term.

Following Barth's theological methodology, there has also been a shift in missionary thinking. So, mission has since then been understood as God's own work rather than that of the Church. Bosch (1991:10) echoed this view when he said that "*missio Dei*, is God's self revelation as the one who loves the world and is actively involved in and with the world; it embraces both the Church and the world, and the Church is privileged to participate in God's mission." It is therefore to be understood that the Church is only a participant in and never the owner of mission. But whether an ecclesiocentric

understanding has completely given way to a theocentric conceptualization of mission still remains to be seen.

This is why it is our contention here that God is a Trinity and missional and this has significant implications for our missionary engagement. Hendriks (2004:11-12) quoting De Gruchy (1994) and Guder (1998) summarizes the implications in the following lines:

> The first premise that undergirds our argument is that mission is an extension or amplification of God's very being. We were created in his image (Gen 1:26-28) and the Church must be his body (1 Cor 12; Eph 4:11-16). As such, both our anthropology and ecclesiology should have a profound missional basis. The second premise is that a faith community cannot really understand God in a personal way without participating in God's missional praxis.

Also quoting a number of sources, the South African theologian and missiologist, David Bosch (1991:372) in his magisterial work, *Transforming Mission*, further draws out the implications of this understanding of mission for ecclesiology:

> Mission is not a 'fringe activity of a strongly established Church, a pious cause that may be attended to when the home fires are first brightly burning…Missionary activity is not so much the work of the Church as simply the Church at work.' It is a duty which pertains to the whole Church'. The question, 'Why still mission?', evokes a further question, 'Why still Church?' It has become impossible to talk about the Church without at the same time talking about mission. One can no longer talk about Church *and* mission, only about the mission *of* the Church.

Participating in this missional praxis is both the essence of the Church's existence and its primary vocation. It is a self-giving service in the *missio Dei* which also purifies the Church. It sets the Church under the cross – the only place where it is ever safe (Bosch 1991:519). The cross is a symbol *par excellence* of God's mission to, and solidarity with, his creation. And "if the cross is understood as a statement about God, then, it must also be seen as the most astonishing affirmation of the grandeur of the human creature of God" (Hall 2003:93). Thus, in affirming that Christ suffered for our sake and in our place, the New Testament bears witness to this divine act of solidarity and grandeur more extraordinary than that of the humanists. For example, to remember that Jesus Christ was crucified between two thieves is to perceive God's solidarity with those who are rejected, condemned and finally

killed by humans. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2:14-17 RSV) expresses the same idea in this manner:

> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature…. For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God.

God's concern for humanity and human salvation is expressed through Christ's life of solidarity with sinful humans. *Missio Dei* therefore does not make allowance for any dichotomy between God and His creation. The incarnation is the clearest expression of the point of the unity between the reality of God and humanity in history. Therefore, we can agree with Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1955:66) who submitted that:

> Ethical thinking in terms of two spheres, then, is invalidated by faith in the revelation of the ultimate reality in Jesus Christ, and this means that there is no real possibility of being a Christian outside the reality of the world and that there is no real worldly existence outside the reality of Jesus Christ. There is no place to which the Christian can withdraw from the world, whether it is outwardly or in the sphere of the inner life. Any attempt to escape from the world must sooner or later be paid for with a sinful surrender to the world.

So the Church's being in this world can only be understood in the context of the *missio Dei*. In terms of our methodology, this refers to the second point of our definition which deals with the identity of the Church. We should understand mission therefore as the good news of God's love incarnated in the witness of a community for the sake of the world (Bosch 1991:519). If there is any message the PCN should hear and share today, it is that its community of members exists not for the sake of the Efik and Ibo groups but the entire spectrum of ethnic nationalities in the country of Nigeria and the world as a whole. The PCN needs this understanding in order to play the missional role of "light and salt" in Nigeria and beyond.

5.3.2.2   *Missio ecclesiae*

"The Church lives by mission as fire lives by burning." This was the vivid way the twentieth-century theologian, Emil Brunner, once described mission. So by *missio ecclesiae*, we mean the mission of the Church and the reflective practice of that mission. In unmistaken terms, Bosch (1991: 372) reminds us that the Church is missionary by nature. Mission is the heart of the Church's life and if the Church

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ceases to be missionary, it has not just failed in one task as has been argued earlier on in the *missio Dei*; it has failed in all. It is a duty "which pertains to the whole Church" and all God's people are to be equipped for it (Ephesians 4:11-16). Since God is a missionary God; God's people are a missionary people. Since Church and mission belong together from the beginning, "a Church without mission or a mission without the Church are both contradictions" (Bosch 1991: 372). The point is that the Church exists in being sent and in building itself up for the sake of its mission. Bishop Newbigin and others have helped us to see that God's mission is calling and sending us, the Church of Jesus Christ, to be a missionary Church in our societies, in the cultures in which we find ourselves (Guder 1998:5). If we are primarily called and sent to be a missionary Church, Bosch (1991: 372) should then be right when he said "missiology precedes ecclesiology." Blauw (1963:126) adds, "a theology of mission cannot be other than a theology of the Church" (cf I Peter 2:9).

All that we have said does not suggest that the Church is always and everywhere overly involved in the *missio Dei*. This is why, according to Lesslie Newbigin, we should note the helpful distinction between the Church's missionary *dimension* and its missionary *intention*. "The missionary dimension of a local Church's life," Newbigin argues, "manifests itself, among other ways, when it is truly a worshipping community; it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home; it is a Church in which the pastor does not have the monopoly and the members are not merely objects of pastoral care; its members are equipped for their calling in society; it is structurally pliable and innovative."
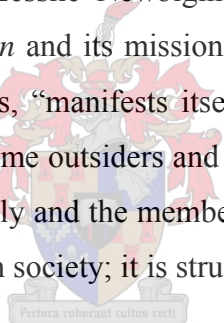
There was a time when the Church was very innovative and powerful – a time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. "In those days the Church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of the society" (King Jr. 1994: 434). Lack of innovation and creativity in mission can be very costly for the Church. How can the Church do today's theology and mission with yesterday's methods and still expect to be in business tomorrow? The Church needs a spirit of innovation and creativity to save itself from the embarrassment of engaging in a mission of irrelevance today. For this reason, there is an enormous challenge for the leadership of the PCN to wrestle with the issues of curriculum for theological training and ministerial formation, liturgy, culture, socio-political engagement and indeed her entire missionary praxis today to ensure that all we do falls under the ambit of the *Missio Dei*. For as Bosch (1991:391) has told us:

The primary purpose of the *missiones ecclesiae* (missionary activities of the Church) can therefore not simply be the planting of Churches or the saving of souls. Rather it has to be to service the *missio Dei*, representing God in, over and against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany. In its mission, the Church witnesses to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participates in the ongoing struggle between that reign and the powers of darkness and evil.

There are many ways the Church can prepare the entire faith community to participate in the promise of God's reign and the ongoing struggle with the powers of darkness. The list by Hendriks (2004: 20 see also Van Gelder 2000: 149-154) given hereunder may not be exhaustive, but it is a very helpful guide for the members of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria to commence participation in the *missio Dei:*

Worship (*leiturgia*)
Service (*diakonia)*
Communion *(Koinonia)*
Witness *(marturia)*
Preaching (*kerugma)*
Teaching *(didaskalia)*
Administrative *(kubernesis)*
Pastoral care *(paraklesis)*
Ecumenism *(oikonomeo)*

As the Church faithfully engages in the above missionary activities, it proves that it is possible for it to be in the world but at the same time not be of the world. It will enable it avoid being a countersign of the kingdom of God and become a sign of God's reign in the world and to humanity for whom God so loved and sacrificed the only Son. The Church is called to show its congregants and the entire humanity their mission as well as guide them. This is the essence and basis of the concept of *missio humanitatis* which is the next point we shall consider.

5.3.2.3   *Missio Humanitatis*

By *missio humanitatis* we mean the mission of humanity. This idea has been popularized by Thomas M. Thangaraj (1999:47-60) who raises some serious questions about whether in a post Christian era, multi-religious and secularized world, we can develop a theology of mission based on an understanding

of the *missio Dei*. His contention is that many of the assumptions that gave rise to the development of *missio Dei* thinking, assumed an interaction with the biblical narrative and the construction of a Christian theology of mission. But there is a problem today since there is no definite understanding of the word "Church". The word "Church" is often linked with mainline Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It excludes people of other religious faiths with their traditions and scriptures. Thangaraj therefore proposes that the best place to begin an interfaith dialogue is to begin "with the idea of the mission of humanity or *missio humanitatis* (Thangaraj 1999: 47). We agree with Thangaraj in the sense that part of our methodological point of departure in this dissertation is that theology should be done at different levels including the larger society of human existence. By *humanity* we mean all human beings irrespective of their faith in God or their membership in a religious community.

Theologically, this concept of *missio humanitatis* can be anchored in Genesis 1:26-28. Here we find our identity as humans - an identity much wider that of the Church. But the dilemma in the submission from Thangaraj arises from the fact that when one is in an interfaith dialogue, there is a need to find a common ground as an entry point to discuss issues affecting our common humanity. That should not, however, suggest and it should be clearly stated that a Christian need not forsake his or her identity in any situation like Peter did in the courtyard (cf Mt 26:29; Mk 14:71; Lk 22:56; Jn18: 17). For to deny our identity is to make us false and untrustworthy ambassadors of the faith and even bereft of any reliable credentials for that engagement. This point is important because everybody, including the agnostic, has a faith framework with which to engage in any discourse. So, *missio humanitatis* as a mission concept is useful only to the extent that it helps us to develop a consensus among different faiths and ideological backgrounds in addressing common issues affecting humanity. In this regard, the three ideas of *responsibility*[88], *solidarity and mutuality* developed by Thangaraj (1999:49-58) in

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[88] In its formal sense, responsibility is not peculiarly Christian. So in this context, it is being used in the formal sense rather than in any concrete material way. As Christian theologians, we cannot at any given moment suspend all Christian perspectives and look at theological issues in a vacuum. It is possible, in a setting of multi-religious and multicultural conversation, to broaden one's particular stance for a time and work toward a more inclusive understanding of mission. So taking our point of departure from the meaning of the word "mission", both within and outside the ecclesia, we may describe the *missio humanitatis* – the nature of the being-sent-ness of the human – as an act of responsibility (Thangaraj 1999:49-53).

From a pastoral theological perspective, Louw (2002:156) states that the concept of responsibility suggests a creative tension between 'must' (obligation) and 'can' (potential), without describing the exact nature of the obligation and potential. Both express the fact that being human implies having freedom, within which, reason and volition play an important role. This interpretation of the concept of 'responsibility' enables us to conclude that because of accountability, people are also moral beings. People are responsible 'for'. To be human, means to be committed to someone and to live with a vocation to do something for someone.

connection with the concept of *missio humanitatis* can be useful in our discussion in this work. I would like to quickly add that these terms do not constitute an exhaustive list on the subject. They are nevertheless helpful and have, as such, been suggested as heuristic devices to organize our thoughts on and around *missio humanitatis.*

5.3.2.4 *Missio Hominum*

This refers to the mission of the individual. According to Orlando Costas, (in Smith 2002: 15 -19) "if the Churches are preaching a gospel without demands in respect of justice, peace and equity, Jesus has become a conscience-soothing Jesus with a non-scandalous cross, and otherworldly kingdom, a private inward spirit, and a brutalized Bible." In this case, the goal of the Church is to create a happy and successful life for its members, obtainable through the forgiveness of abstract sinfulness, by faith in an unhistorical Christ. Furthermore, Costas called such a Church an escapist Church and mission done by this Church cannot but make a mockery of the Christian faith. Instead of writing off the Church, a new paradigm for mission has to be found and introduced. This is *missio hominum* or the mission of the individual.

Missio hominum thus means believers going out into the world to be involved in the affairs of people in their contexts; identifying with them and demonstrating to them God's love and concern for people. It is thus not in the first instance God at work in the world in a mysterious way, but people whose agendas for life have been prescribed to them by God, made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. So, if the incarnation of Jesus is to have real meaning in Nigeria, Presbyterians will need to become aware of life and the abundance *in* life to all people. This life in abundance should not be interpreted as the abundance of eternal salvation, but life brought about by those who are willing to agonise, sweat and bleed for justice and peace, in order to bring liberation to the oppressed *and* oppressors. Life in abundance demands the end of oppression through injustice and demands a life in mutuality in justice and peace. Our mission will thus have to be the locus of the continuing encounter between God and humanity. God has to be made present in the world by believers who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate to people the renewing power of God in all spheres. Such a mission will

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This meaning of 'responsibility' is important for a theological anthropology. (See chapter three of this dissertation on this topic). And the basic notion in a theological anthropology, according to Louw (2000:156) is: '*respondeo ergo sum: I respond (and I am responsible) therefore I am*'.

have to move away from merely converting people - from making them proselytes of a certain brand of Christianity. It will need people who are willing to go out into the world and become incarnated, especially among the downtrodden people of society. The rural people in the villages and the exploited people of the Niger Delta area need more than just preaching the word by the Church. The Church should be committed to justice, which is allowing the people have a fair share of the natural resources that are found in their land. This may mean confronting the powers that are making it difficult, or even impossible, for this to happen. This task is by no means easy, yet it is a divine task which the Church is called to perform.

In summary, we have attempted to look at just four important concepts of mission in our work, namely, *missio Dei*, *missio ecclesiae*, *missio humanitatis, and missio hominum* and their implications for the overall missionary praxis of the Church. It is clear from our discussions that though Christianity is a personal faith, it is not to be privatized. Every Christian member is a missionary. Accordingly we have to avoid a reductionistic approach or the 'ecclesiasticization' of the gospel if we are to be part of the *missio Dei* and engage critically in the contemporary mission which is already in crisis. We must heed this call with the appropriate sense of urgency.

A missiological consultation held a few years ago by the Christian Conference of Asia and the Council of World Mission (quoted in Wickeri 2004:13) affirmed that:
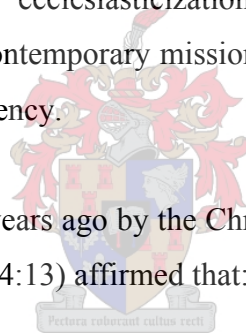
> Our new context calls for a reassessment of the missiological paradigms which we have used in the past. In the aftermath of World War II, the concept of *Missio Dei* helped to vindicate mission as primarily God's dealing with the world as a whole and comprising the totality of the salvific work of the Holy Spirit. The role of Churches in participating in this mission became focused on bearing witness to the reign of God, service to the poor and marginalized, and the building up of new communities of faith. We believe that *Missio Dei* retains its value as a liberative force with emphasis on "God working in history," but that in our new situation, new theological questions have emerged which point us to new directions.

These new directions are many. Bosch[89] (1991:368-510) calls them emerging elements in mission which require a new ecumenical missiology or paradigm. We believe that they are so crucial that they are at the heart of what constitutes the motive and motifs of mission today.

5.4   MOTIVE FOR MISSION AND MOTIF OF MISSION

5.4.1   Motive for Mission

Karl Barth has called the Church to re-examine its *Missionsmotiv* – its motive for mission. Barth states that "in the end the Church cannot justify herself, but she can only hope to be justified as an act of obedience" (Thomas 1996:105). In this sense, mission is obedience. Mission is obedience to Christ's commands as dictated in the great commission. Mission is obedience to the purpose of the Christian's election and salvation. Mission is obedience to God's calling to serve Him in whatever capacity He ordains. At the same time, it is only God that can be the motive for mission. Individuals are called to mission by numerous devices and for a number of reasons, but any motivation for mission outside obedience to God's calling is an endeavour that is not, and cannot be, mission (Bavinck 1960:6).

5.4.2   Motif of Mission

Between two polarized extremes – the individualistic approach where mission is every thing, versus an exclusivistic view of mission, where mission is seen only as a proclamation - a definition of mission must be found. Bosch makes an outstanding effort in the twelfth chapter of his missiological text, *Transforming Mission*, to define mission (Bosch 1991:368-510). Bosch lists and discusses thirteen elements of mission[90], emphasizing that these are not necessarily thirteen isolated components of

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[89] Most of the views in this dissertation on ecumenical missiology are drawn from Bosch's book *Transforming Mission* because of its respect and influence in contemporary missiological thinking. According Andrew F. Walls (2004:273-277), David Bosch's completeness as a missiologist springs from the fact that he was not only a missiologist. There are missiologists who are content to play a specialist role in theological arena and who make an ancillary contribution to a discourse on which other people provide the core. This means that at the theological banquet table, mission studies are roughly the equivalent of after dinner mints. For Bosch, missiology was theology, indeed, *encyclopaedic* theology. This is evident, not just from his last great work, *Transforming Mission*, but from his writings as a whole. His missiology is biblical and systematic, historical and practical.

[90] After a biblical and historical overview, using Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory, Bosch (1991:531) begins his constructive work by identifying thirteen elements of a new postmodern, or ecumenical missionary paradigm. These are:
- Mission as the Church with others
- Mission as *missio Dei*
- Mission as mediating salvation

mission, but they should be seen as interrelated parts of what mission is – all contributing to the whole. Bosch is careful to add that these should never be thought of as a comprehensive definition of mission. To assign a stoic, concrete and permanent definition to mission would eliminate the constantly changing and transforming nature of mission. Yet to neglect the intricate task of working toward a definition of mission is equally dangerous. As Bosch himself once wrote, "We have reached the stage at which almost anybody using the concept mission has to explain how it is understood, if serious confusion is to be avoided" (Vermeulen 1996:1).

Therefore the thirteen elements of mission should not be seen as isolated components of mission, but as interrelated parts of God's *holistic* mission. Bosch makes an important point when he says, "Our mission has to be multi-dimensional in order to be credible and faithful to its origins and character" (Bosch 1991:512). In essence he is saying that a one-dimensional front to Christian mission – e.g. evangelism or church planting- would be an inaccurate representation of what Christ intended for the Church. For example, when the Christian community becomes too consumed with mission as liberation and in turn slights mission as mediating salvation, the Church then presents a warped picture and ineffective mode of Christianity to the world. For the Church to be effective, there must be a balance in its approach to mission. The apostle Paul himself explained this in 1 Corinthians 12:4, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit. There are different kinds of service but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works them all in all men" (NIV). The picture we imagine of mission must be one of God holding mission together at the centre. This picture is very essential in our Nigerian context where ethnic conflicts have been hindering the mission of the church and hampering progress among the people. The situation thus challenges us to find new metaphors of mission that can unite our divided people. As could be seen in section 5.7 of this dissertation, we have proposed the metaphors of community, servant and messenger.

- Mission as evangelism
- Mission as contextualization
- Mission as liberation
- Mission as inculturation
- Mission as common witness
- Mission as ministry by the whole people of God
- Mission as witness to people of other faiths
- Mission as theology and
- Mission as action in hope.

According to Chichen (2001:68-102), these elements or motifs of mission can be grouped and examined under the following broad headings: Ecclesiastical Mission, Proclamational Mission, Indigenizational Mission, Theological Mission, and Liberational Mission.

Before we return to these metaphors, we will first look at the various historical models of mission through which the Church has tried to extend the will of God in the world.

5.5 HISTORICAL MODELS OF MISSION

In his book, *Models of the Church,* Catholic theologian, Avery Dulles (1974) delineates five such models: the institutional, the mystical-communal, the sacramental, the proclamatory or kerygmatic, and the diaconal or servant model. According to De Gruchy (1994:128) each model marks off a distinctive understanding of the nature and mission of the Church.

The first model, which dominated the thinking of the Middle Ages is reflected much in Catholic theology. It stresses continuity of structures but at the expense of making the maintenance of these structures more important than mission. The institutional Church is always the Church - the spiritual and the social structure being undialectically related. Dulles claims that this is the most problematic of the five because it is far too static.

An alternative strand in the Catholic tradition suggests a second model (mystical- communal), held by Thomas Aquinas in the middle Ages and Yves Congar recently. Stressing the interiority of the Church's union with God and others, this model is in strong continuity with the New Testament images but risks making the structural aspect of the Church "appear superfluous" (Dulles 1974:63). Not taking the structural aspects into account sufficiently can lead to unbiblical dualism.

The third model (sacramental) tries to synthesize the emphasis on invisibility in the first and the focus on interiority in the second. The sacramental model is exemplified by scholars like Karl Rahner who claims that the Church "signifies what it contains and contains what it signifies" (Dulles 1974:74). The Church is the sacrament of Christ in the world. That is, in its structures and activities, the Church is a sign of the continuing vitality of the grace of Christ and the hope of the redemption that he promises (Dulles 1974:201). The major problem with this model is that it can fall prey to 'an almost narcissistic self—contemplation which is not easily reconcilable with a full Christian commitment to social and ethical values' (Dulles 1974: 79).

While the first three models have appealed to Roman Catholic theologians, the last two (proclamatory or kerygmatic, and the diaconal or servant models) have been expressed more within the Protestant ecclesiology and practice. The proclamatory or kerygmatic model, espoused in this century especially by theologians such as Karl Barth, but also by Catholics such as Hans Kung, stresses the Church as herald of the Gospel, pointing not to itself (as the sacramental model might tend), but to Jesus Christ. This model tends to reduce witness to preaching and therefore, may fail to allow for proclamation in deed as well as in word. Hence, in his critique of Barth's kerygmatic theology, Dietrich Bonhoeffer claimed that the Church, rather than standing over against secular life, must find itself 'in the midst' of the struggles of the world. 'The Church', Bonhoeffer wrote, 'is the Church only when it exists for others' (Bonhoeffer 1971:382). This is the diaconal or servanthood model which sees the Church only being authentic when it is engaged in serving the needs of the world. The danger of this model is, of course, 'secularisation', whereby the Church loses its distinctive character in the world. With this in mind, Bonhoeffer also spoke of the necessary 'secret disciplines' (prayer, worship and sacrament) which was required to enable the Church to retain its identity and truly be 'for others' (Bonhoeffer 1971:286).

From the foregoing, we can see that each model affirms one aspect of the Church, yet none grasps it entirely. Therefore the plurality of models is needed in developing a contemporary ecclesiology (De Gruchy 1994:129). More precisely, the emphases of each of the other four models can he used to deepen the particular one opted for. No model may be taken in isolation from the others without reductionism. For instance, one weakness of the servant model – its tendency to blur the distinction between Church and the world – can be addressed by borrowing from the kerygmatic model the emphasis that the word of God is sovereign and therefore cannot be domesticated. The tendency of the kerygmatic model to reduce the Church to 'a series of totally disconnected happenings' can also be helped by critically retrieving features of the institutional model, which stresses continuity and tradition. Yet, as James Cochrane (1987:227) has pointed out, these options are not to be regarded simply as a matter of preference or choice. The task of ecclesiology is to continually reflect on what it means for the Church to be faithful to Jesus Christ in the world and to enable it to structure its common life (*koinonia*) accordingly.

The Church that embodies Jesus Christ's coming to the world, reflects something of the God who reaches out to people regardless of their social, economic or political backgrounds or leanings. This point of our definition (chapter 1.7) concerns vision, mission, hope and eschatology. We believe that

the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria can make a difference in the context of the endemic ethno-religious conflicts in the country. We believe that, emulating the love and care that were typical of the early Christian community, the Church in Nigeria can become a sign of God's presence and his kingdom in the nation. As such, we believe that the cancer of ethnocentrism in the Church, can also become our greatest opportunity for, and challenge to, evangelism and mission (Stark 1997: 73-94). This is the way we can move from being an institutionalized Church to a missional one that is focusing on the Kingdom of God.

5.6   CHURCH, MISSION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

One of the things to say about mission is that it is as old as Christianity itself. The Church was born in mission and lives by it. When the disciples and the apostles embarked on mission, they were convinced that they were following the direction of Jesus' own teachings as well as the explicit command of Scripture to "go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19, see also Mark 16:15). There is a constant struggle for every church to be both faithful and relevant to this command. It is the Church's calling to embody the gospel's "challenging relevance" (Guder 1998:79). But the question is: How is the Church to give relevant expression and faithful embodiment to the Gospel?

The churches of the New Testament proclaimed Jesus as the Christ, the reigning Lord, by virtue of his crucifixion and resurrection. In this sense their gospel was *about* Jesus. But whatever they proclaimed about Jesus was in concert with the spirit and substance of Jesus' teachings and preaching. Their gospel was not only about Jesus – it was also the Gospel *of* Jesus - the Gospel that he preached. This was so because the Jesus whom they announced as the risen Christ of God, the living Lord of the nations, embodied the message spoken from his lips. Jesus' good news that the reign of God is at hand is clothed with meaning by his continuing presence as the risen, reigning, and glorified Lord. Believing *in* Jesus Christ also means believing Jesus Christ about the reign of God (Guder 1998:88).

Writing on *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus*, Norman Perrin (1967:54) said what scholarship in general has accepted:

> The central aspect of the teaching of Jesus was that concerning the Kingdom of God. Of this there can be no doubt….Jesus appeared as one who proclaimed the Kingdom; all else in his

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message and ministry serves as a function in relation to that proclamation and derives its meaning from it. The challenge to discipleship, the ethical teaching, the disputes about oral tradition or ceremonial law, even the pronouncements about forgiveness of sins and the welcoming of the outcasts in the name of God – all these are to be understood in the context of the Kingdom proclamation or they are not to be understood at all.

But exactly what is this reign of God that Jesus so routinely announces? All the Synoptic Gospels convey the sense that the reign of God has a certain indefinable quality in Jesus' teaching. Always a mystery, yet an open secret, it was best passed on by way of parables, whose intent was to reveal and to hide in the same breath (Guder 1998: 90). Therefore, a definitive answer to the question, "What is the reign of God?" cannot be given. But we can at least sketch some of its contours by listening to the Old Testament's prophetic forecasts of the coming day of God and the prophets' expectations of God's intended future for the world. Holmes in (Guder 1998 compare Brueggemann 1987) summarized that prophetic vision as *shalom*. It envisions a world characterized by peace, justice, and celebration.

> *Shalom*, the overarching vision of the future, means "peace", but not merely peace as the cessation of hostilities. Instead, *shalom* envisions the full prosperity of a people of God living under covenant of God's demanding care and compassionate rule. In the prophetic vision, peace such as this comes hand in hand with justice. Without justice, there can be no peace, and without peace, no real justice. Indeed, only in a social world full of a peace grounded in justice can there come a full expression of joy and celebration (Guder 1998: 90-91).

The reign of God most certainly arises as God's mission to reconcile the creation accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself." (2 Cor.5:19). "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). Ruling by way of cross and a resurrection, God thwarts the powers of sin and death that distort the creation once good at the beginning. The future rule of God breaks in ahead of time as a harbinger of the world's future - to be fully and finally reconciled to God.

The Church has often presumed that the reign of God is with the Church. The two have been regarded as synonymous. In this view, the Church totally encompasses the divine reign. Therefore the church extension or church growth is equivalent to kingdom extension or kingdom growth, and the reign of God is conterminous with the people who embrace it through faith and gather together as a church

(Guder 1998:98). This view leads to the affirmation that there is no salvation outside the Church. The danger is that the Church then sees itself as the fortress and guardian of salvation, perhaps even its author and benefactor, rather than its grateful recipient and guest. But does the biblical portrait of the divine reign allow such conclusions?

It is evident in Scripture that the Church always stands in a position of dependence and humble service to the divine reign. If this is true, then the Church is not, and cannot be, the kingdom or the reign of God. Leslie Newbigin (1977:261) affirmed a perspective that seeks to maintain the distinction but not break their connection:

> The danger … to be avoided is the separation of the Kingdom from the Church. It is clear that they cannot and must not be confused, certainly not identified. But they must not also be separated. From the beginning the announcement of the kingdom led to summons to follow and so to the formation of a community. It is the community which has begun to taste (even only in foretaste) the reality of the kingdom which can alone provide the hermeneutic of the message.

When we ask then what positive model or understanding of the Church would do justice to these two ideas in tension, we are led to capture the biblical sense of the Church's calling and vocation this way: *the Church represents the reign of God.* In Guder's opinion, there are two ways the Church can represent the divine reign:

1. **Sign and foretaste** – The book of Ephesians illustrates this theme when the author speaks of the breaking down of the barriers between Jews and Gentiles (2:1ff) that results from the expansion of the Gospel to the Gentile world. The writer states that this profound social change within the small community of Christians represents God's purpose for the world: "that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of two, thus making peace" (2:15). The emerging multicultural Church is a foretaste of God's redeeming purpose for the world, which is the mystery now revealed: "that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ through the Gospel" (3:6). This point is even more explicit when the Church is described as the sign of God's wisdom for the cosmos: "so that through the Church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (3:10). As a sign, it represents something else and as a foretaste it represents something to come; the Church points away from itself to what God

is going to complete. In this sense, the divine reign's otherness is guarded. The Church must affirm that it is not identical with God's reign (Guder1998: 101).

2. **Agent and instrument** – Here the Church represents the reign in an active sense. The Church bears the divine reign's authority (the authority of the keys, Matt. 16:19; and the authority of forgiveness as indicated in John 20:19-23). It engages in the divine reign's action (living in terms of the lordship of Jesus over all creation). For this reason, Paul may address Christians as "co-workers for the kingdom of God" (Col 4:11) and consider them to be "suffering" for the reign of God (2 Thess. 1:5). The Church is representative in the sense of an embassy ("ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor. 5:20).

By its very existence, the Church brings what is hidden into view as sign and into experience as foretaste. At the same time, it represents to the world the divine reign's character, claims, demands, and gracious gifts as its agent and instrument. In a metaphorical sense, the Church can help the world to make sense of "God's hidden love and wisdom, Christ in you the hope of Glory" (Col. 1:16).

5.7   METAPHORS OF REPRESENTATION: COMMUNITY, SERVANT, AND MESSENGER[91]

Metaphors, Louw (2000:49) states, are used as a figure of speech in the theological vocabulary to present, comprehensibly and meaningfully, the unknown (revelation) in terms of the known (creation). It is an attempt to take the meaning dimension of God-languages and contexts seriously. Its objective is to understand the process of naming God in terms of real-life issues. Metaphorical theology enhances the interplay between God and the existential events.

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[91] This triad, which emerges from Scripture, has constantly surfaced in the Church's recent thinking about its mission. This was particularly the case in the 1950s when the experience of the modern missionary movement led Hans Hoekendijk and Hendrik Kraemer to articulate their threefold sense of the Church's mission as *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia*. The 1961 New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches used the themes of witness, service and unity to signal the three strands that converged in the formulation of the council (International Missionary Council, Life and Work, and Faith and Order). The Vatican Document II Lumen Gentium portrays the Church using the images of prophet, king, and priest. In the *Mustard Seed Conspiracy* (Waco: W, 1981), Tom Sine speaks of the mission as words of love, deeds of love and life of love. Darrell L. Guder talks about being the witness, doing the witness, and saying the witness in *Be My Witnesses: The Church's Mission, Message, and Messenger*s (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

Similarly, Hendriks (2004:136) has opined that symbols represent our association with a reality beyond the physical reality. Symbols represent something else; they evoke a complexity of meanings. Typical examples are the cross, the Holy Communion's bread and wine and the water for baptism.

> In the Catholic tradition the symbols at the centre stage are the sacraments; in the reformed Churches the pulpit is central. The liturgy uses many symbols that recall, or accentuate, integral parts of a congregation's belief system. In the Greek Orthodox Church, icons play an important role while, in all Churches, certain metaphors describe the essence of the belief (Hendriks 2004:136).

Thus, these symbols are the prisms through which we gain insights into the identity of particular Christian persons or groups. Furthermore, the identity and culture symbolically expressed by Christians and congregations help us to understand to which of the two calls they respond: "that of the world as it follows the principalities and powers (Eph 6:20), or that of Jesus Christ and the Gospel" (Hendriks 2004:105).

Biblical metaphors can be veritable tools in the identity analysis of any congregation or Church. The challenge is to identify these metaphors and choose appropriate ones for a particular context. Scripture uses a wide range of metaphors to describe the missional vocation of the Church. To help us understand the missional vocation of the PCN in the context of conflicts in Nigeria, we shall consider three Scriptural metaphors: community, servant and messenger.

5.7.1   Community

From his baptism to his temptations, Jesus demonstrated that his mission was to embody the reign of God through living under its authority. According to Guder (1998:103), "The reign of God was present in a radically new way in Jesus because he lived trustingly and loyally under the gracious rule of his father as none had lived before. The Church shares this calling with Jesus, though, its vocation is corporate, not individual. The point is that Jesus, the one who represented Israel, is now represented by the new Israel, the Church."

But we may ask: What then is the role of the Church and of believers who are the new humanity in the world? What is the mission of the Church and believers in Jesus Christ who now live in societies of

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multi-religious, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic groups like in Nigeria? How can the redeeming mind of Christ in the Scriptures be enabled, through the medium of mother tongue Scriptures, to penetrate into the ethnic Efik/Igbo consciousness to tackle the problem of ethnicity at its subliminal source?

In the book *Jesus and the Gospel in Africa*, Bediako (2004:104) states:

> In the African setting, it is through an African reading of the Scriptures, particularly in African languages, and by paying attention to the resonances of the biblical categories into the African primal world-view, that the desacralising impact of the Gospel is experienced afresh. Since the roots of sacralisation in African tradition lie in *religion*, it is in terms of *religion* that it can be adequately encountered. It is as *religion* that the Christian Gospel is able to meet the African world in depth.

In our Nigerian context, this means that there must be a new configuration of community that engages the Efik or Igbo primal world-view which conceives of the community as "a closed, sacral, tribal unit at the head of which is the sacral monarchy, that is, the chief who is the mediator between the tribe, the Supreme Being and the cosmic powers" (Crafford 1996:5). Thus, the Igbo concept of *Umunna (kinsmen)* which refers only to the descendants from the same biological father would have to assume a new social meaning according the Scriptures. In this connection, the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria faces a challenge to raise to consciousness in the wider society, the connection between the Church's message of righteousness, love, justice, and the search for sustainable unity. The Church has to be a new community whose members (that is, *Umunna* or kinsmen) are not just those who "… become God's children by natural means, that is, by being born as the children of a human father; [but] God is their Father" (John 1:13 GNB).

As we saw from the previous chapters, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria lives in a context of ethnic and religious conflicts. As it struggles to grow in its mission, it carries with it the burdens of a divided people in its membership. These burdens of division and disunity call for a new missional community characterized by the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The Church must be an example of the new humanity that God has created through the Cross of Jesus Christ. This is what Bediako (2004:106) meant when he said:

As the first-fruits of the new humanity, created through the reconciling - by the Cross - of hostile groups (Ephesians 2:14), the Church must manifest the victory of the Cross in the concrete realities of [its] existence in the society, and demonstrate that [it] has begun to be liberated from bondage to the 'powers' that rule human existence and the cosmic order in that context. Christian conversion and Christian conviction need to find concrete expression in relation to the 'elemental forces' – ethnicity, race, social class, culture and customs – that shaped individual and social identity and destiny in the older order.

Part of the old order in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria is that members might want to die for the protection of their ethnic rights and privileges, rather than for the unity of the faith. The politics of administrative headquarters in the Church is a clear example of the abiding presence of the old order (ethnocentrism) in the Church. But if the Church is going to be truly missional and operate in a holistic manner, as espoused by the Scripture, then we must allow the redeeming mind of Christ in the Scriptures to penetrate into our old ethnic Efik/Igbo consciousness so that there would be a new community where everybody counts because of Christ.

Consequently, we must pay attention to what S. D. Gaede (1994:110-111) calls the category of "socializing communities," - that is, families, schools, churches, and any other learning communities which attempt personal formation. Gaede observes that "… such communities must have the opportunities and resources necessary to nurture the next generation according to the truths they believe." Continuing, Gaede (1994:111) states,
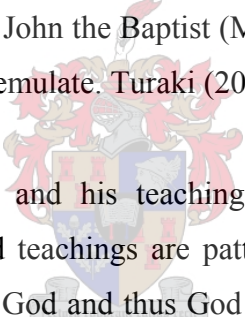
(Many) Christians have the tendency to worship with those who are like them – ethnically, economically, and so on. If we approach community along those same stratified lines and our "socializing institutions" that turn out to be "people like us", then our Churches will not represent the body of Christ; they will not have all the insights and gifts of the body; and we will not [be] teaching the whole, life-changing truth of Scripture.

To be missional is to understand that we are called and sent to be the unique community of those who live under the reign of God. Therefore, the Church should display the first fruits of the forgiven and forgiving people of God who are brought together from the rubble of dividing walls that have crumbled under the weight of the cross. Believing itself to be one in the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3), the Church should know God has sent it into the world in pursuit of the "unity of the faith" (4:13).

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This is what it means to be a missional community. The implication is that members of the PCN have no other option than to be that community that imitates Christ, a community that mirrors God's new humanity. It is such a community that pursues the agenda of Jesus Christ who came "not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43-45).

5.7.2   Servant

The actions of Jesus show forth the horizon of the coming world of *shalom* – peace, justice, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Guder 1998:105). Throughout his earthly ministry we sense the heartbeat of his action: compassionate response to human need. He was predisposed to be interrupted even from his focal task of preaching, whenever hunger, sickness, demonic oppression, the grip of sin, social ostracism, or death crossed his path (Mark 1:35-45). Tears paved the way he travelled in order to bring good news. Such a predisposition was the theme of his keynote address in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20) and proof of his messianic appointment, as he indicated to John the Baptist (Matt11:1-6). Thus, the life and character of Jesus are the normative for the Church to emulate. Turaki (2006b: 49) explains:

> The life and character of Jesus and his teachings have become normative for the new community. Its life, character and teachings are patterned after that of the Master and Lord. Jesus reveals the "Fatherhood" of God and thus God is addressed as "Father". Jesus addressed himself as "Son" and thus introduced the concept of "sonship" into the new community. All believers are the "adopted" sons and daughters of God.

The Church is called to live with a new horizon with the impulse to respond to the whole range of need in humanity and in creation. Thus, the Church represents the reign of God by its deeds; it is the servant of God's passion for the life of the world. This is a monumental challenge in Africa where almost every institution has all kinds of leadership except servant leadership.

Writing on the dearth of servant leadership in Africa, Hendriks (2004:136) hit the nail at the head:

> Misuse of power is endemic in Africa. Presidents want to remain in office for life. They cling to power and simply change the constitution of a country to do so. Church leaders should set an example by demonstrating another kind of leadership: servant leadership and humility.

But what are the indications that church leaders will be able to rise to this challenge? How can we have servant leaders in Africa? Bediako (2004:102) reminds us that "by the close association of religious (sacred) authority and political power in the person of the traditional ruler, African traditional societies were 'ontocracies', sacralising authority and power with the effectual integration of altar and throne." Our primal world-view conceives of everything, including religion, as power. This explains why many Efik and Igbo leaders in the PCN still think of leadership as power and not necessarily of service. But we must engage this concept of power which derives its meaning from our primal world-view.

As our research results show, the struggle for true leadership in the PCN involves making room for the 'way of Jesus', the way of non-dominating power, in administrative arrangements under which members of the church relate to one another. The Scripture teaches us that the mind of Christ on the questions of power is not a dominating mind, not a self-pleasing or self-asserting mind, but a saving mind, a redemptive mind, a servant mind. 'For Christ did not please himself' (Romans 15:3). Jesus' way of dealing with political power represents the perfect desacralisation of all worldly power.

The recognition that power truly belongs to God, rooted in the Christian theology of power as non-dominating, therefore liberates PCN members and their leaders to be humans among fellow humans and ennobles church leadership and membership into the service of God and fellow humans. Ultimately,
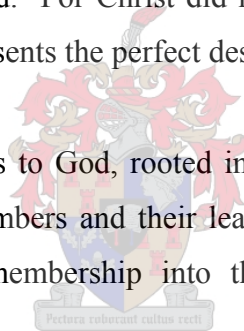
> This perspective provides the only genuine and abiding foundation for any serious quest [in the PCN and Nigerian society] for a sustained culture of freedom and justice…Without such a conception of power as Jesus held, taught and demonstrated by the Cross, the hope of achieving a real sharing of power [among the ethnic groups in Nigeria] will remain elusive (Bediako 2004:105).

This is why Luther insisted that among the so-called marks of the Church, there is only one that is indispensable - only one whose absence would automatically call into question everything else claimed by such a Church, including its unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity. It is the cross. As von Loewenich (1976:126) writes:

Luther lists cross and suffering among the marks of the Church. In his book *Of Councils and the Church*, 1539, Luther counts seven marks by which the Church can be recognized, and he would prefer to call them sacraments of the Church, if the term "sacrament" had not already taken on a different meaning….As the seventh mark of the Church, Luther mentions "the holy possession of the sacred cross"…

This seventh mark of the Church, surely, is one that ought to provide a good deal of critical guidance, as the PCN and other Churches struggle today to overcome their internal conflicts and the penchant for excessive concern over their institutional survival. The whole ethic of justice, peace, and integrity of creation, which the World Council of Churches tried, two decades ago, to make central to ecclesiastical and ecumenical concern, should not be a mere addendum to our mission. It should stand at the centre of our identity and be the core of our message as a community. As a community of God, the Church should be known by its message from God to God's creation. How the church should communicate this message is our next point for consideration.

5.7.3 Messenger – conveying the Gospel through vernacular categories

Jesus believed it to be his mission to announce the presence of the reign of God and its implications and call. It was his mission to put into words what was true about his presence and his deeds, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20). Preaching and teaching with parable-puzzles and penetrating responses to situations in teachable moments, were required to interpret what was seen and experienced. As Guder (1998:106) put it, "If his (Jesus') presence was a *sign* of the reign of God, and his deeds were *signposts* pointing to it, his verbal proclamation of the meaning of his presence and deeds added the *signature*. With the signature of approval from the Master, the Church which is the body of Christ has no other business than to continue the work that Jesus himself had started. Thus, the Church is called to share in this missional role as the messenger of the reign of God." But how does the PCN continue this missional role as the messenger of God's reign using the vernacular categories that enable the Efik and Igbo ethnic groups to grasp the inner meanings of profound and intricate biblical doctrines like reconciliation?

Earlier in chapter 2, we mentioned vernacular translation as one of the contributions of the missionary enterprise in Nigeria. The translation of the Bible[92] into Efik and Igbo languages with all the attendant expenditure of effort on orthography, grammars, dictionaries, and studies of tribal cultures – all contributed markedly to the recovery by Africans of the cultural identity of their tribe, later expressed in such bodies as tribal political parties, welfare societies and particularly in tribal independent churches (Barrett in Sanneh 1989:188).

Thus, a casual glance at the religious map of Nigeria will appear to confirm the impression that the areas of greatest Christian influence overlap almost exactly with those of primal religions and cultures. This overlap is for reasons other than historical coincidence (Sanneh 1989:182).

One of the first and most detailed accounts of the connection between African culture and the success of Christian religious activity is the work of John Peel (1968), a British sociologist. In his book *Aladura: A Religious Movement among the Yoruba*, Peel provides an articulate and lucid account of the Yoruba appropriation of Christianity, showing the continuity of indigenous Yoruba themes in the new Christian setting. Peel sets the stage with a description of Yoruba society before going on to consider in detail the rise of African churches and the role of certain religious subjects such as prayer and vision, medicine, and holiness. Next he explores the activities of the new churches and the role of praying bands and other charismatic aspects. Against this rich religious background, the author delves into the sociological basis of the new churches (Sanneh 1989:182).

> In the patient and open-minded way in which Peel analyzes the phenomenon of prophet movements, we learn a great deal about necessary backup of indigenous culture whose insights and values have persisted into the new religion, with the mutual transformation of numerous common elements. Peel is rare among social scientists in conceding the primary importance of indigenous religion in the Yoruba social system, and instead of seeking to emasculate it into sociological abstraction, infers from it details of social behaviours and political organisation. As a result he is able to present a coherent account of the interrelationship between the various parts of the Yoruba social and religious world… (Sanneh 1989:182-183).

It is this type of sociological enquiry into the Igbo religious world that, for instance, led the Scriptural translators to adopt the name of the Supreme Being of the Igbo, *Chineke* or *Chukwu* as the *deus*

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[92] Maluleke (2005:489) has commended Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako for being at the forefront of Translation Theologies in Africa. But he also observes that "...their reliance on dubious distinctions (e.g. gospel versus Christianity) and equations (e.g. Bible equals Word of God) are serious drawback" to the project.
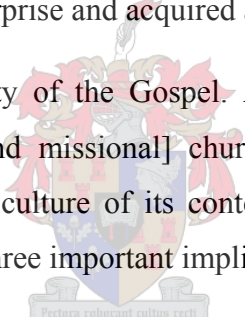
revelatus of the Bible. Thus, the very possibility of Scripture translation, as well as the elements that come into play through it, demonstrate that an African 'incarnation' of the Faith is valid too:

> Translation assumed that the abstract Word of God would find its true destiny when embodied in concrete local idiom, lending credence to the theological insight that the Word of God has always carried the burden of the incarnation, and that its historical manifestation in Jesus Christ concentrated and made visible a process that is occurring throughout history (Sanneh 1983:165-171).

Sanneh's description of this whole process is the comprehensive term, *Missio Dei*, the encompassing divine initiative through the pre-Christian tradition, the historical missionary transmission and indigenous assimilation:

> *Missio Dei* sustained traditional religious enterprise by bringing about a convergence with Christianity…so that *Missio Dei* activated by the stimulus of historical contact with the West, has fused with local religious enterprise and acquired a concrete reality.

This concrete reality is the translatability of the Gospel. And if it is translatability that produces indigeneity, then a truly indigenous [and missional] church should also be a translating church, reaching continually to the heart of the culture of its context and incarnating the translating Word (Bediako 1997:122). This statement has three important implications for the PCN:

- **First, dealing with ethnocentrism,** we need a gospel of reconciliation. We must revive what it means to be communities of the reign of God. After all, churches are called to be bodies of people sent on a mission and not vanguards or local champions of ethnic or tribal ghettoes.
- **Second, in a pluralistic society** with a multitude of religious traditions and ideologies and having an understanding of the Gospel of Christ over all things, the PCN must discover what it means to act faithfully on behalf of the reign of God, within the public life of society. Because we live in a plural and pluralizing society that does not give us privileged place and power, we have the choice to confine our business to the private realm of "self" and its leisure choices, or to find new patterns for faithful public deeds.
- **Third, in a plural world with competing ideas**, possessing a gospel of the knowledge of God through the incarnate Christ, the PCN must learn to speak in confident but humble accents as messengers of the reign of God. The calling of the Church to be missional – to be a sent community, leads the Church to step beyond the given cultural forms and idioms that carry

dubious and mixed assumptions about what the Church is, what its public role should be and what its voice should sound like. We must constantly test and revise our assumptions and practices against a vision of the reign of God in order to maintain a deep renewal of the missional life of the Church.

So far, we have identified a practical ecclesiological approach that is driven by metaphorical missiology as a heuristic tool needed for missional ecclesiology – one that announces and manifests the kingdom of God. The question is: How can this approach be used in mission to deal with ethnocentrism and ethnic conflicts and also engender harmonious co-existence among the peoples of Nigeria both in the Church and the larger society? What are the dangers as well as the opportunities in our situation? This question introduces us to chapter 6 where we will look at the topic: between danger and opportunity: the promise of dialogue in mission.

5.8   PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This chapter argued that for the Church to be an effective agent in translating the eternal truths of God in the context of Nigeria, the PCN will have to be truly missional, embodying the metaphor of a community of the cross, servant of God's creation and a messenger of the reign of God.

Several points therefore emerge from the discussion:

- Church (*ekklesia* – literally 'called out') refers to a people who have discovered something precious and are joyfully sharing, proclaiming and publishing the good news. They are the people of God, the body of Christ, a band of pilgrims, a leavening of yeast, salt of the earth, a light on the hill, performing similar functions worldwide. By being intentionally missional, these people who belong to a movement of God with a non-institutional, critical prophetic voice have the inherent ability to translate the eternal truths of God into relevant cultural forms within any context" (Van Gelder 2000:41). The implication of this statement is that the PCN is to be a practical and an effective agent of God's love and reconciliation in the Nigerian context.

- This chapter thus underlined the fact that a relevant practical ecclesiology that addresses ethnicity is one that that takes missiology seriously. We contend that the criterion for authenticity for a Christian community is not orthodoxy but *orthopraxis* (authentic transformatory action). However, by this we mean more than just analyzing theology by Christian *practice*, for then it would be easy for theology to degenerate into a form of a

pragmatic sociological analysis. The missiological praxis here refers to action that is collective, transformative and that integrates thinking and acting, praying and working.

For without praxis which brings out the missionary dimension of practical theology, "practical theology becomes myopic, occupying itself with the study of the self-realization of the Church in respect of its preaching, catechesis, liturgy, teaching ministry, pastorate and diaconate, instead of having its eyes opened to the ministry in the world outside the walls of the Church, of developing a hermeneutic of missionary activity, of alerting a domesticated theology and Church to the world out there which is aching and which God loves" (Bosch 1991:496). It is impossible for the Church to reflect holistically about the challenges of inculturation, liberation, dialogue, development, poverty, absence of faith and the like if it does not simultaneously alert itself to these realities in different parts of the world - particularly in a divided and dividing world like ours.

- In this regard, ecclesiology and missiology must be understood not as separate theological disciplines, but as in fact, interrelated and complementary. Both ecclesiology and missiology share much in common in their understanding of God's work in the world. Thus, the task of the Church is to continue telling the story of God as epitomized in Jesus of Nazareth. This also means that the Church's role in the world is not *ecclesiocentric*, but *theocentric*. The Church is essentially missional and its task is determined by the *Missio Dei* (Guder 1998:81-83; Bosch 1991:389-393). Our praxis, therefore, is influenced and directed by God's praxis.

- This chapter thus underlined the fact that a relevant, practical ecclesiology that addresses issues such as ethnic problem, is one that functions according to systems principles and understands the people's primal world-view. For this approach, the metaphors of community, servant and messenger have been proposed. It is suggested that the Igbo category of *Umunna* can be considered and given a new social meaning in order to help the PCN be a missional community that faithfully struggles to deal with ethnicity and engages in the *Missio Dei* in the Nigerian context. This process will require deep dialogue which is the focus of chapter 6.

CHAPTER SIX   BETWEEN DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY: THE AMBIVALENCE OF CONFLICT AND THE PROMISE OF DIALOGUE FOR A STRATEGIC RECONCILIATORY MISSIOLOGY IN NIGERIA

"Today, America has people from over 200 racial and religious groups….

It is an interesting challenge. But it is one that I am convinced is a great opportunity, just as your diversity- your religious diversity and ethnic diversity – is a great opportunity".[93]

- President Clinton to Nigeria's National Assembly.

"One way or another, we all have to learn, and keep on learning. And we will learn more from those people, those ideas, and those phenomena that we do not know, than from those we know only too well. We need around us people who represent the rich spectrum of … life, and we need the diversity of ideas that are new to us. We need to pursue this diversity of people and ideas to increase the quality of our core business - which is to learn."[94]

- Stellenbosch University Vice Chancellor Chris Brink during the Rhodes Trust Centenary Reunion in Stellenbosch.

The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward the joy and well-being of every creature.

– Walter Brueggemann (1987:15), *Living toward a Vision.*

"If we fail to learn to live together as brothers and sisters, we will all perish together as fools".[95] - Martin Luther King Jr.

6.1   **INTRODUCTION**

The above quotations, representing a spectrum of people and ideas, set the tone for this chapter. In the previous chapters, we outlined the story and struggles of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria (Chapter

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[93] President Bill Clinton addressing Nigeria's National Assembly on August 26, 2000. (http://usembassy.state.gov/nigeria/wwwhcf50.html accessed: 30/8/2006).

[94] Rector and Vice Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Professor Chris Brink addressing the Rhodes Trust Centenary Reunion (http://www.sun.ac.za/Rector/rhodes2003e.html accessed: 9/5/2006).

[95] Martin Luther King Jr. (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/m/martin_luther_king_jr.html accessed: 30/8/2006).

2), described the role of ethnicity in church and society in Nigeria (Chapter 3), and highlighted the faces of ethnocentrism with regard to Presbyterianism in Nigeria (chapter 4). Because we believe that the Church is a new community in Christ called to mirror the love of God to the world, we argued that tolerance of ethnocentrism, as has happened in the PCN, contradicts the missional identity of the church and compromises its missional vocation. A new missional orientation is needed, which embodies a community-servant-messenger metaphor (see chapter 5). This metaphor is a practical theological and missiological approach that can help us address the identity crisis at the root of the conflicts in the church and broader society in Nigeria.

As part of our methodology in this dissertation, we also believe that theology is about transformative action (Chapter 1.6). Consequently, after conducting research on the contextual reality of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, there should be dialogue about the reality of Scripture and its normative content for us. Our argument is that theology should try to discern present and past realities hermeneutically in order to discern God's will and to participate, vocationally, in God's ongoing praxis towards the anticipated future and eschatological reality (Hendriks 2004:33).

For the above reasons, the main focus of this chapter is to propose a model of theology that provides a strategy for reconciliatory missiology. In doing so, we are using the opportunity that our diversity offers – the challenge of learning from one another through dialogue. Furthermore, this chapter builds on the theological supposition of the whole dissertation, which is that God is a reconciling God. This theological principle is connected to a very specific God-image, namely God's initiative in reconciling the world through the cross of Christ. Mission should therefore proceed from a thorough understanding of a *theologia crucis*. In a sense, mission should be an instrument of, and a vehicle for, truth, justice, peace and mercy within a context of division, disunity and brokenness. In other words, missional theology, which operates from an eschatological perspective, should foster reconciliation which was the core of Old Testament prophetic vision and the heart of the New Testament proclamation!

Like Israel of old and the New Testament *ekklesia*, today's Church is missiologically and theologically called to be a new and alternative community for God. In *The People Called*, Hanson (1987:69) reminds us that psychological or sociological methods alone are inadequate to uncover the essential key to the early Israelite notion of community.

It was not the deliberations of Hebrew philosophers over *summum bonum* of all life that issued forth in the founding principles of the Hebrew community, but the encounter with the God who delivered slaves from bondage. Israel understood community essentially as a response to God's gracious act of salvation. Israel was called into existence as a people when it was called forth from bondage to be a nation of priests consecrated to God's redemptive purposes.

The challenge to the Church in Nigeria is to equip its members to offer effective ministries to deal with endemic ethnic and religious conflicts, and to create harmony out of sociopolitical disorder. This will require an understanding of the nature of conflict.

This chapter therefore describes the ambivalence of conflict both as a danger and an opportunity, with particular reference to Nigeria. It does so by surveying general approaches to conflict and focusing on theologically-driven dialogue in the Bible. A missiological understanding of the church and humanity is advanced as the way to meaningfully deal with endemic conflicts in contemporary society. This highlights a healthy interdisciplinary relationship between social sciences and missiology.

The chapter also argues that, if we are serious in dealing with conflict in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa, a practical theological missiology in Africa should be more ecumenical and communal rather than merely denominational and focusing on the needs of individual churches and their members. This communal approach will offer new hope and life to people who daily walk in the valley of the shadow of death because of conflicts in their lives and communities. This is one of the ways in which theology can become "a process of liberating, self-discovery for the individual as well as the community" (Kalu 1986:21).

6.2   UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPLANATION

Conflict is a complex and diverse phenomenon in life. This has been illustrated by Galtung (in Augsburger 1992:4) in the following words:

> If you cannot remove conflict from life,
> Why not adjust your thinking to it?
> If you can't beat it, join it.

Why not try and see conflict

as the salt of life,

as the big energizer,

the tickler,

the tantalizer,

rather than a bothersome nuisance,

as a noise in a perfect channel,

as disturbing ripples in otherwise quiet water?

Why not treat conflict as a form of life,

particularly since we all know that it is precisely during the periods in our lives when we are exposed

to a conflict that really challenges us,

and that we finally are able to master,

that we feel most alive.

The words above distil a scholar's experience from a life-time of studying human conflicts, and they echo the conclusion of many thinkers from around the world and from different academic disciplines, namely that conflict is inevitable in, and ineradicable from, human life. Because of the complexity or diversity of conflicts, people have different perspectives on the causes of conflict and also adopt different approaches to reducing or resolving conflicts. In light thereof, our argument is that there is a need for a fundamental shift in our approach to the resolution of all types of conflicts, whether they be inter-personal, inter-communal or international.

To start with, scholarly perspectives on the root causes of conflict are many and varied. For purposes of this dissertation, however, we will look at three major perspectives on the root causes of group conflicts, as categorized by leading conflict theorists:

- **Cultural perspective**: The first is the view that **culture** (Jenkins 2002) presents a fundamental causal factor in conflict motives and behaviour. Conflict about culture has to do with values (Huntington 2004). Values are the benchmarks by which we define our self-identity. They are our belief system, which we are often not prepared to negotiate. When people speak about honesty, transparency, fairness, and equality, they are talking about different values. Conflict

around values is more likely to be resolved when the parties to the conflict understand and respect each other's values.

- **Social-psychological perspective:** The second perspective, closely tied to, and complementary to the first, focuses on the **social-psychological** forces and mechanisms of conflict. Social identity theory holds that the most important forces are: the innate need for public affirmation of collective worthiness; the process of positive or invidious comparisons within competitive environments; and the display of collective esteem in symbolic imagery (Tajfel &Turner 1979, Horowitz 1985, 2001, Chua 2003). The same ingredients are essential to effective conflict resolution.

- **Materialist perspective:** The third perspective is a **materialist** one, in which economic factors are considered primary independent variables. Conflicts over material resources (Schartz and Randall 2003, De Villiers 1999) are easy to identify because they are visible. This conflict occurs when two or more parties want the same resource, of which there is not enough to go round. In such cases, one might even see the parties attacking the resource, with the conflict being focused on it.

We need to take these perspectives into account when we are dealing with conflicts, whether in the church or larger society. In addition, the central theme of this dissertation is that these analytical viewpoints should not be considered in isolation, but should be seen as complementary in any conflict situation. At the inter-personal level, for instance, the quarrel of a couple over how many children to have may have its roots in perspectives of **culture**[96], **resources** (how many children they can financially afford), or **social-psychological** need (the prestige accorded to a father of many children). In the same way, power plays in international politics can have all these elements.

These social scientific analyses help us to understand that conflict is a multifaceted phenomenon in life. And similarly to the argument in chapter three about ethnicity, conflict is not just a subject of the social sciences, but it is also a theological matter. For this reason, our treatment of conflict in this chapter also has unmistakable theological underpinnings.

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[96] This is often a thorny issue especially in communities where the sex of a child determines his or her social roles and status in life.

6.3 THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

The Bible is all about conflict (McCollough 1991:15). But the conflict in the Bible is set in a context of meaning that leads to conflict resolution. That meaning is therefore the key to resolution of conflicts. And the meaning of conflict in the Bible is that God is God and human beings are accountable for what they do (McCollough1991:15). According to Hendriks (2004:144), "the aim of managing conflict is to edify the congregation so that the members can be effective and trustworthy in the *missio Dei* (God's mission or plan)."

Christian conflict management therefore has certain points of departure. Hendriks (2004:168) makes useful Scriptural suggestions:

> Conflict is about power (Ephesians 1:15-23), but is not necessarily negative (Eph 6:10-12). It is natural and important for the processes of spiritual growth and of understanding God's will in specific situations. Managing or dealing with conflicts requires a process and a systems approach. "System" refers to the actual connection between the parts and the whole. Theologically speaking, a congregation or denomination is the body of Christ. What affects one member, affects all (1Cor. 12). A community of faith is responsible for one another and for the processes of dealing with conflict. Individual rights, as well as community interests, play a role in the process. Peace (*shalom*) is the ideal towards which every person must strive.

To strive towards the ideal requires that one clearly determines one's theological frame of reference. The basic theological or scriptural framework in which the conflict mediator should see him/herself and the practices involved, is something like the following (mostly taken from Genesis):

1. Creation: we were created 'good', according to God's image, with a social and ecological responsibility. God wants us to straighten things out.
2. Sin: our natural inclination is to try to be God; this leads to broken relationships with God, creation and society. Here conflict originates.

3. Salvation: God reached out to us in our state of brokenness. He led us on a new way and sent his Son to reconcile all broken relationships – with Himself, with one another and with the earth.

4. God sets a process of recreation in motion (and continues to do so). An example of such a process is the long walk to freedom of Abraham, who was a pilgrim with faith and a vision, but with much to learn.

5. In and through Abraham's descendants, God called a people to be a **missional community,** later called a congregation. This was his instrument to bring peace to the world and to act as agents of reconciliation – signs of his kingdom. God brings together, Satan divides (Gal. 3:28; Eph 4:1-4; Jn 1).

6. Summary: **Spiritual growth** to maturity is a long process for which the ability to deal with conflict is a necessary element.

Thus, the theological principles of the unity of the church and the communal responsibility of members towards one another (Mt 18:15-35; 1 Cor. 3 and 12) imply that dealing with conflict in the church has a unique nature. Managing conflict is a ministry of reconciliation. And having been reconciled to God through Christ, the church is called to be a community of reconciliation. A family must learn how to deal with its own conflicts just as a congregation, a denomination and the church should. Although the role of a mediator is important, s/he is not responsible for solving the conflict, but instead facilitates the process of conflict resolution. Only God brings about true reconciliation.

As we deal with conflict, we need to contend with people's understanding of, and attitudes to, conflict. Many people are quite negative about conflict and want to avoid dealing with it. They have a *gut theology*[97], often on a sub-conscious level, that tells them that conflict is bad and should be avoided. It is therefore important to face this negativity and to address it honestly.

6.4   **THE AMBIVALENCE OF CONFLICT**

Is conflict always negative? In answering this question, we need to consider the broad differences between Western and Eastern concepts of conflict. In the Western world, "conflict" is rooted in the Latin word *confligere.* Literally, this means "to strike together." It suggests images of flint and stone, sparks, heat and fire. "Heat" is one of the most common metaphors for conflict, as exemplified in the

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[97] See Hendriks 2004:167, 169.

following phrases: a "heated" discussion, "boiling" mad, an issue too "hot" to handle, or problems "simmering" below the surface. The Chinese and the Japanese, on the other hand, have different symbols for "crisis" or conflict, which are derived by combining the terms "danger" and "opportunity". This view does not perceive conflict in terms of collision, force and heat, but rather as a challenge. According to Bosch (1991:3):

> The Japanese character for "crisis" or conflict is a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity" (or "promise"); crisis is therefore not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning …; the point where danger and opportunity meet, where the future is in the balance and where events can go either way.

Conflict is part of life, and by extension, the church and its mission. History shows that crisis is part of the essential life of the church. If we deny the existence of crisis, it will result in dangerous delusion. Hence Bosch (1991:3) asserts: "…to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of being truly the *church*."

We then need to ask the question of how the church has weathered conflict and crisis in the past in order to truly be the church. Our answer will depend on the nature, time and place in which crises occurred, because the context in which people live determines their response to conflicts and struggles. This is why Rodney Stark, in *The Rise of Christianity* (1997), suggests that if the early church emerged from conflict with a clearer sense of identity and direction, it was partly because it took the instrument of dialogue seriously (compare Acts 15 and Galatians 2).

It is also obvious that people cannot achieve success in conflict management or resolution if they don't first understand the problem. Likewise, we cannot bring about reconciliation or develop appropriate strategies for reconciliatory missiology in Nigeria if we do not first understand the nature and the causes of the conflict in the nation.

A brief overview of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria follows with the aim of suggesting some practical strategies appropriate for the reconciliatory missiology being advocated in this dissertation.

6.5   OVERVIEW OF CAUSES OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that the inter and intra-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria today have a multiplicity of causes, which are difficult to categorize into coherent patterns. Whatever our particular terminology may be, however, we need to identify our hermeneutical models and how they fit within our context. Any honest and self-critical hermeneutics of conflict about Nigeria must necessarily look at the *horizon,* and must be *sociological* and *theological* in character.

The image of a "*horizon*" implies a *cosmos*, a world that is in view (Brownson 1998:10). The world in turn implies a *cosmology* − a comprehensive and synthetic perspective that makes understanding possible and enables meaning to take shape. If we are to speak meaningfully to the complex situation in Nigeria and if we are to understand the diversities that characterize the ethno-religious conflicts, we need to discuss the meaning and function of our horizons.

We must also consider the sociological dynamics underpinning the conflicts in our corporate existence in Nigeria. In sociological terms, Coser (1956:232) defines social conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources, in which the aim of the conflict groups is not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals". On the other hand, Kriesberg (1973:17) views conflict as a relationship between two or more parties that believe they have incompatible goals. These definitions nevertheless agree on the existence of differences between parties in conflict. Attempts to resolve conflicts (real or imagined) must take account of the fact that each party is typically convinced that theirs is the correct solution, definition of reality, or appropriate goal.

We stated earlier that one theory about the causes of conflict is the *materialist* perspective. The view holds that at any given point, there exists in society the problem of how to distribute scarce resources or goals among various individuals and groups. While this may in many instances be correct, it is also true that the emergence of social conflict is not always a function of material resources requiring the dispensing of material rewards. In many cases, immaterial symbolic rewards or potential symbolic rewards will be at the heart of conflict. As Oberschall (1973:187) points out:

> Social conflict is seldom a simple mechanical reaction to grievances and frustrations
> experienced in the pursuit and defence of material interests but rather due to some

dissatisfaction …experienced and interpreted by ways of moral ideas about right and wrong, justice and injustice or conceptions of the social orders as they are expressed in ideals and highly regarded principles.

For this reason, conflicts over symbols generally are more intense than conflicts over non-symbolic issues. Questions arising from conflict between groups cannot be analyzed apart from questions of group membership and its symbolic representation (De Vos 1966). The defence of these symbols is seen as an unselfish action worthy of group support. As Oberchall (1973:187) states: "disrespect of symbols or an attempt to substitute different symbols will be perceived as an attack on the integrity of moral standing, sense of identity and self respect for the entire group". This has been the case in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria in relation to the historicity of Calabar in the affairs of the church (See Kalu 1996, Udo 1988, Aye 1987, and Johnston 1988).

In Nigeria, Muslims and Christians often take to the streets when they perceive that their religious symbols are desecrated or disrespectfully treated. The reaction of the Islamic world to Salmon Rusdie's *Satanic Verses* is a stark reminder of the intensity of such responses. Another example was the 1986 protest march by Christians, who felt that their religious rights had been violated by the registration by the then Babangida government of Nigeria as a fully-fledged member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Sometimes, the conflict in the country may be ethno-religious in nature. Religion and ethnicity play a role in most conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that ethnic affiliations often structure the composition of the groups in conflict (Braathen et al 2000:3). As we saw in chapter 3, the conflict between ethnic groups in Nigeria reaches far beyond the country's independence and into its colonial and pre-colonial history.
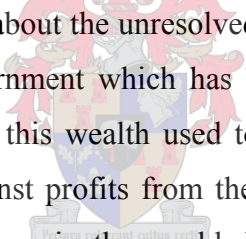
This phenomenon illustrates that the dynamics between religious conflict and political stability among the ethnic groups in Nigeria have long been interrelated, with each affecting the other. Still, it is difficult to understand all the reasons for the outbreak of all the conflicts in Nigeria. We can, however, establish some broad working hypotheses about contributory causal factors which operate at different levels and often in contradictory ways in the country. These have been summarized below.

6.5.1. Geographic and demographic characteristics and the National Question

The colonial legacy of forging over 400 ethnic groups into one state, with three separate administrative regions to govern them, remains a significant source of conflict in Nigeria. This historical circumstance continues to give rise to deep differences of opinion about what Nigeria is and who is a Nigerian, a reality with which those from outside the country are often unfamiliar.

6.5.2. Resources and economy

The oil-producing area in Nigeria is now a battleground. "Mini-civil wars" are a daily occurrence and are fast becoming a way of life in the Niger-delta region. It is even feared that these mini-civil wars, which pose grave dangers to the polity, may snowball into a full-scale war. Indeed, unequal distribution of natural resources between regions is creating political tension, and resource control remains a constant source of conflict in Nigeria. Because of this, some eminent Nigerians[98] recently warned:

> We should also express our fears about the unresolved issues of resource control. Under the same federal system of government which has been in existence since 1954, we know what the state of origin of this wealth used to get from the sale of groundnut, cotton – Northern region, as against profits from the sale of palm oil and kernel, and Nigeria was numbers one and three in the world. We are nowhere near there now. Eastern Region used to get 50 per cent from cocoa, rubber and timber, Western Region used to get 50 per cent; so to give the oil producing states 13 per cent is something we should look into. There is no problem trying to share the wealth with other states, but the fishermen in oil producing states are complaining that they can no longer fish because of the effect of oil exploration. It is something we should think about.

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[98] As the imperative for a broad renewal of the Nigerian project came into the fore again, a crop of ageing eminent nationalists met on an unlabelled platform and like the prophets of Old Testament, issued an impassioned warning to the Olusegun Obasanjo Presidency on the current dangerous trajectory of the national journey. In their pained counsel titled "Nigeria Burns," personally signed by the grizzled veterans, they cited the crises in the Niger Delta, Anambra State and other parts of Nigeria to give teeth to their angst. These notable gentlemen comprise Chief Tayo Akpata, Executive Secretary of the defunct Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), Alhaji Femi Okunnu, former Federal Commissioner of Works; Chief Chike Ofodile, former Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice;; Estate management guru, Chief Hope Harriman; Prof. Theo Afolabi of the University of Lagos and Retired diplomat, Ambassador Peter Afolabi. They chose a non-partisan platform to address some issues of urgent national importance. See 'Our Fears for Nigeria' in *This Day* 12.11.2004.

It is not enough just to think about these issues when many people are dying and the ecological hazards are rapidly deteriorating. It is time to do justice. Justice here means giving a fair share of the proceeds to the people whose land is being exploited. It is investing these funds in life-improving projects so that ordinary people will benefit from these God-given natural resources. This is where the church should play a role. The longer we delay the redressing of this injustice, the more the conflicts will escalate and the nearer the nation is pushed to a precipice. This must be avoided at all costs because no one who suffered during the civil war would wish another civil war in Nigeria.

6.5.3.   The military

The authoritarian military governments followed a 'divide and rule' approach in order to stay in power, and flamed ethnic tensions to draw attention away from themselves. Under the military, ethnic and sectional agitation has been aggravated by governance failure.

In no other time in Nigerian history was this more acute than under Babangida's military regime. Using ideological structures, such as MAMSER[99], the National Guard, and the Quick Intervention Force, Babangida became increasingly authoritarian in his approach to leadership in Nigeria. As the social analyst, Peter M. Lewis (1994:323-340) observed:
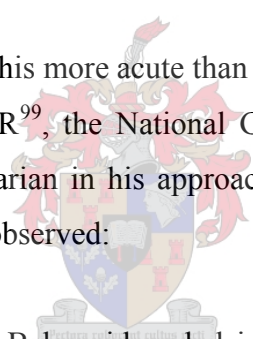
> During his final years in power, Babangida ruled in an increasingly arbitrary and autocratic fashion, personalizing state power to a degree unprecedented in Nigerian experience. While the President's talents for political manipulation were legendary, Babangida came to rely on a mixture of intimidation and material inducement. The State Security Service under Brigadier Akilu became a power unto itself, responsible for a growing array of arbitrary arrests, detentions and human rights abuses, and possible assassinations. Two open coup attempts, and numerous abortive schemes, resulted in dozens of executions. Rule by decree was exercised with little consultation even among the senior military council.

The straw that broke the camel's back in Babangida's military authoritarianism was the cancellation of the June 12 1993 election. Although the National Electoral Commission's final tabulation showed that MKO Abiola had a decisive 58 percent victory – capturing the south-western Yoruba ethnic heartland,

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[99] MAMSER means Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic and Recovery.

and the northern and Middle Belt States − the Babangida administration annulled the election results on 23 June 1993. According to the president, the voting had been irreparably tarnished by procedural irregularities and a legal tussle, and the integrity of the nation's judiciary needed to be protected (Abubakar 1997:91). In spite of the rationalizations by Babangida, the annulment ultimately revealed the "hidden agenda", namely that the northern oligarchy did not want to relinquish political power to other sections of the country. This raised the issue of the national question[100]. In the south-western states, Babangida's action was greeted with civil resistance. Violence erupted in cities such as Lagos, Ibadan and Abeokuta, leading to the destruction of life and property. As the political crisis intensified, people mounted a massive exodus from the major cities in fear of an outbreak of ethnic violence, as it had occurred in 1967. While the northerners moved from the southern cities up north, the Igbo and the Yoruba left their businesses in the northern cities and moved to their "ethnohome bases". In short, the communal instability that followed the annulment not only raised the north-south dichotomy of the National Question, but it also revealed the fragility of Nigeria and its lack of autonomy to mediate political conflict (Okafor 1997:92).

The Babangida era was indeed characterized by ethno-religious conflicts and communal violence. As Peter Lewis (1994:323-340) argues:

> Ethnic politics under the military, especially amidst declining economy,...served to aggravate societal divisions. Religious enmity intensified by the 1986 announcement that Nigeria would join the Organization of Islamic Conference, grew in scope and severity throughout Babangida's tenure. The marginalization of Christians within the President's Military Council added to such resentment. Reflecting these tensions at the grassroots level, Christian-Muslim riots in the northern and middle-belt states claimed hundreds of lives during 1991 and 1992.

Similarly, in October 1991, a procession by the gzala sect in Kano to halt an open air crusade by a German missionary, Rev. Reinhard Bonnke, degenerated into bloody religious violence with attacks on churches and predominantly Igbo businesses. The Igbo community retaliated to prevent any repeat of the 1967 civil war episode. Human lives, and property valued at millions of naira, were lost. In May 1992, a communal feud between the Katafs and Hausas in Kaduna State took a religious dimension, leading to the destruction of life and property (Okafor 1997:92). Nigeria and Nigerians suffered from

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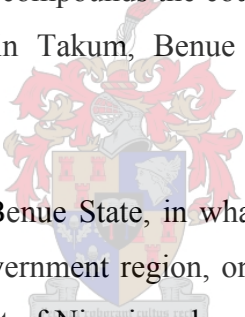
[100] The national question refers to the north-south political dichotomy which is also basically a Muslim -Christian divide.

ethno-religious conflicts under the military authorities, with Babangida's regime being the worst example of this.

6.5.4. Land Ownership

Land is very important when it comes to ethnicity. It is also used to assert the geographical sovereignty of a particular group of people. The demand for land created by rapid increase in population, and the incessant creation of states, local government areas and autonomous communities in Nigeria, are some of the reasons why people often fight over land in Nigeria. The ethno-religious clashes in Yelwa, Plateau State of Nigeria, which claimed hundreds of lives and led to a State of Emergency being declared by President Obasanjo, basically arose from a problem of who owns and controls land. Once more, it raised the question of the indigenous versus settler population problem in Nigeria.

When ethnicity coincides with religion, it compounds the country's sociopolitical quagmire. This is the case with the ethno-religious conflict in Takum, Benue State, where there are many reformed congregations:

> Takum is the regional centre in Benue State, in what is known as the Middle Belt of Nigeria. It is a seat of a local government region, one of 174 such regions in Nigeria. The Middle Belt is the food basket of Nigeria, where much of Nigeria's food is grown. Most of the region's people are nominally Christian. For decades, there have been minor and major conflicts between the tribes in the area, as migration of one group encroaches on traditional lands of another. Modern governmental divisions cannot keep up with these shifting boundaries, and local politics is heavily influenced by tribalism (Van Houten 2006:3).

Among the obstacles to the realization of true ecumenism in Nigeria is the fight over land. While the experimental union among the Anglicans, Methodists and Presbyterians initially proved to be successful, the claim for the Okwulaga land by the Anglicans and their eventual ousting of the other two denominations from Trinity (Union) Theological College, Umuahia, derailed the endeavour. This situation has once more exposed the churches' inability to live in true unity because of land disputes − a situation that does great discredit to Christian witness in the Nigerian nation.

6.5.5.   **Religion and Religious Differences**

Differences in religious orientation and affiliation create tensions in Nigeria. This is very clear in the country where most Muslims are found in the North and the South is dominated by Christians. This religious demographic spread is more of a colonial creation than a natural order. Yet, inter-religious differences have remained a major divisive factor in Nigeria for decades with the Christian South afraid of the Muslim populated North, while the underdeveloped north feared the better-educated south.

Although records of religious riots seem to show that Muslims are frequently on the offensive in these riots, they have often been provoked into violent action by the offensive preaching of some Christian evangelists. This brand of preachers is mainly from the new Christian Pentecostal Movements. It is therefore appropriate to examine what these new movements are, what they stand for, and why they are at the centre of most of the religious confrontations between Christians and Muslims. It is noteworthy that the period of the emergence of the Christian Pentecostal Movements in Nigeria coincided with the period when Muslim-Christian confrontations became fierce. This seems to suggest that there is a direct link between Muslim-Christian conflicts, on the one hand, and fundamentalism, Pentecostalism, and evangelistic movements on the other (Kalu 1996:67). The identities of the churches that were burnt by Muslims during the Kano October 1982 crisis seem to support this assumption.

Among their evangelistic methods, Nigerian pentecostalist fundamentalists seek to spread their message through crusades, revivals, and workshops. When these crusades and revivalistic meetings are organized in predominantly Muslim territory, the Muslims resent them because they violate their Shari'a law that forbids Christians from preaching publicly in a Muslim environment. The insistence of Christians on their right to profess and practise their religion anywhere often results in confrontation. A typical example of such a confrontation was the Ilorin episode during the Christians' Palm Sunday procession.

On the other hand, intra-religious differences with ethnic influence have also been taking their toll. In the Assemblies of God Church, the complaint of the Ngwa-speaking people of Abia State against the domination and marginalization of the Umuahia group led to the eventual breakup of the church, and the emergence of the "The True Assemblies of God." Some Ohafia people in the same church also left to found "Christ Hope for the Nations" because they thought that the church offered them no future and

hope. Indeed, ethnicity has been influencing the praxis of mission in Christianity especially in the southern part of Nigeria.

In many instances, intra-Christian religious conflicts occur in the form of doctrinal debates and scramble for converts. There have been many unrecorded cases of riots that led to loss of lives and property among Christians of different ethnic groups. Friction has also resulted from the struggle for the leadership and membership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). Sometimes the Pentecostal and fundamentalist groups feel that the mainstream churches are too compromising in matters of faith and politics. Thus they often campaign to take over the leadership of CAN and use it as a political platform. These moves, which are religious in nature, sometimes have ethnic influence.

The question is: How can the Church engage in effective mission in the context of ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria? How can dialogue become a viable strategy to sustain the mission of the Presbyterian Church in Nigeria? In what follows, we will be looking at the relationship between mission and dialogue and the various options that many scholars have tried to adopt.

6.6   MISSION AND DIALOGUE

A discourse on "Mission and Dialogue" is often understood to mean "Mission or Dialogue." At least within Christian circles, it seems that to have one is to exclude the other, or at least to complicate the other. Christians' preferences are typically for *either* mission *or* dialogue (Knitter 2005:200).

However, in this chapter it is argued that it is fallacious to suggest that for dialogue to be "in," mission has to be "out", or that commitment to dialogue is incompatible with commitment to evangelism. We argue that the biblical mandate for mission and its contextual challenges do not preclude the reality of pluralism, especially religious pluralism even in Biblical times. Importantly, we draw on the richness of the Trinitarian approach (Knitter 2005:200) as an emerging new paradigm for mission in dialogue, and as a source of fresh insights in relation to issues such as salvation, community, creation and eschatology.

In chapters 1 and 5 of this dissertation, we argued that our mission has to be the locus of the continuing encounter between God and humanity. God has to be made present in the world by believers, who have

been empowered by the church to demonstrate to people the renewing power of God in all spheres. Such a mission will have to move away from merely converting people to, and making them proselytes of, a certain brand of Christianity. It will need people who are willing to go out into the world and become incarnated, especially among the downtrodden people of society. It requires an understanding that we are in the world not for ourselves, but with and for others. We are to live in community while maintaining our individuality. This is what the Trinity teaches and the Bible also affirms.

We will now consider particularity and plurality, which is a paradoxical reality in the Trinitarian missiology.

6.6.1   Christian Particularity and Pluralism: Biblical and Theological Options

Genuine awareness of religious diversity, coupled with the recognition that each of us occupies only one place on a rather large spectrum (even within our own religious community), is unsettling. The realization raises serious questions about one's world view and belief system. Although the issues arise in different ways and at different times, most people recall their earliest life experiences as situations in which they became aware of life's complexity. The importance of uncontrollable factors, such as the location and cultural context into which one is born, also challenge unstated assumptions. In my case, I am aware that being born in Akanu in Igbo land, as opposed to Kano in Hausa land of Nigeria, made a great deal of difference in my worldview and belief system. While the act of faith and the intentional decision to follow Christ transcend the place and time of my birth, I cannot escape the ever-present reality of pluralism in contemporary Nigeria. The situation poses critical questions which demand thoughtful responses.

As Christians, our natural response is to turn to the Bible for insights and guidance when confronted with confusing and conflicting issues relating to the life of faith. But our explorations will usually show that easy answers to thorny, multidimensional theological questions of great consequence are never ultimately satisfactory. Therefore our hermeneutical explorations of scriptural texts should be marked by humble confidence or confident humility.

6.6.2   The Bible and religious pluralism

The first discovery of a careful reader of the Scriptures is that the Bible presents more than one perspective on issues. Those who adopt a proof-text approach using selective and simplistic interpretation will certainly find simple unambiguous answers in the Bible. But the real challenge is to honestly wrestle with the seemingly different affirmations which, of course, will be a challenging but also a rewarding approach in the long run.

Starting the discussion from the election of Israel, we find numerous texts expressing Israel's consciousness of its status as the chosen people of God. We are told that God has chosen Israel as his "special possession" (Exod. 19:5, Deut. 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal.1:7).

> When the Most High assigned the nations their heritage,
> when he parceled out the descendants of Adam,
> He set up the boundaries of the peoples after the number of the sons of God;
> While the Lord's own portion was Jacob, His hereditary share was Israel (Deut.32:8-9).

Israel is the bride of God's election. This is the image that frames the entire prophecy of Hosea, to return as well in Isaiah 50:1, 54:4-7, 62:4-5, and so on. Elsewhere, perhaps even earlier, it is the image of a "son" that expresses this special bond between Israel and "its" God:

> When Israel was a child I loved him,
> Out of Egypt I called my son
> (Hosea 11:1; cf Exod. 4:22; Isa 1:2; Jer. 3:19).

These images do no more than illustrate the basic theme of the covenant: "I will take you as my own people, and you shall have me as your own God" (Exod. 6:7, cf. Lev. 26:12; Jer. 11:4, 24:7; Ezek.36:28, 37:27). This conviction is constitutive of Israel's faith. It extends into the New Testament itself. When Paul mentions the Jewish people, he continues to assert, "Theirs were the adoption, the glory, the covenants and the law-giving, the worship and the promises" (Rom. 9:4). And he adds; "God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29).

Israel indeed defined itself by an acute awareness of its election. But we would be employing faulty methodology were we to single out certain extreme texts and attempt to burden them with the imputation of a "particularistic" theology. Israel knew that the covenant had not reduced God to a local

god. It may be that, at an earlier stage, the Israelites had not perceived the universality of their God (Legrand 1988:10). But this was only a lack of cosmological imagination, an inability to conceive the world in its totality. It was not a theological limitation imposed by the divine authority itself.

The people thus gathered were not called to install themselves in the material security of a safe situation and the spiritual comfort of a custom-made God (Legrand 1988:35). The people were summoned together to embark on a journey. Israel's history began with Abraham's departure, and "the patriarch, as resident alien, was to be the *typos* in which the people Israel would see the reflection of its own nature" (Legrand 1988:34). This history continued with the exodus, another foundational myth of Israel's consciousness. Thus, one of the basic themes of biblical thought is that of the Promised Land. But Legrand (1988:35) states:

> [This theme] functions in terms of two sub-themes. One of these is that of the Land, where the people are installed and live in *shalom* – in peace and security. The other is that of promise-the not-yet-attained, toward which one journeys, journeying in hope. Land and exile, rest and road, holy city and desert, temple and mobile tabernacle, peace and trial, salvation but only in hope, possession but only in the darkness of faith: we could multiply the various expressions of this fundamental binomial. Thus the biblical human being is at one and the same time the citizen of the kingdom, and a stranger, *en route* to elsewhere.

This is a paradoxical call. A particular aspect of this call to emerge from self is openness to the foreigner. The God who is the "Other" invites his people to encounter others. He does so in the law he gives them: "God loves the foreigner...Love the foreigner, for, in the land of Egypt, you were foreigners" (Deut. 10:18, 19). This same point has been touched on in chapter 3 where we dealt with ethnicity in the Old Testament. The motif of stranger was so vital in the Old Testament tradition that it became an inescapable engagement for the writers.

> In a powerful abridgement, Deuteronomy makes of the foreigner a central theme of the Bible. The foreigner serves as revealer of the divine Love ("God loves the foreigner"). He is the touchstone of the genuine biblical justice ("You shall love the foreigner"), and this because he constitutes a reminder of the fundamental trait of the history of Israel

("You were foreigners"). The foreigner is situated at the focal point of the theodicy, the ethic, and the history of the people of God (Legrand 1988:.36).

In the final analysis, election does not render the chosen people blessed (or afflicted) introverts. Openness to others remains the hallmark of the people of the Holy, Utterly Other God. This is why Malachi (1:11) prophesied:

> For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of Hosts.

The picture that is painted for us even in the New Testament is of a God whose mission has cosmological implications. In wonder of this fact, Paul, in his letter to the Romans 11:29, 31, exclaims:

> O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?

Mission today demands that we recognize our poverty and foolishness in the presence of the all-wise God. God's inscrutable ways should also challenge us to repaint the picture of what it means to be a missional church today. But doing this will leave us with some options.

6.6.3 Options for Christian Theology

6.6.3.1 Exclusivism

Exclusivism is the viewpoint that salvation takes place only through Christ, and then only through conscious surrender and conversion – a view based on the complete hopelessness of humanity after the fall. It holds that all non-Christian religions, including African Traditional Religions, are wrong and are the work of people in rebellion against God and who are attempting to work out their own salvation. Key scriptural passages used in support of this position are John 14:6 and Acts 4:12.

Critique of exclusivism

Whereas exclusivism was traditionally the dominant viewpoint within Protestantism, increasing contact and dialogue with other religions have resulted in growing criticism of this position. Critical questions which are often asked are: If there is revelation in other religions, why can it not lead to salvation? If people are saved only through Jesus Christ, what then of the millions of the Old Testament? Can a loving God allow millions of people to be lost when they had no opportunity to hear the gospel? In his soteriological critique, Wilfred Smith Cantwell (in Placher 1989:15) expresses outrage at the narrow-minded mentality of theologians in this school of thought: "It is morally not possible actually to go out into the world and say to devout, intelligent, fellow human beings: We are saved and you are damned." So extreme exclusivism, which completely rejects the working of God in other religions, cannot be accepted as being in agreement with Scripture.

6.6.3.2   Inclusivism
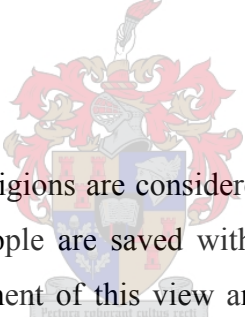
Inclusivism argues that God's saving grace is operative in other religions, but cannot be separated from Christ as a Saviour and as absolute revelation of God. People of other religions who are saved are therefore saved in and through Christ, although they are not aware of it. This is based on the cosmic significance of Christ's saving work and upon God's universal salvific will. The view attempts to reconcile God's universal saving intention with his particular saving act in Christ. This is, after Vatican II, the standpoint of many Roman Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner and R Panikker. It is also the viewpoint of Protestant theologians like John Fahkuhar, Carl Braaten, John Cobb and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Grenz 1989:196-210).

Karl Rahner's position is found in an essay entitled *Christianity and non-Christian Religions*, included in Volume 5 of his Theological Investigations. Rahner accepts that a loving God would create opportunities for salvation for all people, but that it cannot happen outside the redemptive work of Christ. In order to reconcile the two positions, Rahner accepts that people can experience grace within the framework of their own religions, but that the grace must be ascribed to the anonymous operation of Jesus Christ in their midst. In this way, salvation in non-Christian religions is made possible. People who are redeemed in this way can be termed anonymous Christians, since they themselves are not aware that they are Christians. The good that they do must however be ascribed to the grace of Christ.

Critique of inclusivism

The main criticism of inclusivism is that it declares people of other religions to be Christians without them asking or confessing it themselves. The epistemological critique lies in the fact that this position makes "Christian theology repressive." Both John Hick, and George Lindbeck and also Gavin D'Costa (1989:282) claim, for instance, that Rahner's notion of the "anonymous Christian is as imperialistic and deeply offensive to non-Christians as exclusivism." The inclusivist too forces the Other into a category that the Other does not acknowledge. Besides, their religion is not taken seriously enough and the deliberate confession of Christ is not regarded as important (Hick, 1980:68 and Newbigin 1981:8). Kung (1987:194) pertinently asks whether Christians would be happy to be termed "anonymous Muslims." The notion of anonymous Christians appears to be too easy an escape from the problem of "whence good works come" in other religions. So Kung dismisses the entire notion as a pseudo-solution (1997:98). The question remains: what of mission?

6.6.3.3   Pluralism

In terms of a pluralist approach, other religions are considered to be valid means to salvation because they all ultimately lead to one God. People are saved within their own religions, independently of Christ. John Hick, the formidable proponent of this view argued that "the *solus christus* assumption (that salvation is only through Christ) held by exclusivists is incompatible with the Christian teaching of a God who desires to save all people". There are many millions who have never heard of Christ through no fault of their own, before and after the New Testament period – the *invincibly ignorant*. It is therefore un-Christian to think that God would have "ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation.'" Hick argued that it was God, and not Christianity or Christ, toward whom all religions move, and from whom they gain their salvific efficacy. He therefore proposed a *theocentric* revolution away from the *Christocentric* or *ecclesicentric* position that has dominated Christian history. He stressed the doctrine of an all-loving God over that of the *solus Christus* principle (Hick 1977:165-179).

In his book, *No Other Name*?, Paul Knitter (1985) uses the term "unitive pluralism" by means of which he indicates that all religions are equally valid and that there could be other saviours besides Jesus. He proposes a religious ecumenism within which no religion can claim absolute truth.

Critique of pluralism

There have been a number of objections to Hick's thesis, some of which indicate problems with pluralism more generally. First, there are objections to the way in which the centrality of Christ seems to be bypassed. It is argued that Hick's initial *theocentric* revolution is based on a shaky premise. He rejects the *solus Chistus* for he thinks it leads to the *a priori* condemnation of non-Christians. But that is not necessarily the case. Furthermore, by proposing to emphasize God rather than Christ, Hick is in danger of severing Christology from ontology and introducing a free-floating God divorced from any particular revelation (D'Costa 1997:632).

6.6.4   Point at issue

According to McCarthy (1998:74), the models (exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism) that have just been discussed above serve as helpful organizational device and illuminating comparison with non-Christian approaches. But they are rarely adequate to the reality that we face everywhere in the world.

The point is that we are in a context in which, on the one hand, familiarity has robbed us of the freshness and vitality of the gospel, leaving only a dogged loyalty to it and, on the other hand, Christians are being advised, even by fellow-Christians, that it is improper to invite adherents of other faiths or of no faith to put their trust in God through Christ. Yet, the Christian faith cannot surrender the conviction that God, in sending Jesus Christ into our midst, has taken a definite and eschatological course of action and is extending to human beings forgiveness, justification, and a new life of joy and servanthood. This, in turn, calls for a human response in the form of conversion. These inalienable elements of mission are abundantly clear in the Scriptures on the missionary character of the early church (Bosch 1991:483-489). It is also clear that contemporary Christians, aware of the plurality of religions, stand before what Paul Knitter calls a "theological Rubicon": "To cross it means to recognize clearly, unambiguously, the possibility that other religions exercise a role in salvation history that is not only valuable [but] salvific .... It is to admit that if other religions must be fulfilled in Christianity, Christianity must, just as well, find fulfillment in them." This is a reality too troubling for many to accept today (Panniker 1987: 89-116), not least because we are forced to deal with the hermeneutical problem: Who is the Other?

A challenge, both epistemological and ethical, is presented by the fact that there is an *Other* which is not "us" and cannot be assimilated by us. The fear of the other or the stranger has been analyzed by Moltmann (1978) in *The Open Church*. He argues that self-confirmation is at the root of the problem. We alienate others who are not like ourselves because, "people who are different from us, that is people whose thoughts, feelings, and desires are different from us make us feel insecure" (Moltmann 1978:30). This insecurity lies at the root of racism and ethnocentrism (the subject of our discussion), as attempts to put down others are simply attempts to justify ourselves. He suggests that the answer to this problem is found in "accepting one another as Christ has accepted you" (Romans 15:7). Because Christ has welcomed us through suffering, our acceptance and confirmation through him allows us to welcome others. We recognize, indeed, that Christ has already welcomed them. "Then we no longer feel that we are insecure by others because we no longer need self-confirmation. The person who is different becomes for us, precisely because of that difference, a surprise which we gladly accept" (Moltmann 1978:31). Is this acceptance really easy?

The problem of "*who the other is*" has been haunting humanity for ages. The Christian West, until the sixteenth century. called this "Other" "pagan"; during the Age of Reason "unenlightened"; in the nineteenth century, "primitive"; and in the twentieth century, "different." This is the other with whom, in today's world, we must be in dialogue and to whom we must reach out and share hospitality because of a shared concern for justice and human welfare. Unless we are impervious to social change and theological advancement, we have come to a point where contemporary events compel us to honestly acknowledge: "no world peace without peace among the religions, no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions, and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another" (Hans Kung in Vanhoozer 2005: 43). We are called to be on the journey of dialogue!

6.7   The dialogue movement

We argued in chapter five that the PCN should move from being an institutional church to a missional one. In this chapter, we are advancing a reconciliatory mission in which dialogue plays a central role. This is a daunting task that requires living in a new missional framework as well as speaking a new language to suit the pluralistic times. Bosch (1991:489) made the point when he said:

Such language boils down to an admission that we do not have all the answers and are prepared to live in the framework of penultimate knowledge, that we regard our involvement in dialogue and mission as an adventure, are prepared to take risks, and are anticipating surprises as the Spirit guides us into fuller understanding.

The Christian scriptures reveal that not only did the early church find itself proclaiming salvation in Christ among competing religions, but already in the Old Testament the faith of peoples of God was threatened constantly by the faiths of surrounding peoples. The people were in dialogue. The *Shema,* the confession of Israel's faith, was fashioned among pressures from a legion of gods and goddesses: "Hear O Israel, The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!" (Deut. 6:4 NASV). In our time, there are a host of reasons why pluralism poses a major challenge to all Christians – not only among Christians but also between Christians and peoples of other faiths in Nigeria and the world at large.

First, let us look at the global scene. As Manuel Castells (2004) has pointed out, we live in a *Network Society* and the globe is now a village. With scientific breakthroughs and technological advancements, the population of the world has witnessed unprecedented access to other people and cultures. In the world today, whether they want it or not, people of other cultures and faiths have much more to do with each other in schools, markets, workplaces, and even in families through inter-marriage. As a result, many religions that used to be considered "foreign" have gained acceptance and currency in many local contexts.

Times have changed and are still changing, and we cannot deny pluralism as a social fact of our time. In Nigeria, whereas Muslims and Islamic centres could be found in the once predominantly Christian South, Christian missionaries and converts are virtually in every part of the "Muslim North" despite the "scare of Shari'ah." Thus, Nigerians deal on a daily basis with people in their neighbourhoods,[101] from other cultural and religious backgrounds. This, and many other related factors, have brought about a radically new context for Christianity. Thus, Paul Knitter has described it as a "*momentous kairos*". These new contexts call for an ecumenical approach to Christian mission. Furthermore, it is an ecumenical approach that requires a dialogical methodology.

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[101] A vivid example is the location of a Muslim school in Anohia near Unwana, Ebonyi State of Nigeria which used to be exclusively a Christian area.

Awareness of the multifaceted concept of dialogue has increased rapidly. This is evident in the burgeoning literature exploring this theme, including: Hans Kung, *Christianity and World Religions*, Harold Coward, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions*, Paul Knitter, *No Other Name?*, William Oxtoby, *The Meaning Of Other Faiths*, Rosemary Reuther*, Faith and Fatricide*, Stanley Samartha, *The Courage to Dialogue,* Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, and Gordon Kaufman, *The Theological Imagination,* Dirkie Smit*, Learning to Speak: A South African Reformed Perspective on Dialogue.* But with the growth of knowledge is also a growing confusion: so what does dialogue really mean?

6.8 Dialogue defined

In the book, *Striving Together*, Charles Kimball (1991:86) states:

> Dialogue by definition is a conversation, a process of communication through speech. It is a reciprocal relationship in which two or more parties endeavour both to express accurately what they mean and to listen to and respect what the other person says, however different her or his perspective may be.
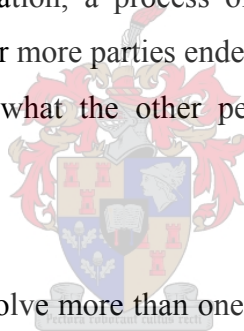
The idea here is that a dialogue must involve more than one person; otherwise it will be a monologue. The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy[102] has also said that:

> Inter-group dialogue is a process, which enables people from all walks of life to talk deeply and personally about the major issues and realities that divide them. Dialogues are transformational experiences that lead to both personal and collaborative action. Dialogue is deliberative, involving the weighing of various options and the considerations of differences for the purpose of reaching agreement or policy decisions.

There exists a bewildering array of definitions, as well as overlapping terms and concepts, in the field of dialogue. The concept is described by many other terms such as civic engagement, public participation, community conversations, public discourse, honest conversations, and deliberative

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[102] Multi-track diplomacy is a centre in the United States of America that explores and addresses socio-political and cultural conflicts through dialogue.

discourse. Some of these terms are used within certain constituencies. But the oldest word with widest popularity is "dialogue," and this is the term that will be used throughout this work.

Dialogue is not new in missionary discourse. The theological foundation for dialogue in mission is the Triune God. At the beginning of creation, when God said "let us make man in our own image" (Gen. 1:26-28), God revealed that dialogue is an essential element of His missional praxis. Here we see communion and community in the Trinity which Jesus constantly sought during His earthly ministry. The Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), which is believed to be the earliest ecumenical Church Council, demonstrated that dialogue is no stranger to the missiological vocabulary of the Church. Paul used it with positive results (cf Acts 17:16-33). And Verkuyl (1980:363) has rightly observed that, "communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the ages has had a dialogical character." So dialogue as a missionary method is not new, though the practice of it takes various forms today.

The model of dialogue in mission that is proposed here advocates an attitude of openness and respect to people of other faiths, coupled with the willingness of Christians to be challenged and changed in the encounter with people of other faiths − whether that encounter takes place in an organized setting or is the consequence of living in a plural religious society. This model of dialogue sees 'the other' as a fellow pilgrim in the journey of life and as "a person who through his/her religion has some grasp of God, however partial the grasp may be" (Fredricks 2005:215).

As Samartha (1981) rightly argued, "dialogue is not just a concept; it is a relationship in community as people share the meaning and mystery of human existence and as they struggle together in suffering, hope and joy." In a sense, dialogue is an adventure and opportunity in which people dare to challenge and be challenged as they seek to come to a deeper understanding about life and God. It is a way of understanding the experiences of men and women in community, and the meaning of life and God in their midst. What follows therefore illustrates the varying responses to dialogue among the different Christian persuasions.

6.9 DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS OF DIALOGUE AMONG CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

6.9.1 The Protestant Perspective

In this section we look at a few variations of Protestant Christianity to illustrate the issue that is being discussed.

6.9.1.1 The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has been playing a vital role in facilitating dialogue among people of different strands of Christianity as well as people of other faiths. Its programme subunit for Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (DFI), established in 1971, has enabled many dialogue processes to take place. Of particular mention here is the week-long dialogue which was held in Broumana, Lebanon in July 1972 between twenty-five Christians and twenty-one Muslims from twenty countries. Part of the memorandum of that encounter, quoted by Kimball (1991:93), is very instructive, especially in the Nigerian context:

> We accepted that dialogue is not an attempt to suppress differences but rather to explore them frankly and self-critically. …Rather than being satisfied with the lowest common denominator, we faced sometimes poignant points of tension. Yet, we also dared to hope for some convergence, not in impatient syncretism, but in openness to God's further guidance.

It is this openness to God in dialogue that often turns up the surprise element by which the Holy Spirit takes over the process, making it then a "trialogue" (Verkuyl 1980:363).

The WCC started struggling with this in its Conference in Tambaran in 1938. In this conference, "the lasting popular impression" revolved around the views of Dutch missiologist, Hendrik Kraemer, which were expressed in the book he wrote as a study document for the conference: *The Christian message in non-Christian world*. In it, Kraemer addressed what he perceived as the danger of compromising the Christian message in relating to other traditions and ideologies, a danger he saw manifest in the then-current trends in mission thinking and practice. Despite some acute observations on the positive significance of other faiths, Kraemer unequivocally asserted the discontinuity of the Christian gospel with other faiths. The terms, if not the answers, which Kraemer provided for discussion influenced and even dominated the thinking about Christian mission for quite some time as the evolution of the themes in the WCC consultations may illustrate.

Since the 1960s the term 'dialogue' has gained prominence in missiology (Fredricks 2005:215). The CWME Mexico City Conference (1963) used the formulation "*The Witness of Christians to Men of Other Faiths*". A year later, at an East Asia Christian Conference meeting in Bangkok, the theme was "*The Christian Encounter With Men of Other Beliefs*". Three years later, in Sri Lanka, the word dialogue surfaced, and the theme was "*Christians in Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths*". Throughout, the major participants were still identified as Christians who dialogue about or with others. Only in Ajaltoun (Lebanon) in 1970 was the mutuality of dialogue recognized; the theme was "*Dialogue between Men of Living Faiths*" (the women were apparently still outside of dialoguers' field of vision!). In the wake of the unstoppable changes in Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity, "the World Council of Churches, under the leadership of Stanley Samartha of India, published The Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals in 1974, followed next year by *Towards World Community: Resources and Responsibilities for Living Together*" (Vetti 2003:22). Consequently, in 1977, in Chiang Mai (Thailand), the consultation "*Dialogue in Community*" was affirmed as an authentic vocation of the church, having its proper integrity alongside the many other specific ministries which the church is called to fulfill in mission (Frederiks 2005: 215).

The choice of "community" opened up many other issues especially relating to people living with ideologies as alternatives to religions. This accounts for the WCC Publication in 1979 on Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faith and Ideologies. These guidelines were adopted partly in recognition of, and in obedience to, the command "to love God and your neighbour". Document V, paragraph 18, in part, states:

> "As an expression of love, engagement in dialogue testifies to the love experienced in Christ. It is a joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and participation with all who are allies of life seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus, dialogue in community is not a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. Rather it is a means of living our faith in Christ in service of community with one's neighbours" (Sherer and Bevans 1992:13).

As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information and have discussions – all this is not yet dialogue. Occasionally, out of our talking and relationships, a deeper encounter arises − an opening up of each to the concerns of the other, in more than just intellectual terms,. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths, or

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ideology. But we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology, and culture, even when the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspects of human life. Dialogue can be recognized as a welcome means for obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: "You shall not bear false witness to your neighbour". This, of course, is a tough but not unachievable goal in mission. This could explain why, as a global body seeking to forge a better understanding and relationship among people of faith and no faith, WCC stresses that: "As Christians enter dialogue with their commitment to Jesus Christ; time and again the relation of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness" (Sherer and Bevans 1992:13). Dialogue is therefore commended as one way in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today. At the same time, Christians engaged in dialogue with neighbours of other faiths will be compelled to rethink their own faith in the light of the issues and experiences raised by the dialogue.

We need to acknowledge that the ecumenical movement marks our generation as unique from all earlier generations of Protestants. This is what the late Archbishop Temple called "the great new fact of our era" (Bosch 199:463). It is significant that when the secular world is breaking apart and deepening the rifts which divide the world, the church is beginning to take the meaning of its own unity more seriously than at any other time since the Reformation,. This underscores the point that the differences which divide the churches are less important than the fact that they are one in Christ.

This same argument holds true even among members of the same reformed family like the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC).

6.9.1.2 World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)

Earlier we saw that dialogue is a missional language that the church is encouraged to speak today. This is because we believe that our new missional framework requires that we speak a new language to suit the pluralistic times. Yet, this is an art that is very difficult to learn, even among members of the same faith family like WARC. The problem remains that the story of Reformed Christianity in Nigeria,[103] as in South Africa, (Smit 2005:183-204) is a very complicated one. It has been called "a story of many stories' (Smit 1992). Even if we focus on Presbyterian traditions − as has been done in this dissertation − the story is still a "complex one of division, conflict and disunity." In the article, *On Learning to*

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[103] There are so many Reformed Churches in Nigeria especially in the northern part of the country that are still engulfed in conflicts. Thanks to the Reformed Ecumenical Council through whose intervention the warring members are beginning to learn to speak the language of dialogue in mission (see van Houten 2006:3).

speak: A South African Reformed Perspective on Dialogue, Smit (2005:183-204) reminds us of the challenge of learning to speak the language of dialogue, and alerts us to at least four questions of extreme importance:

a)   Questions concerning Truth and Community (Smit 2005:187-190)

The first issue concerns questions of *truth*. Reformed believers, like other Christians, know that we confess our faith in many diverse and complex ways. They would strongly agree with Luther's dictum (*tota nostra operacio confession est*) that all our activities, our whole lives, everything we do, are forms of confessing our faith.

We can therefore have community with other believers, and share our common faith and witness, without necessarily sharing the same doctrinal formulae, confessional documents, expressions and decisions, or even ideologies. We do not expect that the truth we believe in should be expressed in only one universally and authoritative way.

Even in interpretation of Scripture − irrespective of readers or form – all remain human readings and therefore in principle revisable and open to evaluation and criticism. This applies equally to the regular sermon at the Sunday worship service as to decisions, declarations and documents adopted by synods of the church. This is the reason why all believers − themselves prophets, priests and kings − are called to become mature in their faith and able to discern and judge for themselves in all spiritual matters. Ultimately, this is the rationale behind the Presbyterian system of church governance, common throughout Reformed churches. This also explains why even the controversies, sometimes threatening and dividing communities of faith, are historical and contextual. They can only be understood by means of a careful and responsible hermeneutics of tradition, as is true of the traditions and documents that arose from there and in response to them.

One may then ask what a Reformed confession is. In his address prepared for the 12th General Council of the World Alliance of the Reformed Churches in 1925, Karl Barth,[104]began with an attempt to

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[104] In the early years, after he became well known for his commentary on Romans, in which he saw the world as facing radical crisis, he was appointed as Professor for Reformed theology in Gottingen. For several years he submerged himself in Reformed theology and thought. He taught several courses on Calvin and major reformed confessional documents. He spoke widely and repeatedly on questions concerning the role and authority of the Bible in Reformed theology, the reformed confessional heritage, and whether it was desirable to write a new Reformed confession. Very soon, he was challenged by the events in Nazi Germany. Together with other, including Reformed people, he played a leading role in the confessional

provide a *definition of Reformed Confession*, and then explained the definition briefly by pointing to ten characteristics of a reformed confession contained in the definition:

> A Reformed confession of faith is the spontaneously and publicly formulated presentation of the Christian church in general of a provisionally granted insight from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ attested to in Holy Scripture alone, by a geographically circumscribed Christian fellowship which, until further notice, authoritatively defines its character to the outsiders and which, until further action, gives direction to its doctrine and life (Smit 2005:188).

Between the Reformed churches with different confessions, according to Barth in Smit (2005:188) at least five interesting ways of uniting and cooperating existed, but the writing of a common confession never came to mind. Barth argued that the reason for this is that it would have contradicted the Reformed notion of the church itself, in which confessing is something that believers do in concrete, everyday and real fellowship with one another. He expressed skepticism concerning the possibility and desirability of a common, universal Reformed confession. It may, he seemed to think, too easily become an instrument of power and a worldly confession, but not one that really lives in the hearts and lives of the believers in their local congregations and everyday lives.

Several of these considerations are important to keep in mind in order to understand the specific Reformed perspective on ecumenical dialogue and documents, particularly also as we consider the context of Nigerian experience.

b)   Questions concerning doctrine and ethics (Smit 2005:190-196)

For a reformed mindset, doctrine and ethics cannot be separated easily, if at all. For instance, in South Africa the *Belhar* Confession rejected apartheid as a *doctrinal* error, to the extent that there had been Biblical and theological justifications of apartheid, but it was also an error *with clear moral and ethical implications*. Some believers in South Africa had elevated apartheid to a matter of confession, albeit unconsciously. For them it was the catechism of their heart and a practice of their lives both inside and outside the church.

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church and the writing of the Barmen Declaration. Finally, after the World War Two, he participated in the initiatives by Reformed Christians to respond to the potential for destruction and war offered by nuclear arms in the form of the declaration of a *status confessionis* (Smit 2005:188 footnote).

In Nigeria, we do not have apartheid as it existed in South Africa. But our *ethnocentrism* and *religious bigotry* are contradicting the gospel, thereby constituting a stumbling block to true reconciliation in the church and the society. Therefore a more missional praxis, which can witness to the reconciliatory aspects of the gospel, has become necessary.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has since its inception been passionately involved in issues concerning social justice in different parts of the world, including Nigeria. To the reformed mind, theology and ethics, doctrine and life, confession through words and confession through actions, are integrally intertwined and impossible to separate. This inseparable link between theology and ethics is again visible in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches' declaration of a *processus confessionis* regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction, also adopted by the World Council of Churches at the Harare General Assembly. During the WARC's Debrecen (23rd) General Council in 1997, it was still called a project on "Reformed Faith and Economic Injustice."

In *The Declaration of Debrecen*, a message or "covenantal liturgy," written in confessional style, was adopted and sent to all the member churches for consideration. Both Calvin's description of the Christian life and the *Heidelberg Catechism*'s description of our deepest comfort, namely that we are not our own but belong to Jesus Christ, are used as a motto. Again, this formulation expresses theology (faith, comfort) and ethics (Christian life, calling and commitment) simultaneously, without any possibility of separation.

Reformed Christians will probably go along with the Ecclesiology and Ethics initiative in the Ecumenical Movement, which aims to bring more closely together the respective agendas of "Faith and Order"[105] and "Life and Work"[106] (for references that follow, see Best and Robra 1997). During the last

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[105] See Smit (2005:194). The focus of the Faith and Order has been, broadly speaking, on the visible unity of churches in the world, both globally and locally. Faith and Order always understood that "efforts towards manifesting the unity of the church" and "efforts towards common witness and service in the world" should "be held together." Several studies therefore sought to reflect on this relationship. A serious effort was made in a study programme called "The unity of the church and the renewal of human community," which led in 1990, after a long process and many consultations, to the document *Church and World. The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community.*

The purpose of Church and World was to affirm and explore the inter-relation of these two fundamental ecumenical tasks: The search for the visible unity of Christ's church, and the search for common Christian proclamation, witness and service as expressions of God's mission and love for a world crying out for renewal."

decade voices grew stronger from both sides that these two emphases belong together and that tension between the struggles for unity and justice should be overcome. From different sides the conviction seemed to grow that an appropriate vision to integrate these two concerns was the notion of *koinonia* – the Greek word indicating something like communion, community, sharing, fellowship, society, participation, solidarity, or *Gemeinschaft,* but kept deliberately untranslated in the earlier study documents because of the crucial differences caused by any translation.[107]

The purpose behind this recent focus on *koinonia* was therefore the attempt to bring ecclesiological and ethical concerns together in a new and fruitful way. Three consultations were held as part of this process, jointly organized by Units I (Faith and Order) and III (Justice, Peace and Creation) of the WCC. Their three final statements were published together as *Ecclesiology* and *Ethics*. Since they are called "Costly Unity,"[108] "Costly Commitment,"[109] and "Costly Obedience"[110] respectively, the ecclesiology and ethics project has been described as "a litany of 'costlies'."

The guiding questions, however, remain ecclesiological and the main argument of the document also. The identity and task of the church is understood within the perspective of the kingdom of God (as God's creative redeeming and sustaining rule), as both mystery (with emphasis on the reality of the church as the body of Christ) and prophetic sign (with emphasis on the church's role as instrument of God's grace given to a world crying out for healing and renewal), pointing (doxologically) towards an eschatological realization of God's saving purpose for human kind.

[106] See Smit (2005:195) footnote. The focus of *Life* and *Work,* on the other hand, has been, broadly speaking, on *furthering justice* in the world. Again, diverse, successive and sometimes competing notions have served as visions for this endeavour. For those involved in Life and Work, ecclesiological issues, including the visible unity of the church were often regarded as irrelevant, sometimes even obstructive, and in any case secondary. At the most, ecclesial unity would sometimes be regarded as necessary for practical reasons, to make the collective efforts of the churches stronger in the face of the enormous social, political and economic challenges they were facing. A statement of the Life and Work conference, in 1925 in Stockholm, already admitted "The sins and sorrows, the struggles and losses of the Great War and since have compelled the Christian Churches to recognize, humbly with shame, that 'the world is too strong for a divided Church'. The interest in visible unity was functional and practical. The primary focus was ethical rather than ecclesiological.

A major meeting in the Life and Work tradition was held in Seoul, in 1990, with a view "to engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and integrity of creation". The two expressions "conciliar process" and "covenant" are ecclesiologically every significant and together demonstrate the underlying intention to commit churches in a unified and in some sense mutually binding manner to confront the life-and-death issues of the time. However, the result was again lack of integration between the two concerns.

[107] See Smit (2005:195) footnote. The Seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra (1991) already issued "The Canberra Statement," using the notion of *koinonia* to set the unity of the church in the broader context of God's design. The Fifth World Conference of Faith and Order met in Santiago de Compostela in 1993 to draw out and develop this picture of visible unity painted at Canberra. The notion of koinonia played a major role in the proceedings. Its official report was also published under the title *On the way to Fuller Koinonia.*

[108] "Costly Unity" was the report of the meeting in Ronde, Denmark, in 1993. The explicit purpose was serious dialogue about these "long-lived tensions and divisions," this "cleft…exposing a history of differences which runs the length of the modern ecumenical movement."

To achieve that, they proposed to see the church itself as *moral community*. "It all came to the same point: The church not only has, but is, social ethic, *koinonia* ethic… "The being *(essse)* of the church is at stake in the justice and peace and

This study process sought to explore the link between what the church is and what the church does. In doing this, both these aspects were also subject to critical reflection. The koinonia to which the *oikomene* is called, which involves communion in faith, life and witness, takes the form of costly unity. This means that faith involves discipleship, and calls the churches to costly commitment to one another, as well as to costly obedience, when facing the struggles for life of every age. It is still an open question whether these attempts to integrate ecclesiological and ethical concerns have been successful. However, such integration remains a very important ecumenical undertaking, at least for Reformed people.

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integrity of creation process", and "*koinonia",* they argued, "is an apt term for both." The major part of the document consisted of an exposition, under different headings, of the nature of such *koinoni*a and its implications.

"Cheap unity" avoided morally contested issues because they would disturb the unity of the church. Costly unity - and therefore the title – in the church as a moral community meant discovering the churches' unity as a gift of pursuing justice and peace. It can often only be acquired at a price.

Church as moral community began with the moral meaning of the sacraments themselves. The sacraments as person-shaping rites can lead into sacramental living. The bridge between ecclesiology and ethics was to be found in the experience of worship and the deepening of spirituality.

This report served a few months later at Santiago de Compostela and contributed to the important role that *koinonia* as integrating notion would play there. Already, however, a second joint meeting was planned, planned because the idea of the church as a moral community was unclear and led to many questions and criticisms.

[109] "Costly commitment" was the report of the second meeting at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem, Israel, in 1994. Part of the problem with the description of the church as moral community was that it could seem like a description of what was already and always the case, particularly when it built on the experiences of the sacraments, worship and spirituality. This would not sufficiently account for the many differences between churches, and for the lack of ethical involvement.

Accordingly, they wanted to emphasize the calling, the vocation, of the church. The churches – even as moral communities − were called to commit themselves to one another, recognizing that they need each other on the ecumenical journey. Such commitment was an essential foundation for their common reflection and action. It had become increasingly clear – they claimed – the road to costly unity led necessarily to costly commitment of the churches to one another. Those who had previously been wary of moral reductionism had to commit themselves also to ecclesial renewal.

[110] "Costly Obedience" (Smit 2005:195) was the report of this third and final meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1996.The theme of moral formation was further pursued by asking "what it might to speak of the church as a global communion of moral witnessing."

The obedience to which the church is called – it was said – is often costly. It may require the churches to position themselves in relation to issues of particular times and places in ways that call for courage, perseverance and sacrifice. Such faithfulness may even come to martyrdom.

Again, the consultation found it necessary, but difficult, to interpret the particular time and place, and did that in terms of globalization. In the light of this description, the document then discussed at some length the meaning of moral formation in the world, the churches' moral failure in face of nationalistic, ethnic and economic violence, the grounding of the church's moral formation in the eucharist and baptism, and finally the idea of an ecumenical moral communion and the possible role of the WCC in such an endeavour.

For the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, this is truly a monumental challenge. Doctrinal questions – about the church, but therefore also about the triune God, Christ, and the Spirit – cannot be isolated from moral or ethical questions about the calling and the life of the church in the world, and vice versa. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, at least for the Presbyterians to be interested in the one and not the other.

c)   Questions concerning real reception (Smit 2005:196-199)

This leads to a third issue of major importance, namely that of "reception". Again, it is a common ecumenical problem, but one that takes on specific problematic dimensions for Reformed Churches.

"Reception" has been called the single most important issue in the ecumenical movement, the main future problem of the ecumenical movement (Rusch 1988), and the number one problem of the ecumenical movement (Kilmartin 1984).

Reception is an umbrella-term, referring to many issues. How can local churches and congregations be persuaded to take more seriously ecumenical challenges, opportunities, issues, decisions, notions, documents, and initiatives? When have local churches really received and appropriated the documents, decisions and documents of other churches, in order to face common challenges collectively? How can local churches and congregations be effectively involved in drawing up these documents and making these decisions?

This has to do with discernment which, as highlighted in chapter 1, is an essential part of our methodology in doing theology. Reception, for us, therefore ultimately entails more than merely "receiving" common decisions, documents and initiatives. It concerns the questions of how we receive one another, how we learn to live with one another, and how we come closer to one another in visible and concrete forms of living unity. Since we do not have uniformity of practices, certain fundamental presuppositions about our Reformed way of life and of being a church may prevent authoritative documents and declarations from achieving the kind of reception needed to make a real difference. This may even be the case in respect of consensus documents from ecumenical discussions and study documents of the specific denomination itself.

Much has been written on the notions of consensus, recognition and reception. Put simply, reception refers to the process whereby churches accept one another in full communion as a result of ecumenical encounters. Perhaps Rusch's definition of ecumenical reception can suffice: "Ecumenical reception includes all phases and aspects of an ongoing process by which a church under the guidance of God's spirit makes the results of a bilateral or multilateral conversation a part of its faith and life because the results are seen to be in conformity with the teachings of Christ and of the apostolic community, that is, the gospel as witnessed to in Scripture" (Rusch 1988, see also Naude and Smit 2000).

Consequently, engagement in such dialogues would be easier for churches like the Roman Catholic Church, with its strong sense of identity and universality, and other churches, particularly those which themselves have a fairly strong sense of identity and worldwide coherence in doctrine, worship and practice. They can receive the result of such dialogues more easily and effectively than other churches, including those from the Reformed community, which may be amenable to and dependent upon a more difficult process of reception. In other words, this process is found to be more difficult by denominations which place less emphasis on denominational unity and rather stress the independence of local congregations. Compounded by the individualism from the West as well as the influence of the Pentecostal movement, the process of ecumenical dialogue has many hurdles to cross.

This acknowledgement leads to the fourth and final issue which is so crucial that it deserves special attention, namely, questions of authority.
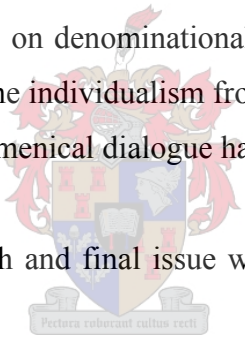
d)   Questions concerning speaking with authority (Smit 2005:196-199).

Each dialogue partner has to deal with the problems of authority in its own ranks, in addition to the problems it might experience in relationship with others. Churches deal with these questions in diverse ways. For Reformed people, this is extremely difficult, as we have always experienced within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Reformed churches *do not have a final authority* to appeal to, neither in the form of an authoritative ecclesial body, nor in the form of authoritative documents. Their only appeal can be to the authority of the Scriptures, or rather, to the authority of "the living God in Christ" still speaking through the Holy Scriptures. This obviously raises new and complex questions in any dialogue.

These problems become even more urgent when Christians hope to come to some agreement about moral questions in typically modern, pluralistic and democratic societies, where churches often have hardly any voice with authority. Our churches therefore need to take questions of authority and reception far more seriously. We need to find new ways of involving members in the discussions and decision-making processes of our churches, particularly when they concern the moral challenges we face. We need to rethink our own position and calling in society, and to find new ways of learning to speak (Clement 1995) in a public voice that will be more modest than before, but that will still be heard and could still make a meaningful contribution.

6.9.1.3 Evangelicals

In evangelical circles, dialogue is regarded with suspicion. When dialogue has occurred on relationships with other faiths between Evangelicals and other groups, participants have been more disturbed with evangelical attitudes than with their theological stance (Covell 1993:169). In the Frankfurt Declaration (1970), the evangelicals noted with concern that dialogue had replaced the proclamation of the gospel and stressed that dialogue is valid only in those cases where it serves as a preparation to witness (Frederiks 2005: 215). But if Frankfurt had sympathy for dialogue in mission, Lussanne 1974 considered dialogue as an unacceptable affront to Christ and therefore deserving of outright rejection by the evangelical ethos. In unmistakable terms, Lausanne Covenant declared: "We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies". Nevertheless, the Lausanne document (1974) in Sherer (1992:254) admits that:

> "the development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods... The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness... Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. [Therefore] Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves (Phil 2:5-7) of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants (2 Cor. 4:5) of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God."

Thus, for the Evangelicals, the Lordship of Christ and his uniqueness and potential universality are non-negotiable elements in mission. Therefore, whenever and wherever dialogue is accepted among the Evangelicals, it is considered only as yet another method of conversion. Little wonder critics have found the *attitudes* and *practices* of evangelicals objectionable, accusing them of "triumphalism, a cocksure attitude, aggressiveness, cold and unanalytic logic, no sensitivity to people, and continued colonialist mentality" (Covell 1993:169).

Some Evangelical theologians and missiologists, however, are beginning to fine-tune their theology taking into account the stark realities of our time. Kenosis − the way of the cross which calls for self-emptying − appears to be gaining currency in contemporary Evangelical missionary enterprise. This approach is replacing the model of dialogue which had hitherto been interpreted as a way to "break down prejudices and to promote respect and peaceful coexistence." In the context of the encounter with others, we are more and more being called upon to empty ourselves, through kenotic dialogue. But should that be our end-point?

This, indeed, is a question for those of us who are serious about engaging in the *missio Dei* in the contemporary world. But we will leave the Evangelicals for now and turn to the Roman Catholic perspective on dialogue in mission.
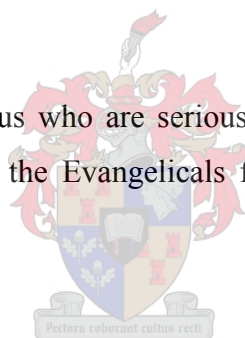
6.9.2   The Roman Catholic Dimension

For the Roman Catholic Church, the second Vatican Council formed a turning point in relations with people of other faiths. *Nostra Aetate* was the first official document to use the term "dialogue" in relation to people of other faiths (Frederiks 2005:215). On Pentecost (May 17) in 1964, the new pontiff, Paul VI, established a Secretariat for non-Christian Religions. Twenty five years later (March 1989), in the reorganization of the curia, the secretariat was designated and renamed the Pontifical Council on Interreligious Dialogue (PCID). Three months after the creation of the secretariat, Paul VI issued his first papal encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam*. In this text, the Pope went further than the Vatican when he spoke not only of persons, but also of other religions. Islam was singled out for special mention among various traditions.

> We refer to the adorers of God according to the conception of monotheism, the Muslim religion especially, deserving of our admiration for all that is true and good in their worship of God...

Honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that there is but one true religion, the religion of Christianity...But we do, nevertheless, recognize and respect moral and spiritual values of the various non- Christian religions, and we desire to join them in promoting common ideas of religious liberty, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order (Kimball 1991:98).

The mandate for the new secretariat concentrated on two primary tasks: studying the religious traditions and providing resources for both Christians and non-Christians; and promoting inter-religious dialogue through education and by facilitating efforts by bishops and others at the local level (Kimball 1991:98). Although the Second Vatican Council declarations had modified the traditional understanding of mission, the finality and the universality of salvation in Christ had not been reconciled clearly in official documents with the affirmation of God's action in seeking out persons in all social and historical situations (Kimball 1991:100). The process, which included four revisions over five years, resulted in a substantial three-part statement that strives to maintain the integrity of both mission and dialogue, and to make more explicit their intrinsic relationship. The final statement was promulgated by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of Pentecost, exactly two decades after the creation of the secretariat.

The document is organized under three sub-headings: mission, dialogue, and dialogue and mission. The thrust of the declaration on mission moves in the direction of a broader and more inclusive stance. The statement cites papal pronouncements and Episcopal conferences in order to underscore the "complex reality of the totality of mission."

> Mission is already constituted by the simple presence and living witness of the Christian life... There is also the concrete commitment to the service of mankind and of all forms of activity for social development and the struggling against poverty and the structures which produce it.... There is as well the dialogue in which Christians meet the followers of other religious traditions in order to walk together towards the truth and work together in projects of common concern... The totality of mission embraces all these elements. (Kimball 1991:101)

The carefully crafted declaration emphasizes the teaching of *Redemptor Mominis*, in which Pope John Paul II stated that Christ is united in some way with each person, whether or not the person is aware of it. This activity of God in the lives of all people, which we have discussed in relation to the inclusivist

option of theology of religion, is the theological anchor for the Roman Catholic Church as it pursues inter-religious dialogue in different ways.

Hans Kung is among the formidable voices calling for a non-exclusive understanding of Islam. Kung, a prolific, controversial and highly influential theologian, has written about many aspects of Islam and Christian-Muslim encounter in recent years. His comments on three basic questions reflect the orientation of his inclusivist (some might say "pluralist") perspective. The questions are: Islam: A way of Salvation? Muhammmed: A Prophet? The Quran: God's Word? (Kung 1986:19-36). In an attempt to draw points of convergence between the Old Testament and Islam, Kung identifies seven parallels between Muhammed and the prophets of Israel:

> ...the Trinity is the Christian answer to the identity of God. The one creator God Father, Son and Spirit. This is an identification that is at once exclusivistic and pluralistic. And because this God who is three in one has covenanted with what is other than himself – creature − the identity of God is also inclusivistic. The Trinity, far from being *scandalon*, is rather transcendental condition for interreligious dialogue, the ontological condition that permits us to take the other in all seriousness, without fear, and without violence (Karkkaneinen 2005:170).

The renaissance of the doctrine of the Trinity, which began in the mid-twentieth century with the groundbreaking work of Barth, has helped to retrieve the relevance of the Christian doctrine of God and its relation to issues such as salvation, community, creation, and eschatology (Karkkaneinen 2005:159). The doctrine of the Trinity is the structuring principle of Christian theology and thus of the Christian doctrine of God among other gods. In the past, Trinity used to be a more or less necessary appendix to the Christian doctrine of God. With good grounds, several contemporary theologians, including Karl Rahner, Karl Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg and the Catholic female theologian Catherine Mowry LaCugna, have criticized this order since it implies that the doctrine of the Trinity is not an integral part of the Christian view of God. In terms of the theology of religions it would mean that one could speak of One God of the Bible without necessarily resorting to Trinity − a topic seen by many other religions, especially Islam, as a major obstacle.

Placing Trinity in the beginning of Christian theology and the doctrine of God, and making it the structuring principle, means nothing less than to argue that to speak of God means to speak of Jesus Christ. There is simply no way to proceed otherwise in Christian theology of religions. The Christian

God − the God of the Israelite *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4), the Father of Jesus Christ − exists as Father, Son, and Spirit.

There is unanimous consensus among contemporary Trinitarian theologians that the Christian God is a divine communion. This is the theological conclusion from the biblical idea that God is love. Karkakainen (2005:162) put it poignantly:

> Relationality, being in relationships, is the proper mode of viewing not only the divine life but also the essence of personhood.[111] Persons exist in communion, in relationships, rather than as mere "individuals."

This is corroborated by the South African concept of *Ubuntu* or the Nigerian version, *Umunna wu ike*. In the final analysis, Trinitarian faith and the particularity of Christian faith are not to be thought of as opposites. According to Ramachandra (1996), this is "a particularity that takes God seriously in his dealings with his creatures." God chose a nation to be the bearer of the cosmic history to the rest, and one mediator to include all. Thus, incarnation is geared towards universality. Particularity is for the purpose of universality, not exclusion. Therefore, Christian faith has always been a missionary faith. Missionary urgency flows from the very logic of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Messiah of all peoples (Ramachandra 1996: 233).
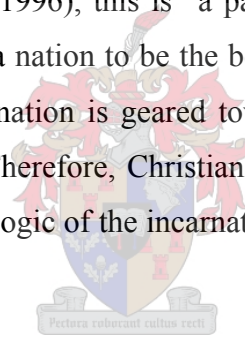
It follows that in Christian theology in general and Trinitarian theology in particular, Christology plays a "criteriological function" (Karkkaneinen 2005:164). There could not be a Trinity apart from the divine identity of Jesus as the Son – at least in the traditional Christian sense. The concept of Trinity expresses the idea that the three persons that constitute it are fully divine: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The implication is that those who have abandoned any form of orthodox Christology have also given up Trinity. According to Mark Heim, an outstanding proponent of pluralism, Christian belief in the incarnation affirms that in Jesus the Trinitarian relations that constitute God's divinity, and the external relations between God and humans, participate in each other. This does not, of course, necessarily mean limiting God's presence in the world to the particular history of Jesus of Nazareth, but that the history of the man Jesus is the criterion for discerning God's presence elsewhere. Heim (2001:134) writes:

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[111] This is part of the motivation for this research as earlier stated in chapter 1 of this dissertation.

The Trinity teaches us that Jesus Christ cannot be exhaustive and exclusive act of God to save us[112]. Yet the Trinity is unavoidably Christocentric in at least two senses. It is Christocentric in the empirical sense that the doctrine, the representation of God's triune nature, arose historically from faith in Jesus Christ. And it is so in the systematic sense that the personal character of God requires particularity as it deepest mode of revelation.

There is no doubt that the doctrine of the Trinity cannot be established without an emphasis on Christology and a more or less classical view of the incarnation. On the one hand, what one believes about God as triune determines one's Christology and pneumatology. It is often observed that based on methodological choice, some chose Christology "from above" while others opt for Christology "from below". But in the final analysis, the methods "from above" or "from below" are not exclusive of each other but rather presuppose each other. Therefore, there is no room for a truncated Christology.

Notwithstanding all the Christological debates[113] that have raged over the years, the position in this research work is that the man Jesus is the Christ. In Bonhoeffer's (1955) *Ethics*, Jesus is the one who shares with us as a member of our human family in all our grandeur and weakness. He is our high priest who sympathizes with us (Heb. 2:18; 4:15) and whose life on earth was lived in dialogue with others. This should be a fundamental cornerstone in our contemporary missional praxis.
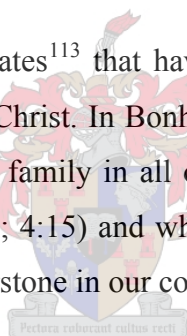
Since we are concerned about ethnic and religious conflicts that inflict pains on the people and hinder the mission of the church in Nigerian context, our proposal here will be for the PCN to engage in an inter-cultural dialogue which has both cultural and theological implications in the church's missional praxis.

6.10   African Cultural Approaches to Conflict Resolution

In chapter 5.7, we referred to the concept of *Umunna* as an Igbo cultural category in the community. In the community, certain factors such as religious adherence to customs and traditions of the land that are held as sacred and generally revered with awe, contribute to the preservation and cohesion of the

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[112] This statement has its own problem (see Karkkaneinen 2005:173 and footnote no.35).
[113] For example, many have written on the Christ of faith and Jesus of history. See also the "Jesus Seminar" in *I don't have enough FAITH to be an ATHEIST* by Geisler, Norman L. and Turek, Frank (2004:409-411).

family. The superior power of the wider social relationships commands an over-arching respect over individualism. Thus, the network of a larger family community is held together by common belief-systems and certain codes of conduct. It was in the vital arena of conflict settlement and peace treaties that the family as a community exercised its sense of justice. According to Egbulem (1987:75) in Manus (2003:134), "all abominations committed in the kinship circle are considered by the Igbo as *Nso* or *Imeru-Ala*, that is, taboo. Such abominations that offend the community spirit and land are murder, illicit sex acts and several sexually-related taboos. Once an offence is established, the process of appeasement of the ancestral spirits and reconciliation with the kinswomen and men are initiated by the eldest man in the kin-group. If it is an offence against a close relation, the reconciliation rite is performed by a senior member of the wider family. But if it is a crime that offends *Ala*, the earth deity, reconciliation is carried out by authorized priests in a ritual cleansing that involves the entire community in an elaborate liturgical ceremony.

Through the process of *intercultural hermeneutics*, the PCN can use the Igbo concept of *Umunna* as an African cultural and Christian approach to deal with conflicts in Nigeria. The challenge, therefore, is for the church to find more African cultural resources that can promote theological reflections and permanently touch life. Thus, there is the need for intercultural dialogue in the PCN's missional praxis.

6.11   WHY SHOULD PCN CONSIDER INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE IN ITS MISSSIONAL PRAXIS?

As we saw earlier in this chapter, inter-ethnic conflicts as well as sub-ethnic rivalries in Nigeria often result in violent clashes, arson, maiming and killings. People engage in these killing ventures because of what they believe about themselves and others. To effect a behavioural change will require a critical engagement with the belief-systems and the primal world-view that influence these behaviours. Through a theologically-driven and culturally-relevant dialogue, the PCN can use the resources of the Gospel to engage these belief-systems that make people think that the lives of other human beings have little or no value.

The benefits of this process can be enormous for us as the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (2002:3) has pointed out and we have summarized as follows:

6.11.1   Fostering collaboration

Without dialogue, it is almost impossible for any collaboration to take place. The Israelite prophet, Amos (3:3), put it succinctly when he asked "can two walk together without agreement?" Members of the different ethnic groups in the PCN must find new ways of collaboration if there is going to be any significant progress in the mission of the Church. The Efik group needs the Igbo and vice versa. The current situation in Iraq escalated because the United States chose monologue rather than creative dialogue with the United Nations. Nations and communities of the world need one another. Indeed, we cannot build relationships without the understanding of our potential partners, and "we cannot achieve that understanding without a form of communication that goes by way of conversation." Our mutual interdependence makes collaboration an imperative for mission (cf I Cor. 12; Eph. 4:11-16).

6.11.2 Improving inter-group understanding

We all carry some form of cultural baggage. In chapter 3, we saw the various types of ethnic stereotypes in Nigeria. Many conflicts in the country and even in PCN congregations result from these cultural prejudices and stereotypes. But "facilitated intercultural and interreligious dialogues" can foster new, respectful relationships, informed by a deepened understanding of the role of prejudice and stereotyping in discriminatory behaviour. Dialogue can help us to understand others better and to develop a commitment to fight against our personal, cultural and institutional prejudices and stereotypes like ethnicism and racism.

For example, writing about African-Muslim dialogue, Azumah (2001:236) concludes:

> The first step of dialogue with indigenous Africa should be to unlearn acquired misinformation and stereotypes and to begin to appreciate the Other through their lenses. In other words, dialogue with indigenous Africa should, therefore, first of all, be geared towards bringing about a change of perception and attitude in the Self. In this regard, the Self needs as much liberation as the Other.

Already, dialogue is being increasingly used "to transform deep-rooted, value-based conflicts" in many parts of the world. Small groups of people who hold opposing views on highly divisive and emotive

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problems (such as abortion and gay rights) are brought together to have "a new kind of conversation or debate, which seeks to score points and to persuade." The goals of this dialogue are mutual understanding and respect. This may not lead to a resolution of the conflict. It can, however, also lead to transformation of the way that conflict is pursued from one which is highly destructive and divisive, to one which is constructive and matured in understanding, In this way, dialogue can be very rewarding. Nigeria, and indeed the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, needs dialogue to deal with the myriads of deep-rooted ethnic conflicts in the polity.

6.11.3 Building peace

Peace is both a condition for, and a result of, effective mission. Without peace, we will find it difficult to do mission. Yet the goal of mission is to produce peace. For instance, effective and fruitful mission can be elusive if there is war in a village, yet in the midst of the war we need to identify with the suffering people in order to bring peace and hope to them. Peace (*Shalom*) is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to those resources and factors which make communal harmony joyous and effective (Brueggemann 1987:16). The Old Testament prophet, Ezekiel (34:25-29a) in a visionary passage expresses its meaning:
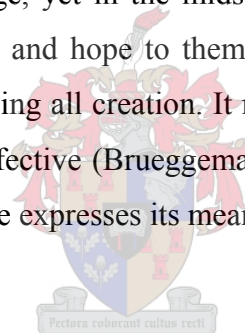
> I will make them a covenant of *shalom* and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers of blessing in their season. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land….They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them; they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide them plantations of *shalom*.

This communal harmony between people and things can only be possible through mutual relational dialogue. So dialogue is a fundamental component in the process of peace building. And peace building maintains human infrastructure for relationships that are harmonious, synergistic, cooperative, responsive and mutually beneficial. When people are divided by their differences, the patterns of relationships reinforce separation, fragmentation and divisiveness. In situations of severe conflict as

we have in Nigeria and other parts of the continent, the absence of peace breeds mistrust, distorted views, cycles of hurt and revenge, blame and pain. But dialogue is a way of creating bridges across the chasms of our differences.

6.11.4 Fostering Community change

Participants in dialogue can have an increased sense of power and determination to initiate change based on the knowledge they gain from the vastly different experiences and perspectives of their own members. Dialogue can also put participating groups in a unique and powerful place to build developmental projects and solve community problems like crime. I still remember how, as the Chairman of Akanu Christian Peace Committee (ACPC) in 2000 and 2001, my community was saved from complete ruin when there was a chieftaincy crisis. The energy and resources that were almost wasted on destruction of lives and property were channeled to rebuilding our long-neglected road and other developmental projects in the community. This was possible because the Lord worked in His people through the power of creative dialogue.
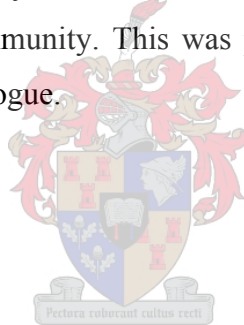
6.11.5 Strengthening democracy

Dialogue helps citizens take an active role in policy and decision-making. It has been said that the health and future of democracy depends on the active participation of responsible citizens, who take the initiative to engage in dialogue, deliberate about public policy choices, and work towards setting the public agenda. Eyo (1995:11) has emphasized that many of the ills plaguing Nigeria are outcomes of the lack of political will on the part of Nigerians to establish a democratic culture. Stressing the need to cultivate and deepen democracy and tolerance through dialogue among the diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria, he further expresses the view that:

> It is only in such a culture that leaders are tested and retained or thrown out according to the will of the people. It is only in such culture that mistakes are made and corrected without social upheaval. It is only in such culture that people are groomed to be tolerant of people of other languages, colours, ethnic groups or clans, and to be able to give and take in periods of triumphs and failure. It is only in such a culture that Nigeria can evolve to become a viable polity that inspires loyalty and patriotism.

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Talking about polity, there is no denying the fact that many of our church structures are still authoritarian in practice and exclusive of some members. We need to democratize these structures so that men and women, and even children, will freely unleash their God-given talents and also participate in building a better society of God's delight. But as long as we fear and neglect dialogue, there will continue to be autocracies and exclusions which will keep resources untapped both in the church and the larger society.

6.11.6 Encouraging innovation

Using the process of collaborative conversation, we create our world and its future through a process of connecting with each other, showing knowledge and know-how, and building relationships. When we consciously focus attention on "questions that matter" to our organizations and communities, we are contributing to the evolution of the knowledge that we need to co-create the future. We "grow what we know individually and collectively using possibilities for mutual insight, innovation, and action that are already present, if only we are ready to look." The innovative possibilities of the future can only be realized in our communities, nations and the entire world if we are willing to dialogue with one another. All the talks about African Union, African Renaissance or the much-announced African century (see Makgoba (ed.) 1999) are possible if we can engage in innovative dialoguing.

The points we have described above are about the mission and the hope that the church is called to pursue. They are about realizing the future and making God's kingdom visible. They are the features that underpin our methodology in this dissertation of doing missional-practical-ecclesial theology. We believe that dialogue holds promise for a better human society.

In this connection, I would add that dialogue in mission is a liberating search for the truth about God and who we are. This search is not an easy process, because dialogue is rooted in the awareness that we must *struggle* to achieve "truth". This "Truth", including the truth of Christian faith, is not something that can be handed to us in a package (Ellsberg 1991:82). The search for truth demands that we know that "truth is not a non-negotiable dogma or principle with which we begin but a goal we seek." As M.

Gandhi once put it, "we must seek it, 'experimentally' in the experience and struggles of life." If we want to know whether the injunction "love your enemies" has truth in it, we must try it. Only in the laboratory of experience can we test our understanding of truth. Gandhi's words on the theory and practice of religion are a challenge to all of us regardless of our different persuasions in life:

> For too many people, religion is a matter of ideas and principles. It is easier, somehow, to advertise them and defend them in debate than to put them into action in daily life, to test them and see how they wear, and to allow them to transform us if they wear well. To our encounters today with people of other traditions of faith we bring not only what we "believe," but who we are. The ideals of religious truth that we bring into dialogue with others cannot be mere ideas to which we adhere theoretically; they must be tried on and tried out in the struggles of our lives" (Ellsberg 1991:82).

Dialogue is not an abstract concept that should just be consigned to intellectual speculation. It is about people and relationships which have to be tried and tested in the laboratory of human lives and situations. It is about the people who meet in congregations and along the street treating themselves as human beings created in the image of God.

In order to understand how the experiment is tried out in the struggles of our lives, we examine the various forms of dialogue in the next section.

6.12 FORMS OF DIALOGUE

Verkuyl (1978:365ff) has suggested three forms of dialogue: a) dialogue to increase understanding; b) dialogue to increase cooperation; and c) dialogue for missionary communication. Thangaraj (1999:95-96) has said that dialogue is best understood when one looks at the type together with the goal of dialogue. Using the Roman Catholic document "Dialogue and Proclamation," Thangaraj lists four types of dialogue (which have been adapted slightly to integrate them with the purpose of this research):

6.12.1 Dialogue of life

Dialogue of life occurs when people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. Since the church does not exist for itself but primarily "for others", it will be demonstrating its solidarity and mutuality with others when it shares in their "joys" and sorrows" as well as their "problems and preoccupations."   In Africa, when people are victims of both natural and human-made disasters, the church can promote harmonious living in communities of pluralistic ideologies and religious persuasion (I Peter 3:15).

In my community (Akanu Ohafia) where we have churchgoers and traditional worshipers living together, community members are expected to share in joys and pains of one another regardless of differences in religious tradition. Of course, it is always a strong witness to the gospel when Christians share especially in the misfortunes of non-church members. But with the gradual cultural invasion of western individualism, this witness is becoming an exception rather than the norm. We need to recover this missional vocation by reading and internalizing the challenging account of the early Christians. Some of the testimonies about the extraordinary witness of the early Christians to the non-believers can be found in Rodney Stark (1996:82-88).

6.12.2 Dialogue of action

The dialogue of action aims to address the problems of the human community (at the local, regional, and national levels) and to redress the injustices that are rampant in our communities (Thangaraj 1999: 96). This form of dialogue is all the more concrete and incarnate in the sense that it is something for which we take responsibility together with other people. The importance of this point lies in the fact that despite our diverse religious affiliations, we still come together to confront problems that threaten our common humanity. These problems not only remind us of our interconnectedness, but also demand our joint action. One of the glaring situations in Nigeria that requires this type of dialogue in action is the exploitation of the resources of the oil rich Niger Delta areas, and the degradation and neglect of the people and their environment by multinational companies like Shell in collaboration with the government. The issues of child trafficking and girl prostitution that are now rampant in our society also need dialogue in action between the church and other people in Nigeria (see Castells' (2004) *End of Millennium*).

In many communities there are calls for people to cooperate in bringing an end to human suffering, to advance racial, social or economic justice, to heal diseased relationships between groups, and to attend to other corporate needs. Jeremiah (29:11-13) wrote a letter to the Diaspora community to encourage them to seek the good of the cities of Babylon in which they were living. Jesus taught the disciples that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt 5:13-16). The Christian church throughout the world is in similar Diaspora today. Rather than retreating into a ghetto (Verkuyl 1980:365), the PCN is challenged to be a faithful steward of God's creation by cooperating with others in the fight against poverty, hunger, ignorance and injustice. This can hardly be accomplished in today's world without a sense of responsibility, solidarity and mutuality in dialogue.

6.12.3 Dialogue of theological exchange

Mutual understanding and respect is promoted when people of different denominational, religious or secular traditions come together to share their faith with each other. Such exercise need not be only among "the experts" or "the specialists" of those traditions. Members of local assemblies can be encouraged to meet and discuss concepts and issues of justice, peace, and neighbourliness in their various Christian and African traditions and contexts. There is much that can be mutually beneficial in a process like this.

6.12.4 Dialogue of religious experience

This form of dialogue aims to achieve spiritual growth and maturity through sharing spiritual resources with others, learning from others, and participating in the spiritual and liturgical practices of other traditions. This can be done through the exchange of pulpits among faith communities within a locality. Much as this is a challenging form of dialogue, the chief concern of the Christian witness is to commend not himself or his own expression of Christianity, but rather Christ Himself (2 Cor. 4:5). We are to engage in dialogue because as Christian people we are under obligation to all human beings (cf. Rom. 1:16). Above all, we are not to overlook the fact that "what often begins as a dialogue can turn to a 'trialogue' with the benediction of the Holy Spirit" (Verkuyl 1980:363).

6.13   HOW DO WE MOTIVATE PEOPLE TO DIALOGUE?

As we have seen, dialogue is not an easy exercise, and it is not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. Because of this, people need motivation to engage in dialogue. And since individuals and faith

communities differ in so many ways, it is often difficult to offer practical suggestions about ways to motivate people for a dialogical mission. Nevertheless, we offer four broad suggestions below.

6.13.1 Sound theological education

The process of dialogue in a congregation is decidedly not one person's responsibility. If people are to engage in meaningful and fruitful dialogue in mission, there must be sound theological education. This will include, but should be not limited to, Sunday school classes, adult bible study groups, children's educational programmes, preaching ministries, and so on. If we are to reach beyond our current situation in Africa, we will need to take seriously and respond urgently to the challenge being posed by Andrew F. Walls (2001:50):

> It need hardly be said that one of the areas of revision will be theological education. Generally speaking, the theological curricula across Africa and Asia have followed western models, simply making some additions for local relevance. But western curricula in Church History, for instance, do not present a universal model; they reflect a careful process of selection that makes the West the special focus of the church's life. And the field of Biblical Studies is dominated by the results of a chapter of western intellectual history, and essentially by Enlightenment methods. There are often traditions of reading sacred and classical texts which minds conditioned by Confucian and Buddhist approaches may profitably apply to Scripture. Paul, after all, is hardly a model for the historical critical method of exegesis. The field of the study of religions, too, is dominated by models developed for a European Enlightenment understanding of religion. For Africans and African Theology and African Church History, the old religions of Africa are the sub-structure of Christianity, the materials which, in converted, or unconverted, or partly converted form, lie beneath the beliefs and practices of the Christian church in Africa.

The content of curricula for theological education should be locally and broadly prepared to include the needs of church leaders, the congregations, professional theologians and even outsiders so as to serve the three publics of David Tracey (1981) and the other two groups also named by Hendriks (2004:24, 33).

6.13.2 "Flesh and blood" engagement

We have often heard that Christians should not be involved in politics because it is a dirty game. But Jackson (2001:2) has quoted Alan Hendricks of Port Elizabeth as saying that "Politics is a dirty game and it needs Christians to clean it up." This could be why God did not only love the world as it is (John 3:16), but He took the initiative to come and clean it up. In the person of Jesus Christ who died and rose again for us, God demonstrated that it is possible to engage in this process (Rom 5:1-8). Theologically speaking, Christians believe that the initiative-taking triune God speaks and works through his body in this world. In John 1:1, 14, Jesus as the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us. God taking His place among people is also called the "emmanuelisation" (Thangaraj 1999) of the human environment. This approach therefore does not regard people or problems as objects to be studied "from a distance." It invites people to become participants and to contribute to a process of finding solutions to problems. Since dialogue is all about 'reasoning together' (Isaiah 1:18), hands-on participation is therefore very important in the process. In research, this is called Participatory Action Research (PAR) (De Vos 1998:408, Hendriks 2004:219-221).

6.13.3 Facilitated Traveling

"Facilitated traveling" is another way of motivating people to dialogue. An Igbo proverb says "*onye ije ka onye isi awo ife ama*" − a traveler surpasses a gray-haired person in knowledge. Already, technology has made it possible for people to move *en masse* from one side of the world to another in a matter of hours. This movement exposes people to a great deal of knowledge about other people, life and things beyond their own natural environments. This can create a great opportunity for dialogue among people of different cultures and ideologies, thereby building a more humane and harmonious society. In this regard, the PCN should continue posting workers to areas other than their places of birth as a way to expose them to dialogue with others and to build bridges of friendship across ethnic boundaries. At the national level, the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) programme is a step in the right direction. This programme, which posts young graduates to parts of the country other than their places of birth, can help to develop a new national orientation and integration for all Nigerians. We now need to safeguard the system from some politicians and government officials who would want to abuse it by using it to patronize their relations and other political associates.

In summary, the process of dialogue is a journey for every Christian. Believers should be equipped for this missional enterprise (Eph 4:12) by the church leadership. Where there is conflict, people should see themselves as Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:20) called into the ministry of reconciliation – reconciling people to themselves and to God. This is the goal and essence of our missional vocation.

However, the question may be asked: how can the Presbyterian Church become intentionally missional and involved in a theologically-driven dialogue and guide its members toward mature participation in reconciliatory missiology? How does this process relate to the methodology we proposed in chapter 1?

6.14   GUIDELINES FOR DIALOGICAL ENGAGEMENT IN RECONCILIATORY MISSIOLOGY: A COUNTER- CULTURAL MODEL

In every generation, the church has faced the temptation of being simply absorbed by the prevailing culture, or otherwise of trying in vain to live in isolation from the culture. But the challenge is how to engage the church in a dynamic interaction with the culture in which it is immersed. The answer is that the church must turn constantly to the scriptures, humbly seeking the illumination of the Holy Spirit to receive the necessary correctives and encouragements to sustain its transforming presence in society (Gibbs and Coffey 2001:214). In doing this, the Presbyterian Church may want to focus on one of the four areas illustrated in figure 6.1[114] overleaf.
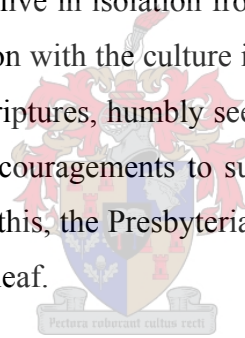
The first option is to *contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints* (Jude 3). In other words, to adhere strictly to the doctrine of *sola scriptura.* The second option is to concern itself with preserving its ecclesiastical heritage and liturgical tradition – a trend that has already produced a distorted identity because of systemic ethnocentrism. A third option could be to emphasize relevance to contemporary setting in terms of worship style and needs-related ministries. And the fourth option is a triumphalist anticipation of the imminent coming of the Lord, which on its own is at risk of making the church insensitive and useless to the society in which it exists.

Settling on one of these options and neglecting the rest will definitely be only a partial approach to what mission demands today, and may even rob it of the challenges and the excitement of holistic missional engagement.

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[114] I am indebted to Eddie Gibbs & Ian Coffey for this diagram which is taken from their book, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian ministry* (2001:216).
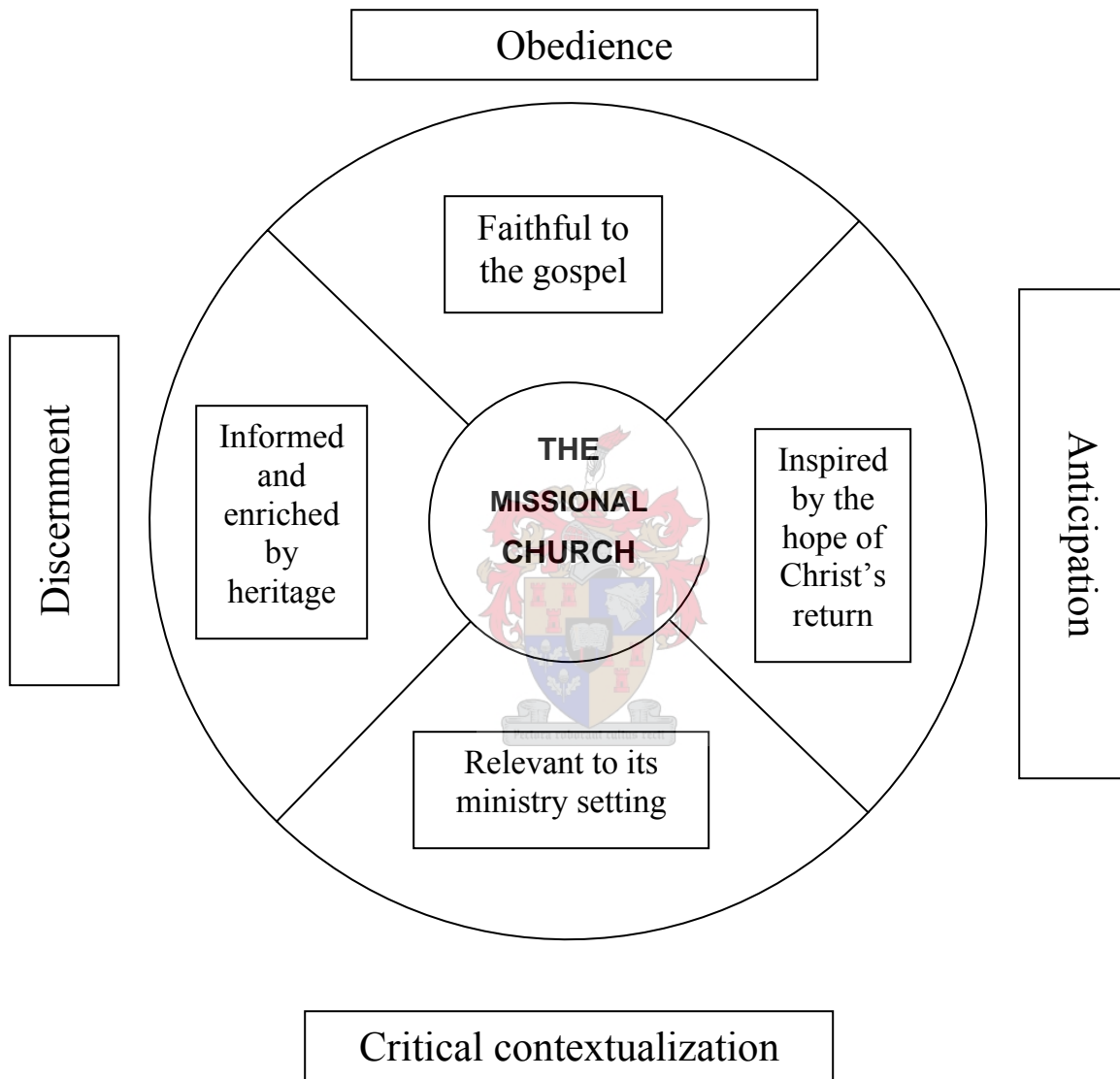
Figure 6.1   Reference points for the missional church

Thus, to be missional, the church must embrace all four emphases, with the inevitable tensions that this brings. Such tension is inescapable, not only because of our human limitations, but because the church exists in the "time between the times" – the time between the inauguration and the consummation of the kingdom of God (Gibbs and Coffey 2001:215).

As a missional church, the PCN must learn to be faithful to the Gospel, be informed and enriched by its heritage, strive to be relevant to its ministry setting, and also be inspired by the hope of Christ's return. It is important that the church understands that "it cannot take refuge in castles of dogmatic assertions or in museums of fossilized ecclesiastical structures and liturgical antiquities. The church must be inspired by the hope of Christ's return. Indeed, as an anticipatory sign of that event, it has to learn to live God's future now" (Gibbs and Coffey 2001: 215-216).

This is the underlying purpose and meaning of the methodology that was proposed in chapter 1, and has guided the development of the subsequent chapters in this research process.

6.15   PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

This chapter suggested a model design for dialogical engagement in reconciliatory missiology. It argued that mission and dialogue should be understood as not mutually exclusive of each other, but rather as mutually completing, especially in a pluralistic and conflict-ridden context like Nigeria.

It emerged from the discussion that:

➢ Conflict is a complex and diverse phenomenon in life; it is inevitable in, and ineradicable from, human life. Because of the complexity or diversity of conflicts, people have different perspectives on the root causes of conflict and also adopt different approaches to reducing or resolving conflict. There is need for a fundamental shift in our approach to the resolution of all types of conflicts, whether they be inter-personal, inter-communal or international.

➢ Like conflict itself, perspectives on conflict are many and varied. Different scholars have different theories about the causes of conflict. There are three major perspectives on the root causes of group conflicts, as categorized by leading conflict theorists. The **cultural perspective** maintains the view that culture (Jenkins 2002) presents a fundamental causal factor

in conflict motives and behaviour. Conflicts about culture have to do with values (Huntington 2004). The **social-psychological perspective**, though closely linked to and complimentary to the first, focuses on the social-psychological forces and mechanisms of conflict. Social identity theory holds that the most important forces giving rise to conflict are the innate need for public affirmation of collective worthiness, the process of positive or invidious comparisons within competitive environments, and the display of collective esteem in symbolic imagery (Tajfel &Turner 1979, Horowitz 1985, 2001, Chua 2003). These same ingredients are essential to effective conflict resolution. The third major perspective, the **materialist perspective**, considers economic factors to be primary independent variables. Conflicts over material resources (Schartz and Randall 2003) are easy to identify because they are visible. This conflict occurs when two or more parties want the same thing and there is not enough of it to go round. In such cases, one might even see the parties attacking the resource itself, with the heat of the conflict being focused on it. An example is the land in Jerusalem being claimed by both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

➢ The Bible itself is all about conflict (McCollough 1991:15). But the conflict in the Bible is set in a context of meaning that leads to conflict resolution. That meaning is therefore the key to resolution of conflicts. The meaning of conflict in the Bible is that God is God and human beings are accountable for what they do (McCollough1991:15). According to Hendriks (2004:144), "the aim of managing conflict is to edify the congregation so that the members can be effective and trustworthy in the *missio Dei* (God's mission or plan)."

➢ The ambivalence of conflict lies in the fact that it can be either danger or an opportunity for growth. The Japanese character for "crisis" or conflict is a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity" (or "promise"). Crisis is therefore not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning − the point where danger and opportunity meet, where the future is in the balance and where events can go either way (Bosch 1991:3). Conflict is part of life, and by extension, the church and its mission. History shows that crisis is part of the essential life of the church. If we deny the existence of crisis, it will simply result in dangerous delusion. Hence Bosch (1991:3) asserts: "…to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of being truly the *church*."

> ➢ It is not only the church that faces conflict; the whole society does. Nigeria experiences different kinds of conflicts. Though it is difficult to understand all the reasons for the outbreak of all the conflicts in Nigeria, a few broad working hypotheses about the contributing causal factors which operate at different levels and often in contradictory ways in the country are summarized: geographic and demographic characteristics and the National Question; resources and economy; military interventions; land ownership; and religion and religious differences. Our situation shows that we direly need peace and reconciliation.

> ➢ This reconciliation requires dialogue. Dialogue is not just a concept but is about relationship which is very essential in the *Missio Dei*. The unanimous consensus among contemporary Trinitarian theologians, that the Christian God is a divine communion, is a theological conclusion based on the biblical notion that God is love. Therefore, relationality − being in relationships − is the proper mode to view not only the divine life but also the essence of personhood (see my motivation in chapter 1). We exist in communion, in relationships, rather than as mere "individuals." In our Nigerian context, intercultural dialogue can help us to understand this fact.

> ➢ With the inevitable and inescapable tensions that the four emphases bring, the PCN must learn as a missional church to be faithful to the Gospel, informed and enriched by its heritage, relevant to its ministry setting, and also inspired by the hope of Christ's return. It is important that the church understands that "it cannot take refuge in castles of dogmatic assertions or in museums of fossilized ecclesiastical structures and liturgical antiquities. The church must be inspired by the hope of Christ's return and learn "to live God's future now" (Gibbs 2001: 215-216).

In view of the discussions and the arguments that have been pursued in chapters 2 to 6, what conclusions do we now draw concerning the issues addressed? This question brings us to the culmination of the research process in chapter 7.

CHAPTER SEVEN   **SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS, FINDINGS AND**

RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter is in two parts. The first part summarizes the arguments of this research and the second part outlines findings and makes recommendations on the issues raised and discussed on the research problem and hypothesis.

7.2   SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

7.2.1   Chapter 2

It is evident in the study that for any meaningful discussion about the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, it is important to start from a contextual understanding of the missionary enterprise from which the church emerged. A contextual understanding places the historical explanation of issues in the PCN within the bigger picture of what really happened and is still happening in the church. In a way, this helps us to look at the mission of the church holistically.

Consequently, the story of the PCN helped us to understand the subject of Presbyterianism in Nigeria, as we revisited the soil (context), source (Scotland), streams (other partner Churches), and the struggles that have marked the missionary enterprise since its inception. Thus, we proceeded by describing the contextual situation in Nigeria before the arrival of the Scottish missionaries. In that way, the picture of the identity of the PCN began to unfold.

As noted, Nigeria is the most populous country in the continent of Africa with over 120 million people. The population is constituted by more than 250 ethnic groups, which have different languages, cultural identities and religious perceptions. Through the instrumentality of the British colonial authorities, all these groups were lumped together as one nation in 1914. Nigeria thus became an amalgam of many ethnic groups. The major ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the West, and the Ibo in the East. The more prominent among the minority ethnic groups are the Tiv, the Edo, the Ijaw, the Ibibio, and the Efik – the first group to welcome the Scottish missionaries into Nigeria. Before

the advent of the missionaries, Efik people lived and worked together in a society that was different from Europe in social, political, economic and religious terms.

In their *Social Life,* Efik people were known for having a well-organized society. They had a social system that was even too complicated for any visitor to understand. Livingstone (1917:26-27) even poignantly observed that "the Negroes … were not destitute of religious beliefs: their 'theology' indeed seemed somewhat too complicated for comprehension. Nor were their lives unregulated by principles and laws; they were ruled by canons and conventions as powerful as those of Europe; their social life was rooted in a tangle of relationships and customs as intricate as any in the world." They were people who lived with a sense of community.

The basis of the community was the house, at the head of which was a master or chief. Each chief had numerous wives and slaves, over whom he exercised absolute control. Efik communities were based on kinship and lineage groups and were organized at the lowest level into family households which included small numbers of domestic slaves even before the arrival of the Europeans. The households were then organized into larger units known as houses (*ufok*) consisting of the male descendants of an ancestor.

Originally, the Efik were divided into two lineage groups, but as the slave trade expanded, the two subdivided into seven wards or city-states. Today, there are twelve clans that make up the Efik ethnic group. Many members of the Efik group are Presbyterians and there are hardly any of their clans or towns without a Presbyterian congregation today.

In their *Economic Life,* Efik people were known for their enterprising spirit. From their different towns, they were in commerce exchanging coastal products, particularly fish and salt with other neighbours. The river played a central role in the economy. From it, they got the fish for food and for sale to their neighbours - the Ibo people in the interior - who brought agricultural products especially, yams and palm oil. Apart from the economic activities in the river, there were also plantations in which slaves that had been sold and brought down for transportation to Europe had to work. Thus, slaves played a vital role in the Efik society and economy.

The Efik *Political Life* showed that the people had a well organized political system before the advent of the Europeans. Their communities were ruled by Chiefs who wielded enormous influence over their subjects. There was no central native government. We understand from Sparks (2000: 3) that "before

the expansion of the slave trade, the oldest member of the family was head of the house (*Etubom*, meaning "father of the canoe" as opposed to *Ete Ufok*, "father of the house")." The new title highlights the importance canoes played in the lives of the traders, who could sometimes send out large fleets of them. Thus political might was, to a great extent, determined by economic power.

By the 1760s, the most important of these wards or groups of houses were Old Town, led by the Robin family and which became the most commercially successful town up to the mid-eighteenth century, and Duke Town (or New Town), led by the Duke family. The Dukes built their settlements down stream from Old Town to try and wrest control of the lucrative slave trade away from their upstream rivals, and the two houses became bitter adversaries. In the annals of Nigerian Presbyterian history, Duke Town was the first port of call for the Scottish missionaries. This seems have added impetus to the political authority of the King (or Obong) of this society who wielded, and still wields, a lot of influence as a traditional ruler.

With respect to *religious life*, study illustrates that like other Africans, the Efik people were and still are notoriously religious, with a resilient primal worldview. The keynote of their life is their religion. In all things, they are religious. Religion forms the foundation and all-governing principle of life for them. As far as they are concerned, the full responsibility of all the affairs of life belongs to the Deity. Through all the circumstances of life, through all its changing scenes, its troubles, it is the Deity who is in control. The Deity above other deities is *Abasi Ibom* known as God.

So, God as the Ground of Being is no stranger to the Cross River people of Calabar and their neighbours. This is why it has been argued that the missionaries did not meet people who were religionless but rather a functional theocratic state. The name *Abasi Ibom* or God was also known to the Yoruba as *Olodumare* and to the Ibo as *Chineke,* that is, the Creator or *Chukwu* the Great God. These names were never European religious inventions but real indigenous names for the Almighty God.

Within the socio-religious system, there is also a belief in ancestors. Ancestral veneration is part of the religious history of the people. It is believed that the dead is still part of the living, hence they are called the "living dead." For the role they played and are believed to still play in the community, many Africans venerate these ancestors. These are elders who have died and are believed to be in the great beyond. But many missionaries described this belief and practice as the worship of the dead and the church in many parts still retains that notion. But the problem is perplexing the church as some

members have refused to abandon their belief in ancestors, whom they believe have active roles to play in their lives here on earth.

Another important part of the people's religious experience was and still is an abiding belief in witchcraft. The people of Calabar believed and still believe in witchcraft. In pre-colonial Nigeria, witchcraft was regarded as the most heinous crime anyone could commit. Witches and wizards were accused of a wide variety of offences. In societies in which belief in witchcraft was strong nearly the whole gamut of life's misfortunes was blamed on them. Witches were believed to have power of metamorphosis; that is, it is thought that they could change at will into non-human creatures like bats, leopards, mosquitoes and crocodiles.

The above reveals that the planting of the Gospel by the Scottish mission did not take place in a socio-cultural void. Rather, the missionaries came to a people with modes of life, government and religion with all its paraphernalia before the impact resulting from the socio-cultural encounters and the theological exchange.

On the invitation of the chiefs of Calabar, King Eyamba of Duke Town and King Eyo of Creek Town, the first missionary party arrived Calabar on 10 April 1846. It is clear from the two royal letters that agriculture and Christian Education were to be topmost on the missionary agenda. Thus when the missionary team led by Hope Masterton Waddell and other Jamaicans assumed duty, education and agriculture received great attention.

For the Scottish missions, at least for a substantial and determinative part of their existence, *education* was mission. Schools were opened in almost every area of the mission work. The Scottish philosophy of education embraced the scientific, the mechanical, and the technological as well as the classically academic, and this was often evidenced in their missionary activity. For instance, when Hope Waddell Training Institute was opened in 1895, the objective was to make it a comprehensive high school where science, technology, agriculture etc., were taught. The urge for European education and the role of education was to promote the Gospel. Schools served as the "nursery of the infant Church." And they were used as an inducement to lure Africans into missionary orbit for initiation into "Christian" civilization (Udoh: 63)." So, Africans attended mission schools with well-defined political, social and economic goals. European education promised a lot of advantages for personal advancement and social transformation following the European political and economic model. Being associated with the Church and "civilization" was advantageous to social status. As a result, political changes in the early

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part of the twentieth century increased the attraction of Christianity and young African teachers. Further, medical missionaries trained by the resident missionaries began to play a more prominent role in the church and the society. In all, one could say missionary education was a mixture of desires for gold (money), glory (sense of pride), and God (the Gospel).

Evangelism was very paramount as the Gospel was seen as the only liberating force from the life-threatening cultures of the people. In many occasions, the missionaries risked their lives in proclaiming this message. During some outreaches, young boys used to carry drums, and beat them to call people together. Hearing that white people were in their vicinity, a great crowd would quickly gather. Many of those preachings were done under the shade of trees. With time, those who responded to the Gospel formed congregations and mud houses were built as worshipping centers for them. Today, there are so many congregations whose existence can be traced to the missionary labour of the Scots who came to Nigeria in the 19th century. And because of the price they paid, the Gospel was planted and has remained alive with us.

In the heydays of the missionary work, the worst enemies of the missionaries were the tropical diseases, which hit many of them so suddenly. Quite a number of the missionaries died because of this and it affected the mission work terribly. The situation was quite a challenge to the mission, so medical work was taken seriously. It was said of Mary Slessor, "that her days were full of treating the sick, teaching the bible and visiting neighbours." Because medical work was seen as part of the mission work, the Scottish mission did not only train medical workers, but also ensured that hospitals were established to sustain medical programmes. One of the fruits of this era is Dr Akanu Ibiam whose legacy as an indigenous missionary medical doctor is still unsurpassed in the history of the church.

Scotland started the mission work but the story of Nigerian Presbyterianism would be incomplete without the streams of experiences from Canada, USA and the Netherlands.

The decision by Canada to enter Nigeria was almost fortuitous. The process began at an ecumenical conference in Germany with conversations between Laura Pelton of the Women's Missionary Society and her counterparts in the Church of Scotland. The Canadian initiative to share in the work of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria came to fruition in November 1954 when the first missionaries arrived in Nigeria. Since then, youth and infrastructural developments, ministerial formation and leadership

empowerment have been the basis for the Canadian involvement in the mission and work of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Ray Pedrotti became the first visible expression of the American (US) blood in the Nigerian missionary stream. He came at a time when the increasing mobility of Presbyterians to the urban centres posed a new challenge of ministerial leadership to the church. The problem was finding ministers with experience and education necessary for the congregations whose lay people often held senior positions in government and business. The solution to this problem seemed to have been found when, in the next few years, the church recruited two Americans - Scot and Ray Pedrotti. The latter was to succeed Walter Mclean as the minister in Enugu Church. Later, Emory Van Gerpen and Phyllis Van Gerpen, initially SIM missionaries in Nigeria, became PCUSA fraternal workers with the PCN. They were based in the north but exerted much influence on the church's life in the areas of liturgy and evangelism.

The arrival of Herman Middle Koop, among others, signaled the entry of the Dutch in into the Nigerian Presbyterian missionary theater. The appearance of the Dutch at this point can be attributed to two important historical factors, both of which made the response a timely one. In first instance, the expulsion of the Dutch missions from Indonesia had set free a number of doctors, some of whom had experience in rural health. Besides, the medical workers from Scotland or Canada were already facing a situation in Nigeria that was apparently beyond their competence. Every doctor knew that, surgery apart, most patients suffered from diseases either caused or complicated by the environment, by malaria, intestinal parasites or malnutrition. Malaria responded to a variety of prophylactics, but intestinal parasites required improvements in water supplies and sewage disposal, the purview of engineers rather than doctors. Malnutrition could be approached through a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the traditional diet, something most doctors had neither time nor the training to acquire. They had been trained in curative medicine and curative medicine took up their time. Besides, the problem was so enormous it was hard to know where to start. It was at this point that the Dutch appeared. Unfortunately, the formal partnership between the PCN and the Dutch has been drastically affected by the unification of Churches in the Netherlands. But the link still exists through the medical work in the Presbyterian Joint Hospital, Uburu, Ebonyi State.

On the whole, the missionary legacies of the Scottish and other foreign Presbyterian missionaries can be summarized as the saving of twins, development of vernacular language through education,

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infrastructural and human development. These legacies have remained sources of blessing to the people of Nigeria.

On the other hand, the struggles in the mission work also left some burdens on the indigenous church. Among others, there was noticeable racial and ethnic rivalry that existed among the missionaries. Particularly, the poor race relation between the Scots and the Jamaicans can rightly be described as a precursor to ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, a problem that appears to be a never-dying monster in the church. Inherited from the missionary era, the problem has been compounded by the local people.

7.2.2   Chapter 3

Ethnicity has been a key concept in anthropology and sociology for many years, yet many people still seem uncertain as to its meaning and relevance. Part of the problem is that ethnicity is a difficult concept to define. As an anthropological category, it is a complex and an ambivalent concept that avoids neat approximations. The paradoxical feature of the phenomenon is rooted in the abiding ambivalence in human nature itself. But many scholars agree that ethnicity

- gives people a sense of belonging,
- provides an economy of affection especially in the traditional societies where for example, payment of bride price or wealth involves the interaction of different ethnic groups, and
- enhances socialization of norms and values. e.g. honesty and hard work within the various ethnic groups.

On the other hand, many people have wondered whether ethnicity is a blessing or a curse on humanity. This is because ethnicity still plays a role in most conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa in the sense that ethnic affiliations still underpin the formation of groupings in conflict. Moreover, there is little doubt that one of the main reasons why people kill each other is in response to who they are and the identities they represent. To some degree, we are all still tied to the identities around which ethnic national conflicts are fought. The power that binds us to these identities through a process that Foucault (1982) refers to as *assujettisement*, or subjectification, still operates.

In Nigeria and most parts of Africa, there is, indeed, a relationship between ethnicity and identity. In fact, ethnic affiliations, in most cases, determine the political landscape and greatly influence the social web in Africa. In the context of Nigeria, ethnicity seems to have an unfading role in the country because it has formed the people. Thus, ethnicity has some fearsome and destructive potential that is dysfunctional in any society. It does not only humanize people, it also dehumanizes. This can be illustrated from the many intractable conflicts in the world today that are said to be ethnic in nature. Among the myriads of dramatic illustrations of deadly ethnic conflicts in our time are the Arabs against Jews, Hutus against Tutsis, Irish against British, Basques against Spaniards, Kurds against Iraqis, Croats against Serbs, Ukrainians against Russians, Tamil Nadir against Sri Lankans. All these make headlines almost every day.

Understanding ethnicity requires a critical anthropological reflection on the people's worldview. There is an extensive amount of literature on the subject. But Barth's work (*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* in 1969) was both an indication of and stimulus for the increasing recognition of ethnicity as an area for academic study, in Africa and elsewhere. However, most of the available written materials contain modes of analysis which reflect more of the Western categories of thinking and interpretation than even those about whom they are written. Broadly speaking, there are three approaches that anthropologists and sociologists have adopted to the study of ethnicity: instrumentalism, primodialism and constructivism.
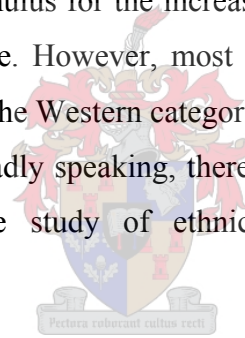
Since humans are not only social beings but also religious, it is important that we consider theological anthropology in our study of ethnicity. Karl Barth and Daniel J. Louw have made some useful contributions on this subject especially from a Reformed perspective. But as Christians, the Bible is our normative document for the study of theological anthropology. Ethnicity in the Bible (Old Testament) is denoted by several words. An investigation of the use of *ger* in the Hebrew Bible, and a social description of the *gerim* and their condition help us understand biblical ideas of ethnicity. In the LXX, *ethnos* is almost always used to translate *ger* and *laos* for 'am. In disagreement, different scholars give English translations of *ger* as "s*ojourner" "alien*" or "*immigrant*." Thus, the Hebrew term *ger* primarily refers to people who are distinct from and are not part of the dominant group. What is important, though, is the fact that whatever meaning that may be given to the Hebrew words, they do not mean much apart from their context. Therefore, an etymological approach to the study of these words should not be pushed too far. Rather, context and usage in understanding the words are essential.

In this regard, the most formidable problem has to do with the description and explanation of social groups larger than the family. As with all social groups, the formulation of boundaries is a crucial feature of self-definition: Who should be considered one of "us" and who should be considered "other"? This differentiation creates a boundary - a boundary between "us" and those who look "like us." Thus the Old Testament emphasizes different aspects of this phenomenon and also illustrates its complexity as a social dialectic (Brett 2002:13). The legal texts regulate the treatment of the "stranger" by reminding the people of Israel that they should love the stranger as themselves because they were strangers (Leviticus 19:34). One would even say that the idealistic laws tried to codify the traditions of "hospitality to the stranger" (Exodus 22:20; 23:9, 12). Isaiah (2:2-4 compare Brueggemann 1987:15) had a vision of all persons drawn into community around the will of Israel's God. And since the strangers were part of those regarded as needy in Israel's community, offences against them were viewed by the Prophets not simply as ethical violations but as the disruption of God's intention for *shalom*, and a perversion of the type of community willed by God (Brueggemann 1987:18).

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That the Hebrew term *ger* primarily refers to people who are distinct from and not part of the dominant group still creates a problem when seeking to define boundaries that determine who should be 'inside' or 'outside' (Brett 1996:11).

It appears in most parts of Israelite history, including the monarchical period; exclusionary attitudes co-existed with idealistic laws about the stranger. It would seem however that the exile experience "raised the stakes" on this discussion because of the particular circumstances of tension within the post-exilic communities seeking to re-build their lives in Palestine during the Persian period. One extreme position is the "racialized" marriage policies of Ezra/Nehemiah (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 13:3, 23-31). Therefore, the Old Testament in various ways denotes ethnicity as inclusion as well as exclusion.

In the inter-testamental period, the Jews of the Diaspora were busy evangelizing Gentiles. They absorbed Gentiles into their culture, one by one, thus making them Jews. They could not imagine any other way of dealing with ethnicity until the advent of the early Church which marks the New Testament times.

In the New Testament, the term *ethnos* and its cognate words, *ethnikos* and *ethne* were used for nation, people in general, and for the Gentiles as distinct from the Jew or Christians. The use of *ethne* in the

New Testament, as a technical term for the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews and Christians, corresponds in some measure to *gerim* in the Hebrew Bible.

We may, however, ask the question: What role did ethnicity play in the identity and character of the early Christian movement? To attempt this question is to draw our initial contours from the life and ministry of Jesus who stands as the one from whom the Church originated. The first thing which can be said is that the Gospel, while critical of ethnic pride and strife, does affirm ethnicity. Its central theme is the incarnation, God taking on human "flesh." The Messiah was a Jew. As the Man of all cultures, Jesus entered a specific culture. He was a descendant of David, raised in a small Galilean village. He accepted cultural identity. That is consistent with the incarnation. To become human therefore is to engage fully in one of humanity's cultures. In the first few years of the Church all its members were Jews. At this time the Church counted among its numbers the disciples and the family of Jesus, all Jews by birth, and perhaps another hundred people (so Acts 1:15) who must also be reckoned Jews since Luke refers to them as "Hebrews" (compare Acts 6:1).

But Paul represents a view that within the social space defined by Jesus Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, male or female, slave or free" (Galatians 3:28); Christ has "erased the categories of ethnic group, gender and class" (Boyarin 1994:5). Nevertheless, complexities are still manifest within the New Testament material. For if Paul appears to be prescribing a "new humanity of no difference," the wider contours of his argument constitute precisely an ascription of ethnic identity to the Galatians which is opposed to the Jewish ethnos. And going by the New Testament records, there is a tension between Matthew's community as a Torah-centred but messianic Jewish sect which regards the Jewish practice of circumcision, blood-ties and genealogy as necessary (though not sufficient) for membership in the community and the concept of peoplehood as advocated by Paul in Galatians 4:29. Matthew falls between these extremes: the physical and the spiritual descent.

It is remarkable how some of these basic conflicts in biblical theology find parallel in the recent scientific debates about the nature of ethnicity. For example, *primordialism* reminds us of ethnicity as not just a function of interaction but deeply rooted and durable affiliation based on kinship, shared territory and tradition. On the other hand, *Constructivism* suggests that ethnicity is more malleable and variable; the agency of the subjects concerned has a much higher profile. This is evidenced, for example, in Fredrik Barth's classic introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.* Over against

Ezra/Nehemiah's primordial nativism, one might be justified in seeing Barth's volume as a kind of Pauline *constructivism*.

In Nigeria, ethnicity is both of *primordialism* and *constructivism*. Blood, speech and custom are very powerful markers for ethnicity in Nigeria. Ethnic consciousness aided by ethnocentric stereotypes, combine to create tension and conflicts that often result into loss of lives and property. Stereotyping in Nigeria is a very serious and complex social issue with its grave socio-political and economic consequences. Each of the main ethnic groups has disparaging stories and sayings about others that are discussed openly when a foreigner is alone with members of a single ethnic group (Guest 2004:120). The sense of who people are shapes their views about others and determines what they do or do not do to people outside their group. This is a common trend even in a church like the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. Unfortunately, this is affecting the mission and witness of the Church in the nation.

In this regard, the question was asked: Is the PCN aware of the reality and impact of ethnicity on its mission and in what ways is this phenomenon manifesting in the life and mission of the Church? Can we identity some faces of ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

7.2.3   Chapter 4

In order to see clearly the different phases and faces of ethnicity in the PCN, the study used qualitative analysis methodology which is relevant for a study of this nature. This chapter identified the issues from the research findings, summarized them and raised the question of how the PCN could develop an appropriate missional theology that could address the problem of ethnocentrism in its life and mission in Nigeria.

7.2.4   Chapter 5

A sound theoretical basis is a necessity for the Christians' involvement in the society. This involvement starts with an understanding of our missional identity as a church. The Scripture is our normative document for this missional understanding and active social engagement. In the case of the PCN, the Scripture should be used to address the inherent ethnicism in the church identity. By providing new and challenging images, the Scripture can play a vital and pivotal role in changing the ideas, the ideals and

the ideologies that underlie our attitudes and actions as a people. The concretization of Scripture is made possible by the Holy Spirit's guidance in the mission of the Church. Practical theology is critical and constructive reflection on the praxis of the Christian community's life and work in various dimensions. Practical theology investigates Scripture and tradition, on the one hand, and the shape of the ecclesiastical ministry, on the other, for the sake of constructive and critical guidance of the church's praxis. It aims at a kind of knowing that guides *being* and *doing*, a critical reflection on the praxis of the Christian community's life and work in various dimensions including the ethnic relations within the membership.

Thus, the criterion for authenticity for a Christian community is not orthodoxy but *orthopraxis* (authentic transformatory action). This means more than just analyzing theology by Christian *practice;* for then it would be easy for theology to degenerate into a form of a pragmatic sociological analysis. It is a praxis that includes a focus on the kingdom of God (*teleos)* which looks to the final purpose of the action. Here again, however, the *teleos* itself is only discovered through action. Thus, theology as praxis assumes that theory must be part of a theological reflection which integrates obedient participation in a missionally driven action (see our research methodology. 1.6).

Herein lies the call of missiology as "a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency, opposing every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, every desire to stay what we are, every inclination toward provincialism and parochialism, every fragmentation of humanity into regional or ideological blocs, even exploitation of some sectors of humanity by the powerful, every religious, ideological, or cultural imperialism, and every exaltation of the self-sufficiency of the individual over other people or over other parts of creation" (Bosch 1991:496). Praxis creates the link between missiology and practical theology so that theology as a whole is not just seen as a venture done in splendid isolation. For without praxis which brings out the missionary dimension of practical theology, "practical theology becomes myopic, occupying itself with the study of the self-realization of the church in respect of its preaching, catechesis, liturgy, teaching ministry, pastorate, and diaconate, instead of having its eyes opened to the ministry in the world outside the walls of the church, of developing a hermeneutic of missionary activity, of alerting a domesticated theology and church to the world out there which is aching and which God loves" (Bosch 1991:496). In this connection, it is important to state that without the *intentional dimension* of mission confronting the realities in our time, it is impossible for missiology and practical theology to reflect theologically and practically about

the challenges of inculturation, liberation, dialogue, development, poverty, absence of faith, and the like in different parts of the world. This is particularly critical in a divided and dividing world like ours.

It is common knowledge that our academic setting for the study of theology is too far removed from the real world, too far from congregations and too far from the "laity" who should be doing theology in real life situations. This means our academic setting for the study of theology must be readjusted. It calls for an overhauling of our process of theological discernment. To sum up our views on missiological praxis, Kritzinger's input was and still is very helpful: adequate missiological praxis needs to be *collective*. Individualist answers which have become customary due to the influence of the Enlightenment (Bosch 1991:267, 289) and of later Pietism (Bosch 1991:255), are not an adequate response to missiological questions of our day. Effective praxis requires a group of people who wish to think together, pray and work together to make a difference to society.

This chapter thus underlined the fact that a relevant practical ecclesiology is one that addresses issues such as ethnic problem through an understanding of the people's primal world-view. In this regard, the metaphors of community, servant, and messenger have been proposed PCN's missional praxis. It is argued that to effectively address the challenge of ethnicity in Nigeria, members of the Church should see and accept themselves as the same *Umunna*. This acceptance of each other would bridge the ethnic divide as well as cement the bond among the peoples and groups. In living as a community of the Cross, members would not only embody but also practically give expression to the teaching of Christ "to love one another." Learning to love one another and living together is a process that requires deep dialogue which is the subject of chapter 6.

7.2.5   Chapter 6

This chapter suggested a model design for dialogical engagement in reconciliatory missiology. It argued that mission and dialogue should be understood as not being mutually exclusive of each other but rather as achieving completion, especially in a pluralistic and conflict-ridden context like Nigeria.

It was established that conflict is a complex and diverse phenomenon in life; it is inevitable in, and ineradicable from human life. And because of the complexity or diversity of conflicts, people have different perspectives on the root causes of conflict and also adopt different approaches in dealing with them in order to settle, reduce, ameliorate, resolve or dissolve them. There is need for a fundamental

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shift in our thinking about and our approach to resolution of all types of conflicts, whether they are inter-personal or inter-communal or international. The major constructs are *cultural, socio-psychological,* and *materialist* perspectives.

Theologically speaking, the Bible itself is all about conflict (McCollough 1991:15). But the conflict in the Bible is set in a context of meaning that leads to conflict resolution. That meaning is therefore the key to resolution of conflicts. And the meaning of conflict in the Bible is that God is God and human beings are accountable for what they do (McCollough1991:15). According to Hendriks (2004:144), "the aim of managing conflict is to edify the congregation so that the members can be effective and trustworthy in the *missio Dei* (God's mission or plan)."

Also, the ambivalence of conflict shows it can be either a danger to, or an opportunity for, growth. The Japanese character for "crisis" or conflict is a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity" (or "promise"); crisis is therefore not the end of opportunity but in reality only its beginning …; the point where danger and opportunity meet, where the future is in the balance and where events can go either way (Bosch 1991:3). Therefore, conflict is part of life, and by extension, the church and its mission. As history shows, crisis is part of the essential life of the church. And if an atmosphere of 'crisislessness' exists, it will simply result to a dangerous delusion. Hence Bosch (1991:3) asserts: "…to encounter crisis is to encounter the possibility of being truly the *Church*.
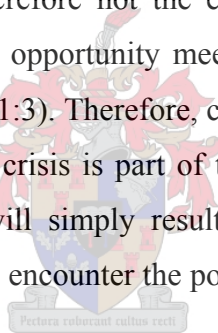
As we saw, it is not only the church that faces conflict, but the whole society. Nigeria experiences different kinds of conflicts. Though it is difficult to understand all of the reasons for the outbreak of all conflicts in Nigeria, a few broad hypotheses about the contributory factors operating at different levels and often in contradictory ways were summarized. These included geographic and demographic characteristics and the National Question, resources and economy, military interventions, land ownership, religion and religious differences. Our situation needs peace and reconciliation.

This reconciliation requires dialogue - and dialogue is not just a concept, but a relationship. Placing Trinity in the beginning of Christian theology and the doctrine of God and making it the structuring principle means nothing less than to argue that to speak of God means to speak of Jesus Christ, who reconciles humanity to God. The unanimity among contemporary Trinitarian theologians that the Christian God is a divine communion is based on the theological conclusion from the biblical idea that God is love. Therefore, relationality, being in relationships, is the proper mode of viewing not only the

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divine life but also the essence of personhood (see my motivation in chapter 1). We exist in communion, in relationships, rather than as mere "individuals." This is corroborated by the South African concept of *Ubuntu* or *Umunna wu ike*, the Nigerian version. These traditional categories are very essential to the Mission of God – *the Missio Dei* -which has been pursued in this dissertation. So the PCN is challenged to explore more African cultural approaches in order to deal with endemic conflicts in Nigeria.

How can the church be missional in this context? With the inevitable tensions that these four emphases bring, the missional church must learn to a) be faithful to the Gospel, b) be informed and enriched by their heritage, c) strive to be relevant to its ministry setting and d) also be inspired by the hope of Christ's return.

7.3   FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research focused on the role of ethnicity and how to deal with ethnic conflicts in a mission context like Nigeria. Thus it deals with ethnicity and missional strategies within the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria.

Understanding ethnocentrism in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria requires a critical understanding of the Church's distorted missional identity which was shaped by its missionary heritage as well as the prevailing social forces.

This research found that despite the fact that ethnocentrism is evident in the Church, and has in fact been the bane of the Church's missionary endeavour, it is not given serious attention. Ethnicity is only mentioned in the church's debates and decision-making processes when such decisions are ethnic in themselves. The neglect of the subject is evidenced by the dearth of information or mention of ethnicity in most official literature on the history of the church. It was also clear from the literature that the failure of the church to recognize this problem accounts for the absence of well-developed and appropriate theological responses to ethnicity and ethnocentrism.

Because of the deficiency in the theological locus, the church overlooks an important issue in the Scripture which is crucial to its mission i.e. that of thinking systemically in missional terms. Authur F. Glasser's (2003) book, *Announcing the Kingdom*, highlights how the Church can relate 'God's mission

to God's people for God's kingdom in God's world as found in God's Word.' In every generation there is a need to reflect on the way the church embraces or exploits the scriptural understanding of mission.

Glasser (1992:26-27) has rightly argued that "only if the church understands the full biblical revelation of God concerning the mission of God's people, stimulated by confronting Scripture with today's questions, will they be responsibly challenged to offer to God the devotion of heart, strength, time, and resources essential to its completion." This means listening to the Old Testament witness as well as to the New Testament. For all Scripture makes its contribution in one way or other to our understanding of mission. And this is our thesis in dealing specifically with the issue of ethnicity in this dissertation.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that when the churchChurch views its mission in the light of announcing the kingdom of God, it would then understand its vocation in the light of Jesus' ministry. In this sense, the mission of the churchChurch is none other, no more nor less, than participating in Jesus' mission. What this means is that as Christians, we have a role to fill that non-Christians cannot possibly fill. We have to break the fatalism that hangs over our world by reflecting in every way the victory that Christ gained over the powers sowing discord and division. We are to be a sign of the new covenant, a demonstration that the New Order has arrived - giving meaning, direction, and hope to history. It also means that Christians dare not uncritically and automatically reflect even the best of the world's patterns of conduct, social amelioration, and service.
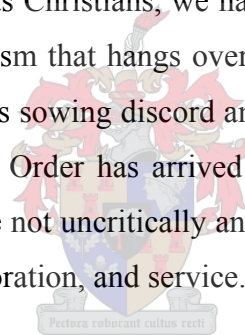
A church that stands as a sign of the kingdom of God should understand that the premise by which its members operate is that they conceive themselves systemically as the body of Christ. As the body of Christ, we are to continue the mission of the Incarnate One in the world today and that includes an ongoing offensive against principalities and powers, and a vigorous, active use of power in the search for greater justice in society. The church should view its ministry of love, care, lack of discrimination etc. as its essence and means of sharing God's kingdom in Christ (eschatology). Thus dealing with ethnocentrism should not just be through sociological or anthropological processes, but should be theologically analyzed, with the Scriptures as normative basis.

Today, the "mission", carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the Gospel by word (*kerygma*), deed (*koinonia*), and prayer and worship (*leiturgia*) and the everyday witness of the Christian life (*martyria*); teaching as building up and strengthening the people in their relationship with God and each other; and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into *koinonia* – a

communion with people, and communion with creation as a whole. Therefore, attention should always be given to a holistic and balanced approach to the praxis of mission; the temptation to emphasize one aspect and ignore others should be avoided. As San Antonio affirmed: "The material gospel and the spiritual gospel have to be one, as was true of Jesus…. There is no evangelism without Christian solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God's coming reign" (WCC 1990:43).

A holistic and balanced approach to the praxis of mission is about systems thinking and theory. It is a framework for understanding the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems like the Church their unique character. Today, systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexities in the world. Systems thinking is the cornerstone of how learning organizations think about their world. To deal with ethnocentrism and ethnocentric tendencies requires that we see the interconnectedness of people and things in the world. What affects one affects the other. When the Igbo are uncomfortable, the Efik would never be at peace. As the saying goes, 'there is no peace for any of us till there is peace for all us.' We are interconnected and interrelated.

In light of our ethnic conflicts and divisions, how then can the PCN be God's agent to foster the needed relationships among the peoples of Nigeria? The answer is reconciliation! The church is to see mission as ministry of reconciliation. The church is to work for reconciliation using a theologically driven dialogue.

This study reveals that the Bible, as the revelation of the mind and design of God, retains its own eschatological vision of the world community. The eschatological vision of Scripture (in *Revelation* 7 verse 9) points to a plurality of redeemed cultures of equal standing, with an enhanced capacity for communication among them, as a direct fruit of the redemptive presence of the living God: "…there was multitude that no one could count, from every nation, people and language .…" This is the vision of God's preferred future for all peoples which is made possible through reconciliation.

The word reconciliation is used in classical Greek to refer to healing of a quarrel, a process whereby broken friendship is restored from enmity to wholeness (See De Young 1997:44). Paul uses the language in the spiritual dimension to imply the restoration of a personal relationship both with God and others (De Young 1997:44). The word is used few times by Paul (Romans 5:10-11; 11:15; 2

Cor.5:17-20); Eph. 2:16; and Colossians 1:20, 22), but each time it describes the radical transformation of humanity's friendship with God and with each other.

In terms of ethnic relations, one of the most important texts on reconciliation for divided peoples is Ephesians 2:13-18. In this text, the wall dividing the groups is broken down by the blood and body of Christ, and in its place Christ stands as the new humanity who in His one body has reconciled both groups to God, thus putting an end to their hostility.

As important as other verses are, verse 18 deserves some comments here because of the crucial structuring principle of reconciliation it espouses: "For through Him (Christ) we both have access to the Father by one Spirit". The Godhead, the Three-in-one, expresses the very nature of community, the reconciliation for which we hope: "The Trinity, the source and image of our existence, shows the importance of diversity, otherness and intrinsic relationships in constituting a community" (WCC 2000:39). Understanding the corporate role of the Trinity in reconciliation underscores the point that the goal of mission is not just to create a new humanity but one that has access to each other without diminishing their diversities. One of the implications of this understanding is that we must go beyond the stopping of hostility and initiate the process of active and critical engagement with each other. Secondly, true Christian reconciliation is made possible only through the ministry and work of the Trinity. This therefore calls us to re-examine not only our theology of the Trinity but also our understanding of the ministry of the God who acts in communion and community.

This Trinitarian theology of reconciliation has implications that are both hopeful and challenging to the Church in our context. It lets us know that reconciliation between the different ethnic or racial groups can only be possible through embrace (Volf 1996). The groups must embrace both forgiveness and repentance in order for reconciliation to be fully achieved. Both the in-group and out-group need the understanding that they are lost, need repentance, conversion and reconciliation. And they both must discover that the road of life goes through the agony of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation (Boesak 1985:77).

In terms of our methodology, reconciliation is both a *goal* (1.6.7), and a *process* (1.6.8) through which we have to move using the strategy of dialogue. "As individuals and societies we need a vision to keep us moving towards a future state of peace and well-being. But without understanding the process we can lose heart and a sense of direction in our work. In actual practice, we will find ourselves moving

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back and forth between goal and process, since we need both in reconciliation and healing" (WCC 2005:106).

We have to emphasize here that the work of reconciliation demands sacrifice in very different but also in very real ways. It is not a cheap enterprise but rather a costly engagement. This is why the agency of the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit who alone can touch and change human hearts, are very crucial. Psalm 127 verse 1 corroborates it this way: "except the Lord builds the house, all the labourers work in vain and unless he watches over the city, they watch in vain who keep watch." What it does mean is that while in the reconciliation process, we should constantly remind ourselves of our vulnerability and limitations. Bosch (1991:515) clearly made the point:

> "Reconciliation does not, of course, mean a mere sentimental harmonizing of conflicting groups. It demands sacrifice, in very different but also in very real ways, from both oppressor and oppressed. It demands the end to oppression and injustice and commitment to a new life of mutuality, justice, and peace. And yet, without taking away anything from this assertion, it has to be added that there may be wrongs that cannot be repaired by human means, that we should not allow ourselves to be trapped in 'helpless, desperate guilt feelings' or in the idea 'that justice must be our justice, that we can and must cancel our guilt by restitution, or…overcome our frustration by mere action.'"
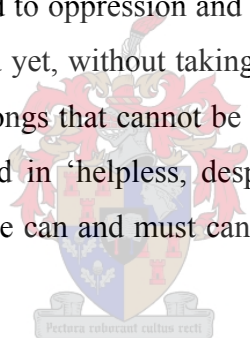
Reconciliation is an authentic meeting and jointly shared meaning in loving relationship (Augsburger 1992:282). It is about forgiveness in order to move into God's preferred future. But forgiveness does not mean that sins are simply covered over neither does reconciliation mean a pious concealment of guilt (Boesak 1985:78). Rather reconciliation is the exposure, the unmasking of sin, and the process of restitution....Reconciliation does not occur between oppressor and the oppressed. Reconciliation occurs between people, people who face each other authentically, vulnerably, and yet with hope. Reconciliation means sharing pain and suffering, accepting each other so that joy can be a joy together. It means the willingness to pay the price (Boesak 1985:78).

There is often a debate between political science and theology on whether the process should be called reconciliation or negotiation. The debate is often pronounced when those involved in the process regard the 'common good' as paramount, which does not necessarily have to be faith-based. Thus, in the quest

for a peaceful and harmonious human society, the Church is faced with dealing with people of other ideologies. In his reflection on the debate, Rev. Frank Chikane (in Boesak 2005:178) has this to say:

> It seemed to me that the concept of reconciliation was being equated with negotiations, political settlements and so on. This, I believe robs the word 'reconciliation' of its deeper meaning, one which includes the concept of healing. Negotiations can result from political pressures or from a mutual decision by parties to avoid a war because the costs are too great. This does not necessarily mean the parties have had a change of heart - they are simply relocating the battle ground to the negotiating table or parliament. For me, the deeper and more critical meaning of the word reconciliation goes beyond the simplistic understanding. It involves people being accountable for their actions and showing a commitment to right their wrongs. Ideally, South Africa needs voluntary disclosure - and I use this phrase in place of the theological term "confession". From the religious point of view, the recognition of truth is akin to confession, which must lead to repentance, and then to conversion. Only such a trajectory merits forgiveness.

Chikane hits the nail at the head. The debate is about reconciliation being "equated" with negotiations. It is about reconciliation not simply being "a relocated battleground", "a site of struggle". Reconciliation is not just secular political settlements. It is about healing. It is not the Christian understanding of reconciliation that confuses the issue. We face confusion when we allow or permit the simplification of the issue by those who seek to secularize it radically, thereby trying to domesticate it, bringing it under (their) political control, yet by the same token robbing the word not only of its meaning but of the radical nature of its appeal (Boesak 2005:178). The Church should understand that even though we may share the same vocabulary with the secularists in terms of words like reconciliation, our dictionaries are never identical. The Bible defines our words and gives us the meanings with which we work. So the Church has a duty to pursue the ministry of reconciliation with all the energy it can muster for the healing of the nations!

Walter Wink in *When the Powers Fall* (1998:63-68) aptly summarizes the task of the church in the healing of the nations: the church cannot avoid the imperative of fostering relationships with the state but must avoid cozying up to power. The church is to continually represent those on the margins who are without adequate power or representation. Official corruption must be exposed without regard to consequences especially in contexts like Nigeria where leaders nurture patrimonial, oligarchal

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structures. The Charismatic perspective urges the church to shape history and political events on their knees through fervent intercession and fasting (Kalu 2001:12).

The church must preach and embody Jesus' domination-free system. Quite often, ethnicity wrecks the witnessing power of the Church (especially the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria) which should have been a balm of Gilead for the nation. The nation will remain broken and the people will continue to bleed until the church takes seriously the healing of the nation and the restoration of the fabric of community.

7.4   RECONCILIATION: RESTORING THE FABRIC OF COMMUNITY[115]

In the words of John Paul Lederach (2001:200), "the root of the challenge posed for us today is perhaps better formulated as a dilemma: How do we engage in the processes of healing that are simultaneously relevant and practical for individuals and communities?" Communities whether local or seen in broader national terms, are the contexts in which divisions and violence are played out in contemporary Nigerian society. The healing therefore requires processes at both levels. The challenge lies in the fact that not all individuals, or even significant portions of the broader community, are at the same place along the journey, or, in many instances not even be on the same journey. However, in both instances - interpersonal and community - the core of creating a healing social space requires engagement with these four biblical themes: Truth, Justice, Peace and Mercy.

"Truth and mercy have met together, Justice and Peace have kissed," the Psalmist once wrote. Thus, in Psalm 85 verse 10 the writer paints a picture of a marriage between justice and peace as well as truth and mercy. It is believed that these four biblical concepts are the very foundations on which social harmony can be built. Little wonder then they are central to *missio Dei* as espoused in Jesus Christ. We see that in the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, these themes were the prominent features. In its missionary vocation of dealing with conflict therefore, the church as the body of Christ is challenged to ensure these themes are addressed. Interestingly, John Paul Lederach has often personalized these concepts, written and developed training exercises around this verse and the social energies of the voices the Psalmist expresses. Thus,

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[115] This title is borrowed from John Paul Lederach's (2001) Five Qualities of Practice in support of Reconciliation Processes in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*.

Sister Truth, in the context of conflict, is about remembering, what to remember and how to remember. Truth casts her eyes toward the past. Brother Justice is about what can be done to rebalance a broken relationship. Brother Justice asks what can make the wrong right and what can restore the balance in the relationship that has been damaged. Brother Justice cast his eyes on the present. Brother Mercy and Sister Peace ask will we coexist, how will we start anew, how can we rebuild with each other? They cast their eyes toward the future.

The quality of practice that emerges from these perspectives is the capacity to see complex, multiple energies as interconnected in a greater whole but in need of hands that keep them connected. Too often, as we work towards reconciliation, we find ourselves drawn into the energy of a given voice because each speaks with integrity. Consequently,

> What is more difficult is to find the way to create a process and quality of space that gives voice to each energy while at the same time keeping them in connection with each other. For truth without mercy is blinding and raw; mercy without truth is a cover up and superficial. Justice without peace falls easily into cycles of bitterness and revenge; peace without justice is short – lived and benefits only the privileged of the victors (Lederach 2001:201).

Therefore, the quality of practice advocated here is best understood in the context of community that provides space for the voices, but not one at the expense of the other. Here lies the ethical structure of the strategy of dialogue that is projected through this dissertation. In demonstrating its belief in the dignity and integrity of every human person, the Church should become a community that affirms these values in any social interaction like dialogue. During the election of officers, for instance, we should be looking for people who are committed to truth, justice, peace, mercy, and not dissipate energy on whether they are Efik or Ibo and so on. Everybody should be given equal space regardless of whether s/he hails from the most obscure village or the most developed city in the country. In providing space for the various voices in the church and society in Nigeria, we will be challenged to understand what these biblical concepts mean for true reconciliation in the Nigerian context.

The trajectory I have chosen to pursue is to explore these ideas in order to bring their meanings home to our situation. Let us take them consecutively.

7.4.1 Truth

It is commonly said that in every conflict, truth is the first casualty. This is because it is not usually easy to find the truth. Truth carries the image of revelation, clarity, open accountability, honesty and accountability. Without the concept of truth, conflict resolution especially in ethnic and religious contexts may never be transforming. The truth must be told, whatever the consequences. Speaking about our Nigerian context, exposure of the lie that held us complicit and complacent during and after the civil war (Jenkins 2002:172-175) is critical to liberating the Nigerian society in pursuing a more domination-free order. We need to know the truth that can set us free to relate with one another.

But looking at our situation in the church and society today, I tend to agree with Wink (1998:34) that "What is needed is more than knowledge of the truth; public acknowledgement that is officially sanctioned is required." Nigerians have not really faced up to the evils of the civil war and the subsequent domination by the military regimes in the lives and affairs of the people and the nation particularly in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria where the Ibo were in Biafra and most of the Efik/Ibibio were on the Nigerian side. What were the effects of this situation in the Church? How did the war aggravate the lack of trust and suspicion among the ethnic groups in the PCN? Have those effects been addressed since after the war? If not, how can the church address these issues in order to do a mission that is free from ethnic suspicion and mistrust?
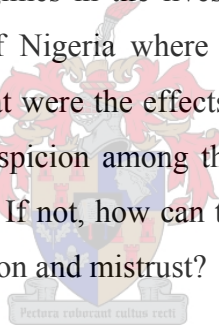
Undoubtedly, our knowledge and experience of the truth in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ should make us see the evil in ethnocentrism. As a Nigerian Ibo Presbyterian Christian I know firsthand that ethnocentrism in Nigeria tears at one's self-respect and sense of worth as a human being. Fortunately, I have learned from my grandmother and parents and the Christian Scripture the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings. The truth serves me well in opposing ethnocentrism. This is a crucial part of our methodology because it deals with our identity. Like Martin Luther King Jr (1967:75), we can oppose ethnocentrism because of the affirmation that all people bear the image of God:

> Deeply rooted in our religious heritage is the conviction that every man is an heir to the legacy and dignity of worth. Our Judeo-Christian tradition refers to this inherent dignity in the biblical term "the image of God." The image of God is universally share in equal portions by all men and women. There is no grade scale of essential worth. Every human being has etched in his or

her personality the indelible stamp of the creator. Every person must be respected because God loves all.

Truth-telling may be more a therapeutic need for the church than a matter of justice. Yet truth alone without justice leaves us naked, vulnerable, and unworthy agents of reconciliation. Hence, we must consider justice in our quest for true reconciliation in church and society in Nigeria.

7.4.2 Justice

What is justice? Many people throughout history have explored justice and have attempted to define it in various ways. Below are a few of the more interesting definitions of justice taken from the internet:

> "Justice is a quality relating to [men] in society, not in solitude."-Hobbes
>
> "Justice is a name for certain classes of moral rules which concern the essentials of human well-being more nearly, and are therefore of more absolute obligation that any other rules for the guidance of life."- John Stuart Mills
>
> Justice requires that the basic structures of society be arranged so as to benefit the least advantaged. - John Rawls
>
> "Justice is the relationship that allows all life to flourish according to its nature and ability."-Byron Plumley
>
> Biblical Justice: the justice of a community is measured by its treatment of the powerless in society. Justice and equity require...a preferential option for the poor. The dignity of the human person, realized in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured. -Bishop's Pastoral Letter
>
> (http://academic.regis.edu/bplumley/justdef.htm accessed: 11/5/2006)
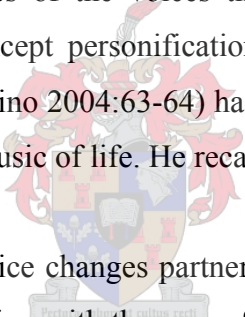
Justice is a fundamental ethical concept. This is because it is a basic criterion of the uprightness of human conduct and actions. Hence, justice has been regarded as a moral virtue or the principle of good behaviour rooted in the will of human beings. So justice as a virtue is identical to the rectitude of the will (Iwe 1985:235). This is why, as a moral virtue, it has been defined by thinkers and jurist as: "the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone what is due to him"(Iwe 1985:235).

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Besides being an ethical concept, as the above definition makes clear, justice is also a social notion and value in its dimensions, purpose, consequences and repercussions. Justice is so basic to social life that a community of people or nation without justice would be a pathetic agglomeration of villains, robbers, and reprobates (Iwe 235). The social dimensions of justice are so essential that justice has often been acclaimed as the foundation of peace among people, as the basis of law and order, as the foundation of the state and its constitution: "for justice is the foundation of state."(Iwe p.235).

Among the four cardinal virtues and pillars of moral probity and excellence – namely: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance, - Justice remains the most basic and fundamental. Justice normally raises powerful images of making things right, creating equal opportunity, rectifying the wrong and restitution. It is traditionally known to be the virtue that observes the rights of others.

Earlier in this chapter, we saw that John Paul Lederach personified justice, among other themes, developing them with the social energies of the voices the Psalmist incarnated in Psalm 85. But Lederach is not alone in this art of concept personification. And if Lederach chose the masculine option, a Brazilian writer (in Miguez-Bonino 2004:63-64) has also feminized justice introducing her as a dancer to the ambivalent rhythms and music of life. He recapitulates:

> As fickle and voluble dancer, justice changes partners as the game of historical contradictions moves on. Today we see her dancing with the powerful and tomorrow with the poor, now with the lord and then with the small and humble. In this dynamic game, everybody wants to be her partner and, when she moves into another's hands, those who are slighted will call her a prostitute. Justice survives all rhythms and all partners because she flies above all of them… as if she floated in an atmosphere where collisions and conflicts do not exist. But in this great dance everybody is engaged…and justice, thinking of herself as eternal and well-balanced, does not realize that she is getting old, empty, an object of derision, and those who for a long time have been ignored and never had this woman in their arms, begin to think that what they want is not a distant and well-balanced woman but a committed and passionate one, who would dance the new rhythms of hope and commitment…the rhythms and music of life, joy, bread and dignity!

In a related but equally important story about justice, the Portuguese Nobel Prizewinner Jose Saramago at the closing of the "II Foro Mundial Social" (Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2002) narrates:

I will begin by telling very briefly a striking event in the life of a rural village in the vicinity of Florence four hundred years ago.

The people of the village were in their homes or working in their farms when, suddenly, they heard the sound of the church bell. In those times (we are speaking of something that happened in the sixteenth century) bells rang several times throughout the day, so there would have been no reason for being disturbed at its sound, but that bell was now tolling for a funeral. It was strange that they did not know that anybody has died in the village. So the women came out into the street, the children gathered together, the men left their work and in a moment they were all gathered in the courtyard of the Church, waiting to be told whose death they should mourn. The bell kept sounding for some more minutes and it finally stopped, the door of the bell tower opened and a peasant came out. But it was not the bell-ringer and the neighbours asked him where the bell-ringer was and who had died. 'The bell-ringer is not here, it was me who sounded the bell,' was the answer. 'Then, nobody died?' answered the neighbours, and the peasant responded, nobody with a human name or figure. I have sounded the funeral bell for Justice, because Justice is dead.' What happened? What happened was that the rich lord of the place – some unscrupulous count or marquis – had for a long time been moving the markers of his land into the small parcel of the peasant, which kept becoming smaller and smaller. The victim began by protesting and demanding, then he claimed mercy, and finally he decided to take the matter to the authorities and ask the protection of justice. Nothing happened, the plundering continued. Then, in despair, he decided to announce *urbi et orbie*…the death of Justice…I don't know what happened afterwards, I do not know whether the whole town came out to return the markers to their proper place or, once the death of justice had been declared, they returned with resignation, head down and soul resigned to the sad life of everyday. The truth is that History never tells us everything (Miguez-Bonino 2004:64).

Our view of justice will be partial if we do not understand also its philosophical dimension which should undergird social institutions. In the words of the social philosopher, John Rawls (1971:19ff),

Justice is the primary virtue of social institutions just as truth is in respect of thought systems. A theory, no matter how attractive and illuminating it may be, has to be rejected or revised if it is not true; in the same way, it does not matter that law and institutions may be well ordered and

prove efficient; if they are unjust they must be reformed or abolished. Every person owns inviolability grounded in justice which not even the welfare of the whole society can overrun.

Without entering into the philosophical and juridical debate on the meaning of justice, two things, according to Miguez-Bonino (2005:65) seem to emerge from these very quotations. The first is that concrete issues, as they become problems of justice, bring together basically three elements: namely a fundamental understanding of the notion of justice – the justice about which Rawls speaks or for which the peasant claims; a need for a law – the markers in the land, law and institutions; and the question of power – with whom is justice dancing, who controls the duke or the count. The second is a consequence: whatever may be the clarity of each of these 'ingredients', unless they are combined in such a way that they become one single product, justice as a human condition has no meaning. This synergistic approach is what we have maintained and will continue to maintain as a necessary point of departure to the mission of the church especially in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the church should be wary about philosophical abstractions when dealing with justice issues regarding the common people. While we do not condemn a sound philosophy or academic study of justice, our primary concern should always be how this knowledge translates into concrete transformation of human situations in our various communities. As this study has pointed out, our praxis of mission and every other theological enterprise means little or nothing if our ecclesiology - or academic theology for that matter - does not impact positively on people. The point that is being made here is that our academic setting for the study of theology has been too far away from the real world, too far from congregations and too far from the "laity" who are doing theology in real life situations. This means that our academic setting for the study of theology must be readjusted to reflect what is relevant to everyday life. With regards to justice, it calls for an overhauling of our process of theological discernment and our understanding of the meaning of true Christian reconciliation.

According to the World Council of Churches (2005:109), three kinds of justice are needed in mission as ministry of reconciliation. These are: retributive justice, restorative justice and structural justice.

7.4.2.1 Retributive justice

This is where wrong doers are held accountable for their actions. This is important for both acknowledging that wrong has been done, and as a statement that such wrongdoing will not be tolerated in the future. Retributive justice should be the task of the legally constituted state. Punishment

outside that forum can be renegade action or sheer revenge, and should be avoided. If the state itself is implicated in the corruption, it may be possible to achieve retributive justice by means of non-violent protest. Retributive justice would take its rightful place in Nigeria the day we start punishing unselectively past leaders who looted the public treasury and their cronies who are still holding public offices in the society. This will require great personal sacrifice on any leader who wants to lead by example.

7.4.2.2 Restorative justice

This happens when what has been taken wrongfully from victims is restored, either directly or in some symbolic way. This may be by reparation or compensation. One classical biblical example comes to mind. In Luke's Gospel, the story of Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus (19:1-10) shows how an authentic repentance resulting from meeting Christ can lead to a radical form of restitution.

Speaking historically, we could recall that many African cultures were demonized by the European colonizers and some of their collaborating missionary colleagues. Restorative justice would demand that where such cultures are still 'buried', they should be exhumed, cleaned and reaffirmed for humanizing purposes. This would mean, for example, that theological tutors and preachers of the Gospel in Nigeria should take the peoples' language seriously, knowing that local languages are the media by which the Gospel can effectively be communicated in some contexts. In other words, the cultural illusion that any particular language (or English for that matter) is the language of contemporary world Christianity must be seen for what it is: an instrument of globalization and an imperialistic project aimed at co-opting everybody and everything into a struggling-to-survive Western civilization - with America as self-appointed superpower. There are many communities, especially the so-called minority groups, whose humanity can be affirmed and their dignity restored if their language is also given a place in the linguistic comity of nations. To accord them such recognition is to accord them the cultural justice they deserve.

7.4.2.3 Structural justice

This is required in order that institutions of society are reformed to prevent instances of injustice from happening in future. Dimensions of restorative and structural justice often need special attention. For example, to achieve economic justice, reform of global trade laws and the mechanisms of trade will be necessary. Gender justice will require the special contributions of women to overcoming injustice and

retaining right relations. Let's face it, many of our structures are yet to be freed from patriarchy and our social institutions in the church and society are still embedded in and influenced by patriarchy. To overcome sexism, ageism, and ethnocentrism in Nigeria structural reform will be necessary. And with all the environmental degradations going on in the Niger Delta area, ecological justice should be accorded priority of place in the mission of the church and the socio-economic agenda of the nation.

7.4.3 Mercy

According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, "mercy" is defined as: "a form of love determined by the state or condition of its objects. Their state is one of suffering and need, while they may be unworthy or ill-deserving. Mercy is, at once the disposition of love respecting such, and the kindly ministry of love for their relief" (http://www.studiesintheword.org/mercy_and_grace.htm accessed: 11/05/2006).

God is full of mercy, so are we to be full of mercy. That is what God requires of us and that is what God stated through the prophet Micah in Micah 6:8.

> He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee,
> but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Christ embodied Mercy. In Matthew 5:7, where Christ spoke the Beatitudes, which were the amplification of the law of God, Jesus spoke directly of the necessity for his followers to both possess and administer mercy.

> Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matt 5:7 KJV).

In James 3: 13 - 17, James really hits the nail on the head when he states the true source of mercy.

> Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his
> deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition
> in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that
> which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and
> selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above
> is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits,
> unwavering, without hypocrisy.

With mercy comes the image of compassion, forgiveness and a new start. This is the idea of grace. We've seen that mercy is part of God's character and very being. God is full of mercy. So, we, as God's people, are also to be full of mercy. We are to possess it and apply it in our lives and put it into practice daily in our contact with other people consistently. As De Jong (1952:12) reminds us, the church can still exert great influence on our world through the ministry of mercy. For without the idea of mercy, healthy relationships will not be possible. Without compassion and forgiveness, healing and restoration will be out of the question. Yet mercy alone is superficial; it covers up and moves on too quickly (Spies 2003:20). For true reconciliation to take place, mercy must therefore go with the other concepts we have spoken about - truth, justice and peace - in a synergistic and holistic way.

7.4.4   Peace

In his parting message, Jesus said to the disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn. 14:27). At the point of departure the greatest thing Jesus could leave his beloved friends (who had intimately walked with him in the last three years) was Peace (*Shalom*) in Hebrew, or *Eirene* in Greek). The Greek word - *eirene* occurred 88 times in the New Testament and it is found in each of the 27 books of the New Testament. One of the great characteristics of the New Testament letters is that they begin and end with a prayer for peace for those who read the letters. Hence Paul begins his letter to the Philippians: "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace."
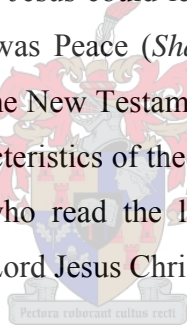
Peace (*Shalom*) is the substance of the biblical vision embracing all creation. It refers to those resources and factors which make communal harmony joyous and effective (Brueggemann. 1987:16). The vision of wholeness which is the supreme of the biblical God is the outgrowth of a covenant for shalom (see (Ezekiel 34:25), in which persons are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community with none to make them afraid (Brueggemann. 1987:17). Therefore peace, the biblical *shalom* comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes none.

The word, peace, is generally used to describe the end of war or trouble. If a country has been undergoing a period of civil war (like Nigeria in the 1960s) and then all those who have been fighting lay down their arms, we would say that peace has returned to that country, despite the fact that the land is devastated, cities are in ruins, and men and women and children are starving. But the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*, has a far wider meaning than that. It describes perfect welfare, serenity, prosperity and happiness. Peace carries the image of harmony, unity and well-being. It is the feeling and

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prevalence of respect and security. To greet a person with *shalom* is to wish him everything that makes for his contentment and his good. *Shalom* also describes right personal relationships- it describes uninterrupted goodwill between people. It is to be understood not to mean the absence of conflict but rather the wholeness of well-being (Gitari 1996:88). Therefore the Hebrew thought does not only describe the absence of war and strife; peace describes happiness, and well-being in life and perfection of human relationships. The peace of Nigeria, and by extension, the African continent is of great concern to God.

Therefore, as Gitari (1996:88) rightly observes,

> The greatest need of the people of Africa is the cultivation of right relationships with one another. We must work to remove all that which divides us if want to lay a deserved claim to *shalom*. Where there is division we need to work for reconciliation. True reconciliation does not come by sweeping problems under the carpet or by a mere shaking of hands in public places. We must find the root cause of our divisions and deal with it. The church and her members must labour to produce right relationships between people.

In Nigeria, we are more of a divided nation than a united people. Our divisions are noticeable in every stratum of the church and society. Many people, even when they belong to the same Presbyterian tradition, live with sharp demarcations and divisions. Okon-Aku / Ikwun people are fighting over land; Igbere community still bleeds from the wounds inflicted upon her by those fighting over chieftaincy and leadership succession. Thus, the lingering animosity and bitterness in these Presbyterian communities are a scandal to the message of the church and an indictment of her mission in Nigeria. Yet we need nothing but right relationships and true reconciliation for real peace to reign.

This type of reconciliatory relationship, which has to do with an authentic meeting and jointly shared meaning in life, calls for a corresponding spirituality: one that is healing, transforming, liberating, and builds relationships of mutual respect. The question may be asked: what is this spirituality of reconciliation?

7.5   SPIRITUALITY OF RECONCILIATION

In a very powerful and insightful way, the WCC (2005:116-117) has articulated an ecumenical perspective of the spirituality of reconciliation, which is summarized here:

> A genuine spirituality for reconciliation and healing reflects the interaction of faith and praxis that constitutes witness (*martyria*). Witness presupposes a spirituality of self-examination and confession of sins (*metanoia*), leading to proclamation (*kerygma*), of the Gospel of reconciliation, service (*diakonia*) in love, worship (*liturgia*) in truth, and teaching justice. The exercise of these spiritual gifts builds up reconciled communities.

This spirituality of reconciliation is one of humility and self-emptying (*kenosis*; Phil. 2:7), and at the same time an experience of the Holy Spirit's transforming power. In his struggle to reconcile the Jews and the Gentiles and other factions, the apostle Paul declared that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 2:3-5). The Church's mission in Nigeria is once again to be found in the "in-between-ness" – between the different ethnic groups. It must be self-emptying (WCC 2005:116-117).

A self-emptying spirituality is also a spirituality of cross–bearing. The Church is called to bear the cross of Jesus Christ, by being with the suffering. As Bonhoeffer would say, "only a suffering God can help." Thus, only a church that identifies with a suffering world can understand and be in a position to help that world. In the Nigerian context, the church can demonstrate this through a creative engagement of the warring parties by using a theologically-driven dialogue and being constantly in the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf Romans 5:1-10).

This study reveals that the challenge facing practical theology and missiology in Africa regarding ethnocentrism lies in confronting people's worldviews in order to transform them to a biblically-based perspective which brings reconciliation. Thus, when they are threatened by the divisive powers of ethnocentrism and tribalism, they need to understand and hold onto God's promises in Christ (Gospel), enabled by the Holy Spirit. In doing reconciliatory missiology, the Church in Nigeria should therefore, among other things, adopt the under-mentioned strategies.

7.6   STRATEGIES FOR A RECONCILIATORY MISSIOLOGY OR MISSION AS MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

For effectiveness in the ministry of reconciliation, it is recommended that the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria should be:

7.6.1   A listening church

Doing mission and theology calls for understanding and doing things in creative and new ways. Whereas the Gospel does not change (1 Pet. 2:23-25), the methods of communication are always changing within time and space. What is therefore required for creative and imaginative engagement in mission is active listening. The *Shema* opens with "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One…(Deut. 6:4ff). God chided Israel through the prophets because they were not listening to what he was saying (see Isaiah 1:1-31). Jesus usually ended his teachings with "whoever has an ear, let him hear…"(cf Mt 11:15). And the last book of the Bible concludes with the same message: " …he who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev.2:29; 3:22). The church has to listen to God - and for God. Without listening to God the church may never discern what the divine agenda for *missio Dei* is - and without listening to the people, it will be impossible for her to hear the cries and the painful groanings of the oppressed people and the whole creation (Romans 8:23-25).

Listening opens the church up and empowers her to witness beyond her present experience. An Ibo proverb says "Drop the ear to the ground and hear the cry of the tiny ant (*mgbisi*)." The "cry of the ant" is the counter-cultural element which constitutes the novelty of the Lord's behaviour and command (Uzukwu 1996:138). Typically, not everybody has the understanding and discernment of a given text and context. This is why it is a challenge for those doing mission to develop the skill and art of active, rather than passive listening. As a strategy for faithful mission to the Lord and relevant service to the contemporary society, the PCN should practically:

7.6.1.1 Listen to women

Women are still suffering under patriarchy and we need to listen to them more than had been done before. This is important because both from the Scripture and our cultures, women hear so many things that are often unheard by men. As women constitute a critical mass among the world's poorest of the

poor, it is clear that there are realities they know of which we are ignorant. As Oduyoye (1983:247) has reminded us of a popular Ashante, Ghanaian proverb: "The person who sleeps by the fire knows how best intensely it burns." Women have a way of experiencing life that we (men) know not of and to listen to them is to understand not only their realities but also our own realities. As Gutierrez (1983:231) once put it:

> When we listen to those who speak from the reality of other poor peoples, we gain a keener and more in-depth insight into the people to whom we ourselves belong and whose life of faith we are seeking to express. To listen to other realities is to let our own reality speak.

This is the message that the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (Oduyoye 1983, Phiri 2002) are trying to pass across to the churches and other faith communities in the entire continent. The church stands to gain a lot if it listens to our women more than it had done before.

7.6.1.2 Listen to the youth

The Church should listen to the youth and develop a relevant ministry that will not only 'win' them today to the Lord but also prepare them for mission tomorrow. We have often been reminded that a church that is indifferent to its youth is already committing a spiritual suicide. The Scripture challenges us to take seriously the ministry to the youth because "From the lips of children and infants, He (the Lord) has also ordained praise!" (Mt 21:16). The fact that David was a boy when he delivered Israel from what could have been an embarrassing defeat by the Philistines (I Samuel 17: 1-end), and Timothy became a Church leader when he was a youth (I Timothy 4:12) should convince us that God may deliver His kingdom through messengers otherwise deemed unlikely.

7.6.1.3 Listen to other ecclesiologies and faiths

My impression is that listening to what sister theologies have to tell us is increasingly becoming the prime gauge of progress in our dialogue (Gutierrez 1983:230). The PCN should listen to other ecclesiologies and faiths because, through them, the Lord might perhaps even teach us not only how to serve Him, but also **how not to** do so (cf Jer. 48:10a). In dealing with ethnicity and ethnocentrism especially in our diverse context, we need to listen to others to hear how they are sensitively dealing with the same problems that are troubling us. Mission in this dispensation does not require any 'solo' effort. It requires our cooperation with others and listening to what the Lord might be saying to them -

which we would not hear if we remained in our spiritual enclaves. Genuine ecumenical mission and inter-faith engagement will definitely create the channels through which we may hear more from others.

7.6.1.4 Listen to the entire creation

We all need to listen to the entire creation so that we may learn how to be faithful stewards of the Lord's people and property. Mission today is incomplete unless there is a deliberate effort by all humans to be eco-friendly. It is the task of the Church to teach the members and our generation to not only be fruitful, multiply and 'dominate' the earth (Genesis 1:28), but also to 'work it and take care of it' (Genesis 2:15). With the avaricious exploitation of the mineral resources by the multinational companies in Nigeria, the Church is expected to raise a prophetic voice both for the people and the environment of the Niger Delta. This represents the responsibility and mutual solidarity of the *missio humanitatis* that we spoke of in Chapter 5 as a method of doing mission.

The question may be asked: what do we do with what we hear? In other words, after listening, what next? This question leads us to the next point of action: the art of creative thinking.

7.6.2 A thinking church
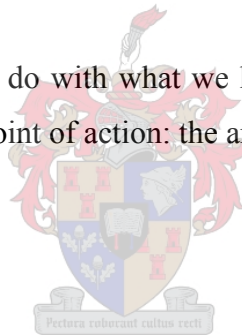
What we do with what we hear from the Lord and the people is very important. We have to think over them, which also means that we have to be discerning. A thinking church is a "dreaming" church. A church that dreams will hardly lack vision and direction. But a church without vision will harvest destruction: 'where there is no vision, the people perish' (Proverbs 29:18). So, the PCN needs a vision and visionary leadership. To do this, we must constantly ask ourselves, 'What is our vision and mission in Nigeria?' It is only when we actively reflect on what we have heard and seen that that we will be able to build a foundation of ideas today upon which we can stand and engage the future.

We are speaking about a future with sound foundation, a future that our children will be proud to inherit; it is God's own preferred future. Therefore, it is not a future to be met with despair, rather with confidence and hope in Christ who himself is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). As Guder (1998:187) put it, 'The Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Jesus, leads the people of God and their leadership into an eschatological future that is present among them now, even if imperfectly. This eschatology is not only

about the end of the world. It is about the future breaking in today with an alternative order known as the reign of God.' No wonder Bonhoeffer (1955:17) said 'the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ indicates that the day is already breaking even though night is not yet over'. The nature of mission today therefore has to be understood and undertaken in a creative and imaginatively new manner (Bosch 1991:367). This would also require repenting, which as Bosch has said, 'may not mean relinquishing what we are, but doing mission in a different way' (Bosch 1991: 365). This would mean that as Nigerian Presbyterians, we should start thinking as ambassadors of Christ and no more as local champions of our different ethnic groups. Unless we think creatively and imaginatively looking for new ideas to engage our society, we would become unfit for the *missio Dei* in critical times of distress like ours.

Listening and thinking are meaningful only when they are backed by action. Therefore, the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria should also be known to be:

7.6.3   A doing church

In reconciliation, we understand that for God, this concept is meant not only to be a verbal message to humanity, but that it had to become incarnate; 'an audible word had to become a visible deed in flesh before reconciliation could become effective' (Naude 2004:139). This was the price God had to pay – the incarnation of Christ, the reconciliation of God with humanity.

Jesus said to the disciples, "occupy till I come" (Lk 19:13). Again, He told them "greater works shall you do because I go to the Father" (John 17:12). Indeed, much is expected from the PCN. But as we listen attentively to various voices through which the Lord speaks, and as we think and create new ideas in the process and struggles of life, we are to put into practice new insights that will enhance the *missio Dei,* through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church has a number of internal resources to aid the ministry of reconciliation. I would like to point to a number of them. These strategies can be used for internal reconciliation processes and/or for promoting broader national and community reconciliation.

7.6.3.1 The power of ritual and rituals in Africa

Ritual is sometimes downplayed in secular societies as neurotic repetition (Schreiter 1992:71). In African society, rituals are important aspects of our lives in expressing deeply felt, but hardly articulated feelings. In dealing with reconciliation, ritual becomes extremely important, because the drama of ritual can speak of that for which we have no words. The Church cannot underestimate the power of its ritual to mark the moments of transition in reconciliation, and to give expression to feelings so painful and so deep that no other way can be found to bear them. For Catholic and Orthodox traditions of Christianity, this turn to ritual may come easier than for Reformation traditions. But all will need to draw upon ritual according to their best lights (Schreiter 1986:75).

One ritual needs to be singled out here, and that is the Eucharist. Eucharistic theologies and practices vary among churches, but the need for deliverance from the suffering of violence may draw them together around those texts in, say Ephesians discussed earlier in this study. Gathering around the Eucharistic table, the broken, damaged and abused bodies of individual victims and the broken body of the church are taken up into the body of Christ. Christ's body has known torture; it has known shame. In his complete solidarity with victims he has gone to the limits of violent death. And so his body becomes a holy medicine to heal the broken bodies of today (Schreiter 1986:75).

7.6.3.2 Retelling the story (story telling as a way of healing)

"What's the use of telling stories?" asks Phiri (2002:3). We can understand the power of stories to overcome divisions when we reflect on the way in which Scripture has spoken of persons of every culture, race, and circumstance, no matter how different they may be. And there is a depth in each of us, a depth of the human condition that is touched when we share our stories (Snyder 1992:95). As Schreiter (1992:71) writes,

> Victims of violence and suffering must tell their story over and over and over again in order to escape the narrative of the lie. As they recount their own narrative, little by little they begin to construct a new narrative of truth that can include the experiences to overwhelm it. This includes, in the first stage, establishing a kind of geography of violence and suffering; that is, bounding it so as to tame its savage power. The more that violence is so bounded, the less formidable it becomes. Without such boundedness, it roams at will in the life of the victim

devouring, like the roaming lion in 1 Peter 5:8, whomever it will. The ministry of reconciliation at this stage is listening.

The incredible fact is how similar our stories often are. Sharing our stories, however, will not overcome all divisions in a single blow. The suspicions run too deep, the problems of communication present hurdles that loom large before us, and our tendency to self-preoccupation is not easily given up. Nor does sharing our stores overcome all differences. We may still find ourselves disagreeing about what is to be done, even when we discover that we share the same fundamental human condition. Culture, strategies, and styles may lead to a variety of responses. Sharing our stories does provide us with a foundation for solidarity (Snyder 1992:92-94).

The stories to be shared are not only those of suffering, however. There are also stories in which we share our dreams and hopes. The creation narrative in Genesis reveals the power in sharing our dreams, our hopes, and our imaginings. God shared a longing: "Let us make …." God shared these deepest longings and, in speaking those words, transformed the darkness into light, the formless into beauty, and the emptiness into abundance. The Bible is above all else, the story of longing, the sharing of God's dreams, first for companionship and then for restoration of a lost relationship. The awful danger in not knowing each other's stories is that we fail to build genuine friendships - caring relationships - that can shape and guide our actions. Sharing our stories not only serves to create solidarity, it also gives solidarity a human face.

7.6.3.3 Advocacy on behalf of victims

The church has to stress the importance of poverty and economic inequality as fundamental obstacles to reconciliation. The importance of development initiatives and advocacy regarding economic justice cannot be over-emphasized. The contemporary need to confront the ruling political elite and their cronies with the need for upliftment, and their consequent responsibilities, arises from the benefits they derive from the exploitation of the Niger Delta resources.

These strategies are very similar to those used by the non-religious NGOs in many places in Africa. The fact that they are conducted under church auspices adds a new dimension to the intervention and provides access to different types of groups and communities.

Finally, I would like to say that any pedagogical and pastoral approach to mission has to acknowledge that the ministry of healing and reconciliation is a profound and lengthy process that therefore requires long-term strategies (Rom 8:25). For those who are reconciled, reconciliation becomes a calling (Shreiter 1986:73). They move to a wholly new place from which they call oppressors to repentance and service in a prophetic way for the whole society. This process requires patience and a deep understanding that we all share a common destiny from which none can escape. As Thabo Mbeki (in Boesak 2005:174) put it,

> The challenge ahead of us is to achieve reconciliation between former oppressor and the formerly oppressed, between black and white, between rich and poor, between men and women, the young and the old, the able and the disabled … seeking to reconcile ourselves with one another…moved to act together in pursuit of common goals, understanding that we cannot escape a shared destiny.

Thabo Mbeki's words fittingly conclude our perspective on the challenging task of reconciliation before the churches which has been presented in this dissertation. Mbeki might have spoken as a politician and not a theologian. Yet the word 'reconciliation', since Paul wrested it from classical Greek in his second letter to the Corinthians, has become a biblical term that can no longer be divested of its theological meaning. It is so central to the Christian faith that it is totally impossible to be a Christian without being confronted with the demand for reconciliation.

The concept of reconciliation – challenges the PCN to focus on the concepts of truth, justice, peace and mercy. These are foundations and pillars upon which true reconciliation can thrive. They are vital for greater social well being, transformation of the lives of the poor and addressing of the injustices that perpetuate most of our personal and communal conflicts. They will lead people to act together in pursuit of and to the creation of a society that truly progresses on the path of common goals, understanding that they cannot escape a shared destiny. For any reconciliation that does not translate into the fundamental transformation of society is empty and meaningless. And when we live in the spirit of reconciliation, we affirm that:

> We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All, all are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich,

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poor, educated, not educated, male, female, all, all, all to belong to this family, human family, and God's family (Tutu 2001: xiii).

It is my sincere hope that with the implementation of the suggestions of this dissertation, Nigeria will gradually move away from life-threatening high conflict incidence to a situation in which the majority of the people enjoy improved quality of life characterized by harmony and peaceful co-existence. Furthermore, I sincerely trust that a theologically driven dialogue in a reconciliatory missiology will spare the church the agonizing emptiness of *triumphalism* which characterized the missionary efforts of the past few centuries and give her a humble but bold foothold on the threshold of the twenty-first century missiology.

7.7   **CONCLUSION**

At the beginning of this research project, the concept of ethnicity was discussed and the fact of ethnocentrism was identified and explained as a monster militating against the missionary strategies in the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria. The goal was clear: to investigate the impact of ethnicity and ethnocentrism on the overall mission of the Church and to establish the use of a theologically-driven and culturally relevant dialogue as a strategy for dealing with the ethnic conflicts in the Nigerian Church and nation. This is a process that aims at genuine reconciliation and which bears the marks of truth, justice, peace and mercy. The hypothesis that undergirded the research was argued. The Presbyterian Church of Nigerian has to recover a missional identity if it wants to play its God-ordained role in a conflict-ridden nation like Nigeria. Our argument proved that point. And the parameters of a strategy to "obediently participate in transformative action" have been planted. Now the challenge is for the PCN leadership to demonstrate unalloyed commitment to the *missio Dei* through the process of prophetic engagement. To every Nigerian Presbyterian, the die is cast!

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Questionnaire on
The PCN's Mission in Dialogue and Conflict Management
(Please respond on a different sheet(s) of paper)

Name:_____

1.   How long have you been a member of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

2.   What position(s) have you held or are still holding in the church since you became a member?

3.   How would you assess the progress of the Church in terms of its missionary activities among the different ethnic groups of Nigeria?

4.   Describe the greatest missionary contributions of the PCN to the Nigerian society.

5.   What in your thinking, are the major problems of the church in its missionary efforts in Nigeria?

6.   Which of these problems are traceable to the missionary root(s) of the church? Please explain.

7.   Do you think the PCN membership is sufficiently aware and creatively responsive to the pluralisms and life-threatening conflicts in the Nigerian society? Give some examples.

8.   What role do you think dialogue can play in dealing with the conflicts within the Nigerian church and the larger society?

9.   Have you been involved in any intra or inter-communal conflict resolution process in the past twenty years? How did your Christian witness impact on your experience then and now?

10.   What are your suggestions on the PCN's engagement in mission through dialogue?

Thank you for your honest responses.

APPENDIX 2   QUESTIONNAIRE TO NON-NIGERIANS (CANADIAN

                         MISSIONARIES)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Aim: The aim of this questionnaire is to examine the impact of ethnicity on the Presbyterian missionary enterprise in Nigeria and see how a theologically driven dialogue can become a strategy of doing mission among the ethnic groups in the Church and society.

The questionnaire is intentionally open-ended so that the respondent may be at liberty to answer the questions as she or he may deem fit. Please respond on a different sheet(s) of paper.

Questions:

1.   When did you assume duty as a missionary in Nigeria?

2.   Where were you located and how long did you serve as a missionary with The Presbyterian Church of Nigeria?

3.   What position(s) did you hold in the church and

4.   What were your primary assignments?

5.   How would you describe the ethnic relations between the Efik/Ibibio and the Ibo groups in the PCN?

6.   During your stay in Nigeria,

     a) Were there manifest cases of ethnic tension or conflict in the Church that you could recall?

    b) What were they about?

7.   How did the ethnic factor affect your ministry in Nigeria?

8.   In your opinion, were there ways in which the policies or practices of the expatriates/missionaries or their sending boards contributed to the tension or conflicts between the groups in Nigeria? Please explain.

9.   If you were to repeat your missionary journey to Nigeria, what would you do differently or in a new way? Why?

10. What are your practical suggestions to the PCN on intentionally doing mission through dialogue and conflict resolution in Nigeria?

Name:_____

Thank you for your honest responses.

APPENDIX 3   QUESTIONNAIRE TO PCUSA COORDINATOR FOR WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA - DOUG WELCH

Brief Questionnaire on ethnicity and the PCN mission

I.   For the period you have been in this position as the Coordinator of Central/West Africa, what are your general impressions about the PCN regarding the ethnic relations between the Efik and Ibo in the Church?

II.   Have you noticed any manifest tensions between the two groups and what are they about?

III.   What can you suggest as the way forward for effective mission in the Church and partnership with the PCUSA?

APPENDIX 4   BRIEF PROFILES OF RESPONDENTS

(Note: These are people who responded to the questionnaire from which we got the research findings for chapter 4: Ethnocentrism and Presbyterianism in Nigeria).

1.   NIGERIAN RESPONDENTS

Names of respondents (Surname first)	Years of membership in the PCN	Positions and responsibilities in the PCN
IDIKA, M	60 years	Moderated all the courts of the church from Session to the General Assembly. Member of various committees and boards of the church. Retired as GA Moderator.
OTU, AA	From infancy i.e. 68 years	Parish Board member, Presbytery moderator, Synod (G.A. Principal) Clerk, G. A. Moderator; Chairman, Board of Faith & Order; and Board of Trustees.
UDE, IOA	From infancy, i.e. 75years now	Seminary teacher after University education, acting Principal of Trinity College in exile during the civil war years, full time parish minister, Director of City of Faith (the Itu project), and a registered Trustee of the PCN.
UKA, IO	From childhood, approx. 30 years	Youth leader, Pastor, Clerk and Moderator of presbyteries. Presbytery/Synod Youth Coordinator. Coordinator, General Assembly Youth Desk.
MBONU, UU	From Infancy, since 1934	Enugu parish board clerk, Presbytery treasurer, Chairman, Finance Board of General Assembly.
UKA, EM	52 years	Theological Consultant; A Theological Tutor, Chairman, Board of Faith Order. Parish Pastor, University Chaplain, Hospital Chaplain.
OTONG, JUU	31 years	Ruling elder, Synod/General Assembly Treasurer.
UKARIWE, O	35 years	A ruling elder, Parish board treasurer, and Presbytery treasurer.
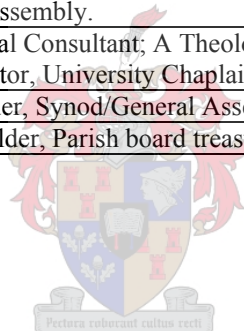
2. NON-NIGERIAN RESPONDENTS (CANADIAN PARTNERS)

Names of respondents (Surname first)	Genesis of missionary work in Nigeria	Locations while in Nigeria	Positions and primary assignment (s) in Nigeria
GOLAN, AGNES	1954 when the PCC started work in Africa	In Arochukwu, Union secondary school, Ibiaku (1year) Ohafia 1960?? – 1968.	Youth worker under Synod of the PCN, 1958-1959.
HALL, RUSSELL T	Appointed June 1, 1966, arrived in Lagos Sept 28, 1966.	Lagos, 1966-1976.	Minister, Lagos Presbyterian Church, Yaba; Synod Moderator of PCN: Jan, 1973- Aug., 1974.
JOHNSTON, JOHN ALEXANDER	1964	Lagos for two and a half years until an accident occurred and was forced to return to Canada with wife for surgery.	Invited by Governor of Eastern Nigeria to: a) provide leadership for the Eastern Nigerians living in the capital, Lagos, b) develop Presbyterian outreach programs with Lagos as the hub, c) teach Church History/ Religion in the University of Lagos which later developed into teaching religious education at the Anglican/Methodist Theological (Immanuel) College, Ibadan. Official responsibility: minister of Lagos Presbyterian Church and tutor at Immanuel College.
JOHNSTON, GEOFFREY	January 1959	1959-1961 Duke Town Secondary school, Calabar; Sept. 1963 Dec 1963 Presbyterian Minister in the North	Secondary school teacher, Lecturer in Church History, Ethics and Worship Minister.
JOHNSTON, MARY DON	April, 1959.	Calabar, 1959-1961; Kaduna, few months; Umuahia, 1963-1966.	(Wife, mother), teacher- Duke Town Secondary school, Calabar; Women's Teacher Training College, Umuahia.
MCLEAN, WALTER	1962 -1967 Came early 70's for 2 months to study with Elder N. A. Ndu on reconstruction after the war. (Returned frequently between 1979-1993 as a Canadian Member of Parliament). Invited to preach at funeral of Elder Dr Akanu Ibiam.	Abakaliki – 9months, Enugu - four and a half years, Regular visits between Lagos and Ibadan.	Interim Minister – Abakaliki, Founding Minister – St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Enugu. Chaplain, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. Interim Minister, Lagos Presbyterian Church.
ROSS, MARJORIE	1962	Uburu, Abakaliki, Enugu.	Wife of Missionary architect, teacher in Enugu.