

MISSIONS IN MALACHI: THE WHOLISTIC PURPOSE OF GOD FOR HIS PRIESTS, PEOPLE AND OTHER NATIONS

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Introduction

Other than the need for an occasional message on missions, the book of Malachi has received little attention. Such neglect has unintentionally relegated the book to a secondary status when it comes to the issue of missions in the Old Testament. Consequently, it is seldom that one thinks of Malachi when considering the mission of God in the Old Testament prophetic books. This neglect is due in part to think that God's love in the Old Testament mainly concentrates on Israel as a nation. One only needs to look at the average theological library or to remember the last message from Malachi that was not on missions but on tithing to see this neglect exists. One has also observe that there has been a debate whether there is mission in the Old Testament but the researcher's survey of Walter Kaiser's book on mission in the Old Testament revealed that mission is also a priority in the Old Testament. His work on mission of God in the Old Testament was a dynamic answer to such debate. He began with Genesis and traced the missionary motifs through some other prophets but Malachi and the mission of God was not included.¹

One observes that man major problem is to think that God's love in the Old Testament mainly concentrates on Israel as a nation. Though, God first revealed himself

¹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 73-4.

to the people of Israel. However, his mission was to work out his purpose for other nations who will come to him through the Israelites was also in place. There are examples of such in the Old Testament, the book of Ruth demonstrates that God can show his mercy to a Moabite, a typical example of this found in Naomi's prayer ² and the grace given to Rahab, the prostitute (Joshua 2:9-11). The book of Jonah is also an exemplary mission of God beyond Israel border (Judges 4:2)³ One observes that beyond what Walter Kaiser could recognize as mission in the Old Testament, this researcher sees the mercy, grace, love of God contrasting the narrowness of man's forgiveness which is further carried to the book of Malachi.

One call that is very essential is the need for African Church to be mission minded. John S. Mbiti opined that "The Church should become mission-minded-not in terms of receiving (for which it is very missionary-minded) but in terms of sending mission, originating mission, carrying out mission"⁴ to the entire world. This is the foundational to the missionary vision of God in the Old Testament and that continue through the ages. Mbiti's call is a clear call but it seems that majority of the church emphasis on mission is centered on her teachings from the New Testament. It seems as if African theologians have said so little on the mission in the Old Testament with specific reference to the book of Malachi. This researcher observes that since the mission of the Church is winning the nation for Christ then both testaments must be given adequate consideration in regards to missions.

² Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as Light to the Nations*, 2000, 42.

³ *Ibid.*, 65-74.

⁴ John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 187. See also Stephen Asonibare, "Obtaining and Sustaining Vision for Missions," A Paper Presented at ECWA Theological Seminary Igbaja Mission Week, 2nd March, 2010.

The theoretical argument of this paper is that Malachi is reminding his audience mainly Jewish readers that the God of Israel is not just only Israel's God but the God of all peoples. The salvific plan of God is not only for the Jews, though first to the Jews, then for the gentiles (Rom 1:16; cf 2:9-10). In this work the researcher explores the prophetic book of Malachi to find out God missioner motifs. You could remember that from the initial stage of the Bible that Yahweh chose Abraham and through him formed a people of his own. This same God is the one who created all human beings. This is to say that the mission of God is more than just Israel, knowing God is beyond the boarder of Israel. The God of Abraham is also the God of Adam, just as the God whose temple stands in Jerusalem is the creator of heaven and earth.⁵

By implication it draws attention to the fact that whatever God did for Israel has universal and cosmic implications, that is to say, Malachi is eschatological in nature. It isn't that Malachi says there are many ways to Yahweh but that Israel stands in a covenant relationship with God will transform the nations.

It is observed that the thesis presented will enable people to see that no one is entitled to interpret the rest of the Old Testament from a narrowly particularistic stand point but from the understanding of God's programme of revelation to the nations. In this vein, the researcher investigates the Wholistic purpose of God. He feels that it is when the three aspects of the Wholistic motif of mission in Malachi is put in place that the foundation of mission will be able to make a significant and lasting impact in the life of the Christians in this generation for a mission with vision. He also assumes that it is then that Yahweh will become known to all nations. This is the missionary message in the Old Testament and it is well presented by Malachi. He clearly states that God will be known

⁵ Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 50.

to all the nations through the purification of Yahweh's priesthood and people. Therefore the challenge of this paper is to develop a new model for mission methodology for the Catholic Church using the book of Malachi in the Old Testament.

The Various Preceding Contributions on Malachi

There have been various contributions on the Prophetic corpus as early as Julius Wellhausen and other people who follow after him.⁶ Towards the end of eighteenth century critical studies of Minor Prophets began, and to be precise a critical look into the composition of the twelve Minor Prophets began with C.C Torrey,⁷ J. Halévy,⁸ and Hermann Gunkel.⁹ Gunkel had earlier at the beginning of his work gave a summary of the classification of the Old Testament Genres¹⁰ which other scholars follow till today.¹¹ However his work on the prophetic corpus was also a contribution to scholarship. Other who were involved in the discussion of the prophetic corpus are H. Ewald,¹² S.R. Driver,¹³ Bernhard Duhm,¹⁴ J. M. P. Smith,¹⁵ A. Von Bulmerincq,¹⁶ Henry S. Gerham,¹⁷

⁶ Julius Wellhausen, *Die Klein Propheten Übersetzt und erklärt* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1892), 209-210. See also his work on *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1885). See also Hermann Gunkel et al., (ed). "Die Propheten als Schriftsteller und Dichter," in *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, Vol. 2. 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923).

⁷ C.C. Torrey, "The Prophet Malachi," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17 (1898): 1-15.

⁸ J. Halévy, "Le Prophète Malachie," *Revue Sémitique* 17 (1909) : 1-44.

⁹ Hermann Gunkel et al., (ed). "Die Propheten als Schriftsteller und Dichter," in *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments*, Vol. 2. 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923), idem., *What Remains of the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1928). Herman Gunkel had earlier at the beginning of his work gave a summary of the classification of the Old Testament genres which other scholars follow till today, however his work on the prophetic corpus was also a contribution to scholarship.

¹⁰ Herman Gunkel, "Fundamental Problems of Hebrew Literary History," in *What Remains of the Old Testament*, 59-60. His summary of Old Testament Genres is still being followed till date. His work was a dynamic contribution to scholarship in this area of genre identification.

¹¹ Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 24, 54-5.

¹² H. Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1867), I. 1-40.

¹³ S.R. Driver, *The Minor Prophets* (New York: Oxford University Press, American Branch, Henry Frowde, 1906).

C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch,¹⁸ K. Elliger,¹⁹ Théophane Chary,²⁰ and Sigmund Mowinckel.²¹

There were other materials that came into scene either on the entire minor prophet or on Malachi to be precise. The growth of this discussion continues in the nineteenth century with the publications of the works by F. Horst,²² Egon Pfeiffer,²³ Otto Eissfeldt,²⁴ J. Harvey,²⁵ Claus Westermann,²⁶ and Thomas V. Moore.²⁷ Though the search for

¹⁴ Bernhard Duhm, *Die Theologie der Propheten* (Bonn: Adolph Marcus, 1875), 1-34, idem., *Die Zwölf Propheten* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohl, 1910). See also idem., *Israels Propheten* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohl, 1st ed, 1916, 2nd ed, 1922), 1-12, 61-88.

¹⁵ J. M. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi* (ICC; Edingburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912).

¹⁶ A. Von Bulmerincq, *Der Prophet Maleachi* 2 Vols, Vol I (Tartu: J. G. Kruger, 1926), II (1932). This work written in German Language, volume I and II rolled out between 1926-32 tolled the literal interpretation of the daughter of a foreign god as a foreign woman. See volume 2:259.

¹⁷ Henry S. Gerham, “‘The Burden’ of the Prophets,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 31 (1940):50-66.

¹⁸ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* Vol. II. Biblical Commentary on The Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949). See C.F. Keil, *Minor Prophets: Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. X, Two Volumes in One Translated from German by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978).

¹⁹ K. Elliger, *Das Buch der Zwölf Kleinen Propheten II. Das Alte Testament Deutsch* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951).

²⁰ Théophane Chary, *Les Prophètes et le culte à partir de l'exil* (Tournai: Desclée and Co., 1855).

²¹ Sigmund Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study of the Growth and History of Tradition* (Oslo: Kommission Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1946), 37 ff.

²² Frederich Horst, *Die Zwölf Kleinen Propheten, Handbuch Zum Alten Testament* no 14 (Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1938), II: 259-260.

²³ Egon Pfeiffer, “Die Disputationsworte im Buche Maleachi (Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichtlichen Struttur),” *Evangelische Theologie* 19 (1959): 546-68. The title of this book is translated from German to English as The disputation words in the book of Malachi. Translation mine.

²⁴ Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*. Trans., Peter Ackroyd (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965).

²⁵ Julien Harvey, *La Pledoyer Prophétique Contre Israël après la Rupture de l'alliance Scholasticat de l'Immaculée-Conception. Etude d'une formulæ litteraire de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1967).

²⁶ Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* Translated by N. C. White (Letterworth, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 90-98. He was the one who presented a detailed structure of the prophetic pronouncement of judgment to Israel. He opined that the judgment of God was announced to Israel because of specific failures. For more information on his structure of prophetic speeches see 65ff, 176.

²⁷ Thomas V. Moore, *A Commentary on Haggai and Malachi* (New York: Robert Carter, 1968).

redactional identification principle for reconstructing the history of Malachi started with the scholars mentioned earlier but in the middle of the nineteenth century some other works with various discussions on authorship, dating and authenticity of Malachi came into the scene, scholars like Joseph Blenkinsopp,²⁸ Rex Mason,²⁹ began to look for more redactional identification for reconstructing Malachi. Still others like Pieter A. Verhoef,³⁰ R. J. Coggins,³¹ employed the use of comparative study of religion, especially relating the prophetic setting to the Ancient Near Eastern treaty forms. Their position, especially in relating Old Testament to its environment in the Ancient Near Eastern is not a new thing in Biblical Studies, it has been in place since the time of Frederick Delitzsch.³²

²⁸ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy in Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983). This scholar observes repetition of themes like “Thus says the Lord” and concluded that this is his basis of suggesting that a redactor compiled the whole book.

²⁹ Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi*: Cambridge Biblical Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

³⁰ Pieter A. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*: New International Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987): 180-184.

³¹ R.J. Coggins, *Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi*: Old Testament Guides (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1977).

³² The method of cultural or comparative study of religion is not a new thing in Biblical studies. There are abundant works on this kind of study as far back as Frederick Delitzsch lectures in 1903. For more information on the use of Comparative study of religions, See Frederick Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible* (New York: G. P. Putman’s Sons, 1903). There has been other book coming from relevant method using various tools of studying Old Testament Background. Works like G. Holscher, *Die Profeten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1914; Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena Zur Geschichte Israels*, 6th ed (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1927, reprinted as *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Meridian, 1957). Cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, “Biblical Customs and The Nuzi Tablets,” *Biblical Archeologists* 3 (1940): 1-12., idem., “Hebrew Origins in the Light of Recent Discoveries,” *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed A Altramann (Cambridge, Nass: Harvard University Press, 1963): 3-14; D. Hillers, “Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets,” *Biblica et Orientalia*, no 16 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); Ephraim A. Speiser, Genesis, Anchor Bible Commentary (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1964); W. F. Albright, “Chapter 2, “The Story of Abraham in the Light of New Archeological Data” in *Archeology, Historical Analogy and Early Biblical History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1966): 21-41; Père Roland de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel*, trans. D. Smith(Philadelphia:/ London: Westminster Press/Dayton, Longman & Todd, 1978), 1:200. This book was originally in French Language edition as *Histoire Ancienne d’Israel* (Paris: Gabalda, 1971); John Bright, *History of Israel*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: /London: Westminster/SCM Press, 1972); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); J. B. Pritchard (ed). *Ancient near eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament* (New Jersey: University of

This approach however is not without its own problem, it raise an issue of literary dependence as well as see the biblical document as a late comer which could not be more than the myth of the Ancient Near Eastern. This is clearly summarized in the words of John H. Walton who observes that Israel while being the receipt of divine revelation that gave her a unique theological distinctiveness reflected in many ways the culture of the Ancient Near Eastern.³³ In essence this researcher understands him to say there is a common worldviews, which Israel sometimes conform and at times depart from it. All the above mentioned scholars are representative of either redactional or comparative study of religions, which made them to arrive at a different setting and structuring for the book of Malachi; however their opinion never went unchallenged.

Some of the scholars above and those who follow after them present several ways to divide the book of Malachi. As early as nineteenth century, C. Von Orelli observed three fold division of the book.³⁴ He sees Malachi as the turning point where the community is transformed from “a national corporation to a moral and religious fellowship.”³⁵ There were others who contributed to expound the theology of Malachi. Young and Baldwin divided the book into two fold structure dealing with Israel’s sin and

Princeton Press, 1955); William H. Hallo, and K. L. Younger, *Context of Scripture* Vol 1. Leiden: Brill, 1997-2000); Kenneth Kitchen, The Patriarchal Age: Myth or History? *Biblical Archeological Review*, 21 (march/April, 1995): 48; Walter C. Kaiser, The Old Testament Documents, Are they Reliable? 84-96. See also John H Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 87-110 and Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006).

³³ John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 21-23.

³⁴ C. Von Orelli, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Minneapolis: Klock \$ Klock, 1897 reprinted Minneapolis: Christian Publishers, 1977): 390-404.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 404.

the judgment thereafter³⁶ Julia M. O'Brien used the form critical method of interpreting Malachi. She observes that Malachi spends an inordinate amount of time on the priesthood.³⁷ Others like Beth Glazier-McDonald focused on the theme of divine messenger,³⁸ McKenzie, Stephen and Howard, Wallace presented the most thorough treatment of the themes of covenant in Malachi³⁹ and Walter C. Kaiser Jr., focused on the unchanging nature of the Love of God for his people.⁴⁰

All of these are well argued themes but they are different from each other and leave a gap to be filled. They neglected the focus of God's mission in Malachi. The focus of God's mission of glorifying Yahweh's name beyond the border of Israel was totally neglected. As a result of this gap created by previous scholars this work focuses on the theme of knowledge of God to all nations through his mission of purification of His priesthood, his people and the nation Israel in the post exilic period of Judah and was carried out to the New Testament (Matt 8:11 and Matt 28:19-20).

Dealing with People in Malachi: God's Vision of all Nations Glorifying Yahweh

Unlike the book of Hosea and Isaiah the time of Malachi's calling was not linked to the reign of any King but he was called and God used him in a mighty way. Some scholars

³⁶ Edward J. Young and J. G. Baldwin, "The Book of Malachi," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed J. D. Douglas (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1988), 728-29.

³⁷ Julia M. O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi* SBL Dissertation Series 121 (Atlanta Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990),

³⁸ Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* SBL Dissertation Series 98 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1987).

³⁹ Stephen McKenzie and Howard Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983):549-63. The duo developed and presented the three covenants mentioned in Malachi.

⁴⁰ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Malachi: God the Unchanging Love* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984).

observed that his ministry started shortly before the arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem,⁴¹ others proposed a late date⁴² but some are not even specific on the date of Malachi.⁴³ One thing that is sure is that Malachi directed his message to his own people, the post exilic Israel.⁴⁴ The prophet Malachi served in Judah after the Babylonian exile after Nehemiah's return to Persia was well attested.⁴⁵ In line with tracing the background, specifically what was happening during Malachi's time is very important for understanding his prophesy. The book of Malachi was written at a point when the nation had special problem, a period when great political, military, economic and religious changes were made.⁴⁶ So there was a need to teach the Jews about Yahweh's faithful love to their fathers in seeking the falling man through reconciliation and his righteous judgment to come in order to get them to repent and initiate a genuine reform of the society that will influence the whole world.

The content of his message was characterized by disputation which is structured into six divisions.⁴⁷ The disputations are structured in this way: First disputation: God's love for Israel (Mal. 1:1-5), Second disputation: God's accusation of the corrupt priests (Mal 1:6-2:9), Third disputation: God's accusation of the unfaithful people in covenantal

⁴¹ David F. Hinson, *The Books of the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1992), 184.

⁴² C.C. Torrey, "The Prophecy of Malachi" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17, (1898), 14-15.

⁴³ J.E. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi: Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* (ed. D.J. Wiseman, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 213.

⁴⁴ Smith, 302. See also *Ibid.*, 299-300.

⁴⁵ Richard A Taylor, and E. Ray Clendenen, *Haggai-Malachi: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (The New American Commentary, Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 205, 216. See also Pieter Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 160.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 299. See also McConville, 259-60 and Zuck, 428.

⁴⁷ Eggon Pfeifer, "Die Disputationsworte im Buche Maleachi: Ein Beitrag zur formgeschichtlichen Struktur," *Evangelical Theology* vol. 19 (1959), 554. See also Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: The Anchor Bible* vol. .25D (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1998), 26, 41-42. See also Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum-Malachi* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1986), 173-96.

obligations (Mal. 2:10-16), Fourth disputation: God's accusation of the sluggish people (Mal. 2:11-3:5), Fifth disputation: God's call to repent (Mal. 3:6-12), Sixth disputation: God's accusation of the careless people. This book has a final call to obey the Law of Moses (Mal. 3:22-24).

From the first disputation to the last one in that book one observes that Malachi's pictured the surrounding nations as a worshiper of foreign god (2:11) and look at the people in the congregation of Yahweh as having an alliance with them as unfaithful to one's covenant God (2:10). This shows that they had a broken relationship with God which will not allow the name of Yahweh to be known among the surrounding nations. He condemned the various people group and their disregard for the Law that shows a lack of fear of God which does not allow Yahweh to receive his glory among the nations. One should remember that He had a purpose of living Israel among the nations. He wanted them to live a distinct kind of life that other nations around will see and glorify God which is one aspect that is very important in Malachi.

The argument was well presented. It all started with the Yahweh's covenant love with the people in 1:1-5. Here he states the love of God for Israel and the failure of the people to love Him which has led the people to fail in loving their neighbours.⁴⁸ This was followed by the behaviour of the priest who were not loyal to the worship of Yahweh; they were also indicted in 1:6-2:9.⁴⁹ The people and the priests have neglected the honour and worship of Yahweh. Now, how can this negligence be curbed? This work look into, specific references, where being known among the nations is considered in Malachi.

The writer of Malachi help the readers to know the broken relationship which

⁴⁸Andrew Hill, 145-70.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 171-221.

started with God caused the people a broken relationship in human society that He was speaking against. In order to make a change that will affect the whole nations in the whole world, the writer presents three cycles of calling the priests to order in his accusation (1:6-2:9, 2:10-3:7 and 3:8-15). The writer makes use of different imageries to let the readers know the severity of the sins of the priests like father-son relationship and husband and wife relationship. He observed that the clan and tribe of the priest were the most important social groups for the Hebrew people. However, their unacceptable cultic practice and disloyalty to the covenant relationship in Yahweh's congregation has misinformed the world as to who Yahweh is. He opines that all of these priests' defiling behaviour was an insult to Yahweh like a son despising his father. Their despising behaviour was stated in two ways; they defile the cultic practice (2:4, 8) and were unfaithful to God's covenant relationship with respect to fellow human beings which has misinformed the world as to who Yahweh is.

At the conclusion of Malachi indictment against the priests who are leaders in Israel (Ma. 1:6-2:9), he opined that there is a need for an expansion of the accusation from the priests to the whole nation of Israel (3:7-15). Why? This is because the Jews were the recipients of the word of God/Torah (Ex 19-20). They were the custodians of the word of God (Deut 4:8). They have a specific mission that is to be a life model to other nations (Deut 30:11-20). They were also the transmitter of the word of God (Is 42:6,7; 49:3, 6). They were all of these so that other nations would be attracted to God (Yahweh) unlike in the New Testament where evangelism is one-on-one.

God revealed himself to his people in this way, especially to the leaders, the priests, the people and the entire nation. The priests and the people are failing in their

covenantal obligations. God will come in judgment to both the priests and the people. He assures them that he will purify his people but beyond that, he, in the end, will make himself known to all the world through the life and treatment of his people. The observation of this writer was captured in the words of Brian Froese when he says, “. . . the themes of knowledge and witness of Yahweh to the nations is Malachi’s theological pinwheel. The revelation, as to who Yahweh is, has come in three forms: cultic, covenant expressed in Levitical priesthood, marriage, and adherence to the legal tradition. As Yahweh wished to be known to the nations, he starts with corrective measures in the people, the priesthood, then in marriage, the whole of the nation and finally with the world at the time of judgment.”⁵⁰

This is clearly demonstrated in a faithful and national God who does not want anyone to perish but that everyone will come to repentance (Gen 12:3 Cf. Rev 5:9; 7:9 and 14:6).⁵¹ He reiterated that, at the end, God will come in judgment. Malachi was able to show the readers that there are two types of people, the people who know and follow Yahweh, (faithful) and those who do not (the unfaithful). The term treasured possessions shows that he will spare the faithful in the end but method of judging the ungodly will be painful (3:1-5). This writer observes that if this purpose will be fulfilled then the central unifying theme of Malachi will be knowledge of God to all nations through the purification of the corrupt priests and the people in Yahweh’s congregation. This is the

⁵⁰ Brien Froese, “Approaching A Theology of The Book of Malachi,” *Direction* vol. 25. No. 1 (Spring 1996), 19. See also Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum-Malachi*, (Louisville; John Knox Press, 1986), 177. She opines that the goal of God is a future establishment of the kinship of God over all the earth and that Israel was the people called to be a special instrument through which God would realize his universal kinship.

⁵¹ Note that all peoples as used here does not mean every person on earth but every ethnic group is given the opportunity and grace of participating in accepting, worshipping and serving God. God can do this by his sovereign power. So the believers need to be more active in sharing their faith.

primary theological concept that God's sovereign rule over all the nations will be achieved at the end.⁵²

Conclusion

Mission is a priority, there is no other task in the Bible that one can compare with mission because this is the only important task that God himself is involved, he is a missionary God. The concern of mission for the nations beyond the boarder of Israel has been shown in this work. The initial process of purification will begin with the corrupt priests because they are the leaders of the people. They must see to it that they manage their private lives well because this is a manner by which God is revealed. They must also do their functions of transmitting the knowledge of God and instruction to the people in a right manner because the future event is centered on the present. The concern for the nations in God's future plan is embedded in the way the priests, the people and the nation Israel conduct their lives. God is still seeking the falling man through reconciliation in all ages in order to bring back to himself the lost people in a spiritual relationship. This is exactly where the emerging theme of knowing God develops and looks forward to a proclamation that demands a reversal of mission trends, the mission of God the father must be seen as a priority in our churches, a mission of reconciling the lost which should go beyond the boarder of Israel.

The book of Malachi is a missionary book in the Old Testament. Malachi is centered on God's dealing with a corrupt priesthood and the subsequent purification of Israel in order to continue Yahweh's witness to the nations. It looks forward and presents

⁵² See Psalm 47:9; Psalm 2:8; 7:9; Psalm 22:29; Psalm 82:8 and 99:1 in the Masoretic edition of the Hebrew Text. See also Jer 10:7; 2 Chro 20:6 and the promise that all nations will share in the salvation and blessing of Abraham in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 26:4 and Gal. 3:8).

Israel as having a great future in the presence of God but she needs to keep God's covenant and be faithful in covenant obligations. Such fulfillment cut across every areas of the life of the people in the nation, the priests, the levites, the people or individuals and the nation at large. God will begin the purification process from the priests; the people in Yahweh's congregation, the nation Israel will follow, then the judgment of other people of other nations. It is when these people are purified and begin to uphold the cultic, priestly and legal traditions, then, things will be okay, for this is the ways for all nations to know and fear God. That is the mission of God. Therefore, a demand for a reflection of mission with a vision that will have a significant result in the Catholic Church should be our priority in the present dispensation.

This distinct kind of life is their missionary method of making Yahweh known beyond the boarder of Israel, especially among the other nations. This is the missioner motif of God who has a mission with vision in Malachi. It is in this way that Yahweh will make himself known and make his name great among the nations and his name will be magnified beyond the boarder of Israel (1:11, 14). In view of this observation, the missionary message of Malachi is applicable to the contemporary Christians worldwide. The church should not change the priority thing for the least. There is a need to look into the way we do missions by looking at the way we live our Christian lives. Christians should examine their lives and our relationship with the Lord in worship and in our daily living among the nations. God in Christ did not die to save believers alone but also to live a holy live. Salvation calls for living a distinct kind of life different from the pagan community from other nations. It is only in living such life that God will be made known beyond the boarder of Israel and ours.

