

THE CENTRIFUGAL AND CENTRIPETAL FORCE OF MISSION: EXEGETICAL INSIGHTS ON THE GOSPELS

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ABSTRACT: The role of the Holy Spirit in Mission is twofold: *centripetal* and *centrifugal*. The centripetal role reflects the attractive force that the Holy Spirit performs by bringing people into the Kingdom, while the centrifugal force reflects the outward move in which the Holy Spirit empowers the believers to expand the Kingdom of God by taking the Gospel to all men. The Great Commission is simultaneously a call to mission in the sense of fulfilling the centrifugal mandate of bringing Christ to non-believers, and a centripetal mandate of drawing non-believers to Christ. This paper exegetes some key passages in order to highlight this twofold theological and missional aspect.

KEY WORDS: The Great Commission, Kingdom of God, Centripetal and Centrifugal, *missio Dei*.

Introduction

In a study on mission in the New Testament, Bengt Sundkler used for the first time the terms “centrifugal” and “centripetal” to describe this dual perspective in mission.² He considers that the Old Testament has a centripetal approach in which the nations are drawn toward Israel, while the

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2 Bengt Sundkler, “Jésus et Les Païens,” ed. Bengt Sundkler and A. Fridrichsen, *Contributions À l'étude de La Pensée Missionnaire Dans Le Nouveau Testament*, Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis 6; Uppsala: Neutestamentliches Seminar zu Uppsala, 1937, 1–38.

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New Testament has a centrifugal approach in which the Church reaches out to the nations. Later he wrote about the *centrifugal* and *centripetal* aspect in mission as:

Centripetal [universality] is actualized by a messenger who crosses frontiers and passes on his news to those who are afar off; centripetal [as if drawn] by a magnetic force, drawing distant people into the place of the person who stands at the center.³

Johannes Blauw, a Dutch scholar, also used in 1962 this terminology in order to describe an apparent contrast between the Old and New Testament and to highlight the missional mandate of the Church.⁴ Blauw mentions that these terms are not exclusively related to the Old and New Testament since he admits that there are aspects of centrifugal force of mission in various passages in the Old Testament (e.g. The Servant Song of Isaiah; the book of Jonah), although these passages are rare.

Christopher Wright acknowledges that although there is an obvious level of truth in highlighting the major difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament in terms of centripetal, respectively centrifugal, this broad assertion is not entirely adequate.⁵ The reason for this argument is that there are centrifugal aspects in the history of Israel⁶ and also in the New Testament the aspect of drawing the nations into God's Kingdom as the final purpose of the outward mission is prevalent.

3 Bengt Sundkler, *The World of Mission* (Lutterworth Press, 1966), 14–45.

4 Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church: A Survey of the Biblical Theology of Mission* (London: Lutterworth Press, 2003), 44–80.

5 Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 523.

6 Wright lists the following aspects: the law goes forth to the islands that wait for it; the Servant will bring justice to the nations; God's salvation reaches to the end of the earth; God sends emissaries to the nations to proclaim God's glory. Wright, 523.

Wright correctly noted that the centrifugal mission of the New Testament church has a centripetal theology.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to highlight various exegetical insights on these twofold centripetal and centrifugal missional aspects as seen in the Gospel writings. The centripetal role reflects God's attractive force of bringing people into the Kingdom, while the centrifugal force reflects the outward movement in which the Holy Spirit empowers the believers to expand the Kingdom of God by proclaiming the Gospel. The Great Commission is simultaneously a call to mission in the sense of fulfilling the centrifugal mandate of bringing Christ to non-believers, and a centripetal mandate of drawing non-believers to Christ. This paper exegetes some key passages in order to highlight this twofold theological and missional aspect.

The Centripetal Aspect of Mission

The general tendency in theology was to argue that the Old Testament has a centripetal view on mission, with the emphasis on the nations coming toward Israel. Apparently, with the exception of the book of Jonah, in the Old Testament there is no explicit and missiological mandate of Israel, but only an inward focus in which God draws nations to him. Isaiah emphasized in his writing the centrality of the mountain of the Lord as the driving force that determined the people to approach God by moving from foreign countries to Zion (Is. 2.3; 19.23; 25.6-8; 56.7; 66.18-20; see also Ps. 22.27; 47.9; 72.9-11; Jer. 3.17; Ez. 38.12; Mic. 4.2, etc.).⁸

Following Schultz and Sundkler, Schnabel admits that the process which leads to the integration of foreigners into the people of God is centripetal, both in terms of initiative and in terms of geographical movement.⁹ He noted that "[t]he drive to Zion is initiated by the nations,

7 Wright, 524.

8 See also J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: Early Perspectives in David Bosch's Theology of Mission and Evangelism* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2014), 175.

9 Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Israel, The People Of God, And The Nations," *Journal of*

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caused by the epiphany of YHWH and the activity of the Servant.”¹⁰ On the other side, Schnabel downplays the “centrifugal” movement from Israel to the nations in Isaiah, noting that there are only two statements in Israel’s prophetic tradition about such a move (*i.e.* the Servant of the Lord is a ‘light of the nations’ 42.1, 6–7; 49.6; 51.4–5; and the ‘survivors’ of God’s judgement are sent to be priests among the nations 66.18–21). Although Schnabel notes that Israel’s relationship with the nations can be divided into five categories, he fails to argue that this relationship has a centrifugal nuance imbedded into the Abrahamic Covenant (*e.g.* Gen. 12.3). He considers that Gen. 12.3 does not imply a ‘missionary outreach’ while the admission of non-Israelites was possible but regulated by the ritual. Schnabel argument is unconvincing, since the admission of non-Israelites is inherently an outward-driven enterprise before it has an inward-driven finality (*e.g.* Rahab, Josh. 2 and the inhabitants of Gibeon, Josh. 9). A centripetal force of mission that acts magnetically, does not exclude a centrifugal force that demonstrates the outreach of God’s salvific plan (*e.g.* Jonah). Trying to create a dichotomy between the ‘outreach of the grace of God’ and the ‘outreach of the people of God’ is to ignore the importance of the human factor in the economy of God’s plan of blessing all the families on the earth by using Israel as an agent of blessing.

The Centrifugal Aspect of Mission

The etymology of this term goes back to the Latin term *centrifugus*, which implies an outward-movement from a center. Walter Kaiser admits that almost all modern scholars emphasize the strong missiological nuance in the New Testament, especially in the Great Commission, but few will grant the idea that the Old Testament has such an emphasis. However he suggests:

A case for mission forming a central role in the plan of God in the Old Testament can indeed be successfully argued, for an international invitation of the gospel

the Evangelical Theological Society 45, no. 1 (2002): 41.

10 Schnabel, 41.

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to all nations is explicitly set forth in the Old Testament, and it forms one of the great unifying threads of meaning in the purpose-plan of God.¹¹

In his study of mission in the Old Testament, he argues that Israel's role is not only centripetal and passive in witnessing and spreading the Good News, but also centrifugal, namely an active outward moving in sharing the faith.¹² He emphasizes that Paul's quote of Isaiah 49.6 in an attempt to convince the Jews at Antioch of Pisidia that it is in line with God's sovereign plan of extending the blessing of redemption to the Gentiles.¹³ This plan is seen mentioned in various places in the Old Testament not only by God's use of Israel to reach Gentiles,¹⁴ but also by God's use of individuals to reach Gentiles.¹⁵ Because of all these examples, Kaiser correctly argues that an exclusivist emphasis of the centripetal feature of Israel denies the missionary purpose and theology of the Old Testament in which Israel was called to be a light to the nations.

Wright also noted that the centrifugal dynamic of mission is seen in the dominant association of the word *missionary* with the activity of sending and with cross-cultural communication of the gospel. Because of this he prefers not to connect this term with the Old Testament since "Israel was not mandated by God to send missionaries to the nations."¹⁶ Wright admits that his view is not agreed by all. He mentions that al-

11 Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Recovering the Unity of the Bible: One Continuous Story, Plan, and Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 183.

12 Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations*, 2 edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 9.

13 See also Rom. 1.1-5; 11.25; Gal. 1.15-16 as a parallel to Is. 49.1; Jer. 1.5. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament*, 9–10. David Bosch also considers that the metaphor of light in Is. 42.6 and 49.6 express both a centripetal and a centrifugal movement. David J. Bosch, *Witness To The World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 76.

14 E.g. Gen. 12.1-3; Ex. 7.5, 17; 8.22; 14:4,18; 19.4-6; 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 2; 9.1-12; 33; 57.9; 66; 67; 96; 100; 117; 119.46; 126.2-3; 145.11-12, 21; et. al.

15 E.g. Melchisedek, Jethro, Balaam son of Beor, Rahab, Ruth, Naaman.

16 Wright, *The Mission of God*, 24.

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though he reads the Old Testament missiologically he does not refer to the missionary message of the Old Testament as H. H. Rowley does.¹⁷

Wright's contribution to our understanding of mission is that he attempts to broaden the sense of the theme *missionary* since there are indeed many passages that are enriching our understanding of mission is a sense that is not restricted to the concept of "sending missionaries". Because of this he welcomes the use of the adjective *missional* instead of *missionary*, since the former terminology has a broader spectrum by describing that which is related to or characterized by mission. "Israel had a missional reason for existence, without implying that they had had a *missionary* mandate to go to the nations (whereas we could certainly speak of the missionary role of the church among the nations)."¹⁸

Walter Kaiser, mentioned above, argued convincingly about a missionary purpose of God's call to Israel to be a light to the nations.¹⁹ Schnabel disagrees with Kaiser considering that even though it might be theologically appropriate to emphasize the outreach of the grace of God, there is no exegetical evidence that allows us to speak of examples of an outreach of the people of God.²⁰

In the New Testament there is an explicit missiological mandate to proclaim the Messianic era to all the nations. Matthew 28.19-20 and Acts 1.8 are the *locus classicus* of the divine commission. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that as the Old Testament is not exclusively centripetal in its missiological focus so the New Testament is not exclusively centrifugal in its missiological mandate.

The focus of this paper is not to have an exhaustive analysis of a certain missiological paradigm but to underline some exegetical insights from the Gospel that attest the fact that similarly to the Old Testament,

17 See Harold Henry Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Carey Press, 1945).

18 Wright, *The Mission of God*, 25.

19 Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament*.

20 Schnabel, "Israel, The People of God, And The Nations," 39.

the Gospels follows the same dual paradigm of mission that is at the same time centrifugal and centripetal in approach.

Matthew: the circular composition of the Gospel

It is generally accepted that the Gospel according to Matthew was addressed to a Jewish audience. However, the composition of the Gospel is strikingly surprising for a writing that has a well-defined audience. The Gospel has a circular composition that begins and ends with a focus on gentiles.

After the introductory genealogy of Jesus, the moment of His birth is marked by the visit of the Magi. This visit is emphatic since this group of gentiles seem to be more open and willing to accept the Messiah, than those living in Jerusalem.

The circular composition is seen in the fact that the Gospel begins by drawing Gentiles to Christ and ends with a missiological mandate of bringing Christ to Gentiles. This circular composition is seen not only at the thematic level, but also at the compositional level. The birth of the Messiah is presented in chapter 1 in connection to the prophecy of Isaiah regarding the birth of a son that will be called Emmanuel – God with us (1.23 *cf.* Isaiah 7.14). The point of this prophecy must be understood not as a reference to the actual name, but to the presence of God among the people. This presence is reiterated at the end of the letter through Jesus' promise to His followers to be with them even to the end of the age (28.20).

The Great Commission is simultaneously a call to mission in the sense of fulfilling the centrifugal mandate of bringing Christ to non-believers, and a centripetal mandate of drawing non-believers to Christ. This mandate is corroborated with the exhortation of Jesus to the disciples to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (Mt. 9.37-38). The contrast in Matthew 9 between the crowds coming to Jesus and the need for sending out labourers into the harvest is emphatic. It seems that the main problem of Jesus' ministry was not to draw unbelievers to God, but to send believers to unbelievers.

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The circular composition of the gospel of Matthew attests that a classification of the New Testament as centrifugal, in opposition to the Old Testament that is centripetal, is inappropriate since such a dichotomy is not supported by either of the Testaments.

David Bosch correctly argued that the dominant characteristic of mission in the Old Testament is not that it is centripetal, rather the centripetal category is employed to give expression to the idea that God, not Israel, is the author of mission.²¹ Similarly he considers that the New Testament has also a centripetal missionary dimension. The arrival of the astrologers from the East to Jerusalem (Matt. 2), the coming of the Roman army officer (Matt. 8.5), but also references to Simeon's prophetic words (Luke 2.31-32), Jesus' references to the temple as a house of prayer for all the nations (Mk. 11.17) and to the Greeks traveling to Jerusalem (Jn. 12.20) attest the fact that salvation is to be found in Israel. The problem with Bosch's interpretation of the concept that salvation comes from the Jews (Jn. 4.22) in light of all these references to the centripetal missionary dimension is his conclusion, namely that "[t]he world's salvation can be consummated at one place only – in Jerusalem." However, it can be suggested that all these examples attest the fact that the world's salvation is *inaugurated* at one place only, rather than *consummated* in one place only.

Mark: a house of prayer for all the nations (Mark. 11.17)

Mark's Gospel presents a peculiar aspect of the inauguration of Jesus' ministry regarding the calling of the twelve. In Mark 3.14 the explicit twofold purpose in the act of appointing the apostles was that they might be with Jesus and that he might send them out to preach. Thus, Mark presents in a unique way the centrifugal and centripetal force of mission as the working paradigm in Jesus' relation to the apostles. This aspect is reiterated in the second sending of the twelve in Mark 6.7 where the verb προσκαλέω is accompanied by the verb ἀποστέλλω highlighting a dialectical tension.

²¹ Bosch, *Witness To The World*, 77.

Towards the end of Jesus' ministry, the evangelist presents another aspect that highlights the centrifugal force of the messianic ministry that was inaugurated in Jesus. The event of the cleansing of the Temple is marked by a peculiar aspect that is presented only in the Gospel of Mark. In Mark 11.17, Jesus' words "My house shall be called a house of prayer *for all the nations*" (emphasis added) represent a quote from Isaiah 56.7 where the prophet predicts the messianic age in which the foreigners will join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him, and because of that they will be brought to God's holy mountain and His house of prayer that will be called a house of prayer for all peoples. This aspect of prayer places the fundamental aspect of sacrifice that was taking place at the Temple at a secondary level. Mark emphasized a peculiar aspect of Jesus' words that focused not only on the importance of prayer but also on the importance of a global aspect in which all the nations converge in the Temple with a prayerful attitude.

At the time of Jesus, it is important to view Isaiah's quote in practical terms regarding the Temple. The Second Temple was characterized by manifold physical barriers that made the presence of the Gentiles in the Temple worship virtually impossible.

The delimitation of the inner sanctuary between the Holy of Holies and the Holy through the veil was clearly required by the Mosaic Law. The access to the Holy of Holies was reserved only to the High Priests once a year, while the main sanctuary was the place where the priests performed their priestly ministry on a daily basis. Regarding the Temple precincts it is important to note that the court was divided into four courts: the court of the priests, the court of Israel, the court of the Women and finally the court of the Gentiles. The Gentile worshipers were only permitted in the outer courts called the Courts of the Gentiles. The two Temple inscription that were discovered in 1871 (*C.I.J.* 2.1400) and 1935 (*OGIS* II.598)²² were most likely placed in

22 (*OGIS* 598). Josephus, *Ant.* 15.417; *B.J.* 5.5.2; 6.2.4. Philo, *Ad Gaium*, 31.212. Elias J. Bickerman, "The Warning Inscriptions of Herod's Temple," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, 37, no. 4 (1947): 387–405; Jean Baptiste Frey,

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the Temple at the end of the Court of Gentiles and the entrance to the inner courts and mentioned that “No outsider is to enter the protective enclosure around the temple; whoever does will have only himself to blame for the death that follows.”²³

The one in charge for the affairs that took place at the Temple, including social order and everyday activities was one of the high priest’s representatives described by Josephus as *stratēgos* (*B.J.* 2.409). The Levites were responsible for such aspects according to the Law of Moses and Davidic worship regulations (*Num.* 18.2-7; *1 Ch.* 23.4-5). Any trespass of a foreigner, including a Roman citizen, into the Temple was subject to capital punishment (*e.g.* *Acts* 21.26-28).

The event of cleansing the Temple took place in the courts of the Gentiles where the transactions that sustained the whole apparatus of daily sacrifice were performed. While such an administrative act can be seen as necessary, the implication was that the worship of the Gentiles was practically impossible within the tumult of this religious marketplace.

While the Mosaic Law stipulated only the delimitation between God and man that was to be mediated by the Priests and Levites, in time, new restrictions were imposed as the new courts were being created. While the women were not excluded or restricted from worship according to the Law, the development of the synagogue tradition meant that the partition between men and women became the norm (*e.g.* *mechitzah*). Gradually the initial delimitation between God and man in worship was redefined in new categories as men vs. women, Jews vs. non-Jews. However, this demarcation was not intended in God’s universal plan of salvation.

Corpus of Jewish Inscriptions: Jewish Inscriptions From the Third Century B.C. to the Seventh Century A.D. (New York: Ktav Pub House, 1975), 329; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

23 K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 131.

Mark records Jesus' quote from Isaiah 56.7 emphasizing the universal and inclusive aspect of God's house of prayer in a unique way that highlights the tension between the centripetal aspect of worship that gravitates around the Temple and the centrifugal force of the messianic ministry that the worship of the Temple should be opened for all the nations.

Luke: two sets of prophetic figures

The Gospel of Luke presents the birth of Jesus as a pivotal missiological moment in which the promised salvation has arrived for both Jews and Gentiles (Lk. 2.27-32). Luke presents four prophetic figures in 4.25-27 and 11.30-32 in a striking centrifugal-centripetal balance.

Luke 4.25-27: Elijah and Elisha

At the inauguration of Jesus' mission in his own village, in the Gospel of Luke one can see a twofold missiological aspect in His ministry. In the text of Isaiah that Jesus edits and reads there is a delicate balance between "go out" and "attract in." The anointed one is "sent to proclaim to the captives freedom." This is illustrated by Elijah, who leaves Israel and goes to the woman of Zarephath in Sidon. On the other hand, the Messiah also attracts people in, as Elisha attracted Naaman to Israel. These two forces can be called the centrifugal and centripetal forces of mission. For Bailey,²⁴ loyalty to this text requires commitment to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. The messenger goes out with the message (to the woman), and Naaman is attracted into the community of faith and its prophet.²⁵

It is important to note that both persons Elijah and Elisha interact with were non-Jews: the woman from Sidon and Naaman from Syria. In Luke's Gospel, there is no dichotomy between these two aspects

24 Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 166.

25 Bailey, 169; Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 105.

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of mission. On the contrary, the twofold nature of mission is being presented together in an intentional tension: the mission of Elijah has a centrifugal emphasis as he goes to the woman in Sidon, while the mission of Elisha has a centripetal feature as he ministers to Naaman that is drawn from Syria to Israel.

Luke 11.30-32: Jonah and Solomon

This missiological dualism is presented in the Gospel again in chapter 11 where another two prophetic figures are grouped. In addition to the comparison of the greatness of Jesus in contrast to Jonah and Solomon, there is a subtle contrast in these two examples in the fact that Jonah had to *go* (centrifugal mandate), while the Queen of the South had to *come* (centripetal magnetism). Also, Jonah had to perform a northward journey, while the Queen had to perform a journey from the ends of the earth. This hyperbolic idiom ἦλθεν ἐκ τῶν περάτων τῆς γῆς is an indicator of the great distance that can be contrasted with Jonah's long escapade until he finally reached Niniveh.

Regarding prophetic figures ministering to Gentiles (e.g. Jonah, Solomon, Elijah and Elisha), Bird correctly noted that they provide an illustration of preaching by both centripetal attraction and by active centrifugal seeking.²⁶ “The centrifugal force may be observed in the case of Jonah whose ‘preaching’ (κήρυγμα) entails a journey to Nineveh, while Elijah is ‘sent’ (ἐπέμφθη) not to Israel, but to a widow.”²⁷

Considering these examples, there are consistent arguments to highlight that Luke incorporates in his Gospel a twofold theology of mission that is simultaneously both centripetal and centrifugal.

26 Michael F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, The Library of New Testament Studies 331 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 70.

27 Bird, 70.

John: centrifugal/centripetal dynamic narrative

Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the concept of mission in the Fourth Gospel has a distinctive approach. From the beginning of the Gospel, the apostle presents the divine Logos having an ontological relation to God and fulfilling a missional plan. The scholars have been using the term *missio Dei* to describe the participation in the mission of the Triune God by sending the Son into the world to save the world. The concept *mission Dei* was described by the theologians in numerous ways in the last century²⁸ and generally emphasizes the centripetal aspect of mission in sending of the Son by the Father.

The problem with this theological concept resides in the danger of interpreting the centripetal dimension of mission in such a way that the role of man can be almost nullified. In fact, the concept of *Missio Dei* has been regarded by the scholars as a mission that is ascribed entirely to God in such a way that man becomes inactive in this salvific process.

The Apostle John, similar to the Synoptic Gospels, emphasized the twofold centrifugal/centripetal aspect of mission that was present in the teaching of Jesus.

This aspect is clearly seen in the dynamic narrative of chapter 4 where Jesus goes in Samaria not by chance but a necessity (v.4 :Εδει δε. ...). The dynamic is seen in the movement of the players: the woman comes to the well for the water (v.7 ... ἔρχομαι) while the disciples had gone away (v.8 ... ἀπέρχομαι) to the village for food; the disciples come from the village with the food while the woman goes to the village (v.28 ... ἀπέρχομαι) after tasting the living water; the disciples come (v.30 ἔξέρχομαι ... ἔρχομαι) bringing food to Jesus while the woman invites (v.29 δεῦτε) people to the Messiah; after the event

28 For an overview of the use of the concept see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 286–304.

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Jesus departed (v.43 ... ἐξέρχομαι...) and went into Galilee (v.43 ... ἀπέρχομαι).

This dynamic is later present in John 6.44 where there is a clear word-play in which the verbs *come* (έρχομαι), *send* (πέμπω), and *draw* (έλκω) are used one after the other. The centrifugal aspect is emphasized in the sending of the Son, while the centripetal dimension is seen in the fact the Jesus will draw all people to himself (Jn. 6.44).

The death and resurrection of Jesus are marked by a special emphasis on the centripetal and the centrifugal aspect. When the Greeks came to Philip in order to see Jesus, the centripetal aspect of mission is clearly stated by the fact that all men are attracted to Jesus (Jn. 12-32-33). On the other side, after the resurrection the Evangelist presents the centrifugal mandate of the disciples that is modeled upon the paradigm of the Father sending the Son into the world (Jn. 20.21).

Conclusion

The role of the Holy Spirit in Mission is twofold: *centripetal* and *centrifugal*. The centripetal role reflects the attractive force that the Holy Spirit performs by bringing people into the Kingdom, while the centrifugal force reflects the outward move in which the Holy Spirit empowers the believers to expand the Kingdom of God by reaching out and proclaiming the Gospel.

David Bosch correctly emphasized that the danger of defining mission in the Old Testament as exclusively 'God's work' and the New Testament as centrifugal mission in which man is ostensibly more actively involved as 'man's work' is that of constructing two entities that tend to mutually exclude one another.²⁹ Giving more than two dozen examples, he acknowledged a dialectical and creative tension between God's work and man's that is of utmost importance for the biblical foundation of missions.³⁰

As it was argued the *centripetal* and *centrifugal* aspects are not restricted to the Old and respectively the New Testament, but there are present

29 Bosch, *Witness To The World*, 79.

30 Bosch, 80-81.

in both testaments. In the Old Testament the nations were drawn toward the people of God, but in this process, God's people (as a corporate entity) and heralds (as individual emissaries) were used to proclaim salvation to the ends of the earth. In the New Testament the Church is mandated with a great commission to bring the message of Christ to Gentiles, however the ultimate teleological aspect of mission is centripetal, namely to bring all the nations to Christ.

In the Gospels, the concept of mission has a theological approach in its centrifugal mandate and a teleological approach in its centripetal aspect. These inseparable aspects are *to proclaim God to the people* and *to bring people to God*.

While in the Old Testament this twofold nature of mission had a physical implication (Israel as the physical people of God and the Temple as the physical place of worship), in the New Testament, mission is a spiritual dimension in which the physical aspect becomes secondary. However, it can be stated that there is no missiological dichotomy between Old and New Testament, since both follow the same dual paradigm of mission that is simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal.

This twofold missiological emphasis has a significant implication for the church today. The presence of so many centrifugal and centripetal missiological aspects in the Biblical texts must function as indicators when it comes to the missional strategy of the Church. Often the Church had a single approach on mission ignoring the alternative. The centripetal mission of the Church should not be passive waiting the people to come to salvation, but proactive. Similarly, the centrifugal emphasis on reaching the lost, should not be man-centered, but God-centered. Thus, the Church today must be proactive in attracting the lost to God and strategic in bringing the Gospel to the lost.

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