

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO BENEFITS OF BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS OF MIMESIS TO THE MORAL FORMATION OF SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** Until recently, the pervasive and primordial role of imitation in human life was either largely ignored or misunderstood by empirical researchers but is now clear that Investigations in human imitation are among the most profound areas of research which unfortunately contribute to the future of a less unified society. This human imitation lacks insight to the proper principles of what biblical imitation advocates. Human imitation produces human forms of unhealthy relational competition, rivalry, mayhem, total annihilation of human Life and violence while biblical hermeneutics of mimesis produces a godly moral formation of society as well as practices in transforming the effects of human imitation into viable and sustainable communities. Using the Bible as a theological leitmotif, this study was conducted to find out, "Benefits of biblical hermeneutics of mimesis to the moral formation of society." It served a double purpose to explore these benefits and to present for consideration a positive thesis about the nature of true imitation of moral values base on God's Word which gives a central position to the development of true knowledge. Two hypotheses investigated were: 1. Biblical hermeneutics of mimesis benefits society in bringing peace and stability to the world and 2. It generates God's own attributes in mankind thereby creating the willingness to love and obey God's fundamental principles of good living.

The major findings pointed to a 100% and 94% respectively to confirm the above hypotheses making them acceptable by the researcher. In general, to arrive at these conclusions, the author used oral interview and questionnaire whose validity and reliability were determined statistically through the percentage and average methods.

The findings revealed eight critical benefits of biblical hermeneutics of mimesis to the Moral formation of society

1. Moral degradation is avoided
  2. Peace and stability through God's graciousness
  3. The generation of God's attributes of willingness to love, obedience to His Fundamental principles and kindness for humanity sake
  4. Role models in humility
  5. Strength in resisting tests from the ungodly
  6. Acquisition of techniques in virtue thinking and basic life orientations
  7. Self-control and perseverance and the inheritance of eternal life.
  8. Benefit of God's veracity
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It was suggested that, because the presence of ruthless massacres, genocide, terrorism, civil and natural wars and the worst violations of human rights are what we see prevail all over the world, only by imitating God's own standards can we solve at these savage calamities. Mankind keeps drifting away from imitating God's principle of life which eventually leads him from the extinguishing moral values and remoteness of self-control, and so respondents recommended that religion and particularly Christianity should teach what the Bible says; help their followers embody these godly qualities in their lives for they are mandatory. The Literacy rate in the knowledge of Bible teaching should be raised to produce a morally sound generation because it was found in the course of this research that misinterpretation or unbiblical hermeneutics of scriptures created a lack of knowledge of God's word thereby creating pitfalls to the Creators standard of mimesis or imitation, and that eventually is leading to humanity's inability.

**Keywords:** Benefits, Mimesis, Moral formation, Hermeneutics.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Think of all the chaos that would have been avoided if we followed the example of Christ Jesus, the relationships that would have avoided painful breakups, the violence and savage behavior of mankind interpretation of what is mimesis and how this knowledge helps unlock an interpretive method for understanding how the world operates, should always be based on a biblical hermeneutic. Christianity has as one of its objectives to bring about a tranquility of mind and heart which is the peace that transcend all other virtues of this region. This focus has its foundation of the Biblical teaching about who God and what He can do. The interpretations of what is right and what is wrong, what does God say and what does God mean, go a large measure in our society today. The non-violent God is tuned as a God of violence and disorder due to various interpretations of His nature, it is within the context of this abysmal darkness that scorches the innermost feelings of God's creatures that the researcher has engaged in a study on the topic *An investigation into benefits of Biblical hermeneutics of mimesis to the moral formation of society: A case study of Omega Fire Ministry in Maseru District*. In realization of the need for proper imitation of God's nature and the development of positive moral values and character building towards one another that this study is rationally constructed to be a necessary academic exercise for investigation. Christian education acknowledges God as mankind's common Father and helps us live not according to our own conscience and dictates but according to the conscience of God in us- In other words, God's voice speaking in silent in the depth of our hearts on the right kind of mimesis towards Him and other fellowmen of His nature. This study will therefore identify the correct mimesis of Biblical hermeneutic and its benefits or rewards to society in general.

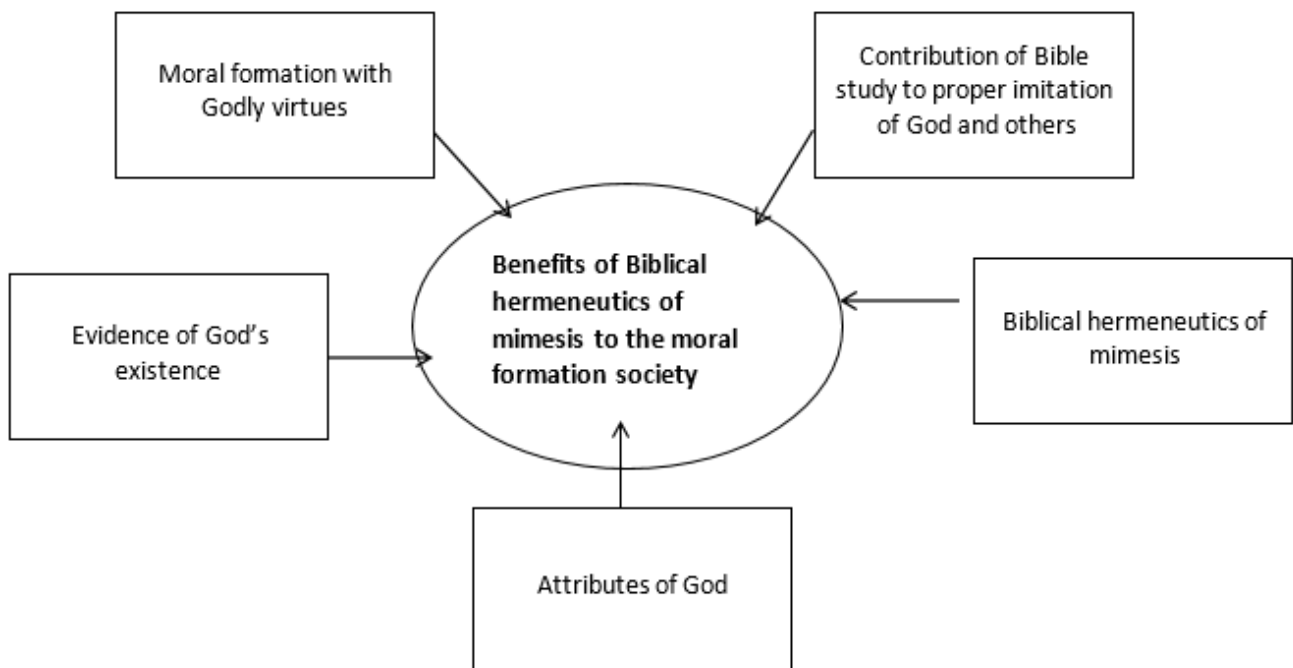
## 2. UNDERSTANDING MORAL BEHAVIOR

### 2.1 Understanding Moral Behavior

For decades now, scientists have been interested in understanding moral behavior through focusing on individual differences, conscience development; empathy related emotions as well as moral judgment (Murray, 2004). Nevertheless, an effective way to understand why mankind, the adult, adolescent children behave the way that do h's already be laid down in the Bible for us to discover, God in this law book, the bible gives reasons for any positive or negative behavior of mankind and practical solutions to any of such behavior that may mar our relationship with Him. It is in the light of this book (the bible) that the Christian doctrine not only has its roots of moral development and values acquisition but also a nonviolence character of those who imitate the nonviolent God. Despite the laudable efforts from the holy book to impact Christian hermeneutical interpretation of mimesis and moral education, a number of social disorders are visible in our society. This therefore indicates deficiencies in what actually constitute mimesis or imitation. To dig out these dissonances and investigate the causes of these divergent interpretations of this concept," will be imperative to review the works of some scholars. According to E. Wynne, good character must be the priority for every educational system because there is always a need to produce moral human beings before they become competent professionals, scholars and technicians, (Wynne, 1989). It is evidently clear that Christian's values and norms impact society to practice honesty while religious knowledge in general equip us with the capacity to imitate He that we claim to worship. But to understand barriers to all these efforts of Christian mimesis, it is imperative to review as well, what some studies advocate against religious knowledge. According to the study carried out by C. Bronte, he concluded that some researchers declare that individuals do not need religion to be sophisticated human being and that they can learn values without having religious knowledge, (Bronte 1977). In the light of the above discussion and controversial empirical evidences, this study will need to resolve such conflicts through further investigations. Researchers have found out that, the substratum of character is self discipline which comes through embedded Christian teachings, (Coleman, 1995). It a person can defeat his own self for the interest of other people and can

feel others emotions, he is empathically moved and can be a moral being" Coleman reiterated. Of course! Only God and the God of the Bible alone can subdue the wicked and deceitful Heart of man in order for this altruism to form a reformed and redeemed individual, (Jer. 17:9).

### Conceptual framework of the study



## 2.2 Morality and Christianity

It was believed by atheists in Europe and America that religion had nothing to do with the solution of problems faced by humanity. They promoted that therefore, schools influence should exclude all material related to religion. This blind thought began to influence individual collective code of ethic. Then in England and America a movement was launched to protest against this illogical idea. Dr Flex Adler from Columbia University started a movement to organize a movement in nineteenth century. The basic creed of the ethic movement was expressed in the blowing words in the statement of objectives of the American Ethical Union, a federation of six ethical societies of America:

“To assert the supreme importance of the ethical factor in all relations of life, personal, social, national and international, apart from any theological or metaphysical considerations.”(Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol, 8, pp.757)

There was an ethical movement initiated in England for the revival of ethics and a Union of Ethical Societies' was established. During 1928, the society for ethical movement was merged in this Union. Its main objectives are stated as:

“To promote by all lawful means the study of ethical principles to advocate a religion of human fellowship and service, based upon the principle that the supreme aim of religion is the love of goodness, and that moral ideas and the moral life are independent of beliefs as to the ultimate nature of things and a life after-death; and, by purely human and material means, to help men to love, know, and do the right in all relations of life.” (The Ethical Movement, Encyclopedia Britannica. Vol.8, pp. 756-57) Christianity plays a significant role in satisfying our physical as well as spiritual needs: It teaches us a code of behavior and gives us a meaning for our existence Unfortunately, in today's western society and even part of Africa and Asia, religious, moral and ethical values have been declining. The families are falling apart, divorce rate is increasing sharply, and substance abuse and excessive sexual indulgence are common in adolescents of school age and young adults. These factors lead to conflicts resentment, loss of self-respect, loneliness, depression, anxiety and a host of psychological symptoms" (Moses, 2012) Christianity enlightens, terrifies, subdues, gives faith, inflicts penitence, inspires resolution, and inflames devotion. Doing good in practice is the proof of having the right belief in the heart. This is why the Holy Bible emphasizes that we should do good at all times, (Galatians 6:6-10)

Morality is at the heart of all religion, and, as many have argued, one important reason for studying Christianity is to acquire some sense of the answers that have been given to the fundamental existential questions of life. Moral development of children is refined and shaped by religious Christian education and this makes it (Christian education) insuperable with morality. According to Fagan, Gerald and William, the relationship of morality with religion Christian education is the development of a strong family fellowship unit, which has a stable marriage bond, move out poverty easily, has sound moral judgment, self-esteem and is less attracted towards alcoholism and drug addiction, (Fagan, 1996). The word Christianity has two-fold meaning: peace, and submission to Christ. This submission requires a fully conscious and willing effort to submit to the one Almighty God. One must consciously and conscientiously give oneself to the service of God. This means to act on what God enjoins all to do in the Bible, In Christianity we find such comprehensive moral as can ensure our progress to the highest pinnacle in every sphere of human life and activity. Christianity gives us basic moral norms and values to guide and control the entire gamut of man's life. It gives a comprehensive code of behavior for the individual and shows him the highest possible moral excellence and also gives ethical principles on which the edifice of a truly righteous society can be raised and which, accepted as the basis of individual and collective conduct, can save life from the chaos and anarchy that have overtaken today'

Christianity has been from its inception very concerned with issues of human rights. Privacy, freedom, dignity and equality of human beings are protected in Christianity. It has the dominant characteristics of morality superior than any other religion of the world because it holds a comprehensive code of behavior. It also differentiates the right and wrong in the sense that the rules which bring benefit to human beings are 'good and vice is all harmful for the mankind, it provokes its followers to adapt sheer moral ideas and concepts that are made for the safety human beings it has formulated principles for every walk of life and guides human very expressive way. People coming under its flag are a community. Their interests are common and they live like brethren.

Christianity refines and purifies both intrinsic behavior of man within a self-sufficing orbit of culture and a social system of defined features it holds the principles of morality towards the Creator of man as well as his fellow being. It offers a complete coordination of the spiritual and material aspects of human life lays down a practical code and demands righteousness well within the realm of practicability. It promotes every thought and action best for human survival and peace. The international scenario indicates a recent wave for the revival of religious education for the solution of their social problems and stability in families and societies.

### 3. ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

#### 3.1 Arguments for God's Existence

One would rather live believing strongly that there is God (a Supreme Being) and finds out later there wasn't than live that there is no God and discover later that He lives and exists: What a dreadful encounter that would be bloodcurdling and frightening so to speak. This part of the thesis will look at four great arguments of God existence as well as presenting to every finite mind those genuine and reliable proofs that God exist and why imitating Him creates benefits to society it is imperative for one to say God exist. The complex universe is one of the most outstanding proofs or evidence for the existing of the Almighty God Isn't it amazing that any other things that exist after the universe was made, where God just spoke and things were put in their normal places-anything else new is fashioned not with words of mouth but with tools? The chairs, tables and beds in our houses made by carpenters, the cars, airplanes and houses, just to mention but a few all these things will only come alive by man's ability to fit things together in order for him to have the final product. We have heard about the Big Bang theory where one enormous explosion of energy and light as the scientists put is the origin of the universe. But no one can answer where the explosion came from some say man developed and became the higher form of the animal kingdom, but where did the animal come from?

According to Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow, a self-described agnostic, stated, "The seed of everything that has happened in the universe was planted in that first instant, every star, every planet and every living creature in the universe came into being as a result of events that were set in motion in the moment of the cosmic explosion. The Universe flashed into being and we cannot find out what caused that to happen." Robert could not find out what caused this explosion as he mentioned above, but today, it is clear evidence that God was at work. The Encyclopedia Americana, Vol 12 (1970:743), defines God as:

*The Supreme Being - the First Cause and spiritual Being Self-existent, external and absolutely free and all powerful. He is distinct from the matter which He has created in many forms and which He conserves and controls.*

The above definition expands on the idea that there does not seem to have been a period of history where mankind was without a belief in a supernatural author and governor of the universe. This could only attest because He has written His laws and attributes in our minds and even in the peanut minds of those who seem to believe in something else. Something else, yes! Maybe, a stone, a tree, a piece of wood, some flying creatures, or some celestial objects.

### 3.2 The Ontological Argument

This argument was first formulated by St Anselm which proceeded from the notion of the *most perfect Being*, in other words, the being than which none greater can be thought (Franco P 743) Anselm insisted that to inter his existence without actual existence, the idea will fall short of perfection and no doubt today in our society particularly the society of any apologist, without God, the world will be in total chaos total annihilation of human life without restraint and the dominant behavior will be that of savagery. It is worth mentioning that in the course of my research to this assignment. St Anselm and René Descartes champion this stance followed by Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hegel (Halsey, 179). Anselm believes that, there is a meditative mind which equally and already believes in God but seeks an understanding of Him. He (Anselm) believes on the idea of the divine nature based on the authority of faith but which others can reach through reason by defining God as, "That than which a greater cannot be thought,"

(Halsey, 179). In my walk with Christianity, such a being exist in the real order than in the understanding alone and that is why personally always argue that God exist solely in the understanding. He is both the being than which no greater can be thought and the being than which something greater (a being existing in extra-mental reality) (Moses, 110). To avoid contradiction in understanding the ontological argument, we must admit that God truly exist in reality and not only in our minds- and as such, God Himself, as we strongly believe in His actually existing essence is a true God and the cause of the necessity and truth of our idea of what He is, (Moses, 111).

### 3.3 The Cosmological Argument

The supporters of this argument state that, knowledge of God actual existence does not flow from any ideal necessity but rather is founded on existential facts of our own human experience. (Halsey, 179). Aristotle, St Thomas Aquinas argue in this dimension that mankind cannot conceive an infinite regression of finite causes and therefore beyond the last or the first of the finite causes is the infinite, in other words an application of the cause of the existence of the universe originates from him. (Halsey 179) Cosmologists rely on the intelligibility of the notion of something which is not self caused to exist by anything else. To ask the questions, who made God? Or how does he look like? These are statements of ignorance and arrogance to a cosmologist as well as to a true apologist. According to Kretzmann and Stump in (Moses, 2012) was indeed God who created the universe- they argue, and that if God is supremely good, which of course He is, then there had to be some overflowing of His goodness in the form of a cosmos. I would like to end this line of thought with the intelligent argument of Thomas Aquinas who summarized his view with three solid and tact points:

- a) If the universe is moving in an orderly fashion, then there must be an unmovable mover behind the scenes
- b) If the universe exists and must have had a starting point, a being must have existed before the universe did to cause to come into existence
- c) An independent being must be the cause for all dependent beings, such as humans need cause for their continuing existence.

### 3.4 The Teleological Argument

This is an argument that proceeds from design to the order and arrangement of the universe, the reign of law and beauty and adaptation, to the intelligent and supreme fountain of order, (Halsey, 179). According to Halsey, the cosmos is evidence that God exist and that it provides a sort of reality that would be produced by an intelligent being William Paley, writing in his influential book "Nature Theology, offers a succinct and widely quoted summary of the design argument. He said, There cannot be design without a designer, contrivance without a contriver, order without choice; arrangement without anything capable of arranging, subservience and relation to a purpose without that which could intend a purpose, means suitable to an end and executing their office in accomplishing that end without ever having been contemplated or the means accommodated to it, arrangement, disposition of parts, subservience of means to an end, relation of instrument to a use implies the presence of intelligence and mind (Halsey, 203), it is imperative to mention that it is hard to look and believe in the big bang theory and say that a chaotic explosion caused all the order we find in the entire universe. This is mere foolishness in the minds and hearts of those who support it the Law Book of God reiterates, (Psalms 14; Psalm 53)



### 3.5 The Moral Argument

According to the supporters, this argument relied on the fact that God is a postulate of our moral nature and the moral law in us implies a lawgiver without us (Franco, 743). Finally if we carefully look at the ontological argument, one can say beyond all reasonable doubts and without any fear of contradictions that, this argument is the most useful in Christian apologetic today, it can be summarised in three shot statements.

i. God is the greatest conceivable being ii. it is greater to exist than not to exist iii. Therefore, God exists (Halsey, 179)

According to a true Christian general standpoint, logic, Science and other serious arguments that people use will never make sense in the absence of God-in other words, outside God Animals were not made in the image of God, they do not have any sense of morality and cannot think of the concept of love, man do have that sense, that moral compass that makes him know right from wrong Six serious and straight-forward reasons to believe that God is really there.

## 4. RESEARCH METHOD

Since a research design is a section of the research plan, this researcher the description of the procedure he used in testing the hypothesis Firstly, I visited the congregation that constituted the case study of this research and was granted audience in their bible study lessons. The purpose of this visit was to identify how the members of this congregation define mimeses and whether the hermeneutic on this concept was that of biblical standards. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher used interviews and a questionnaire of thirty questions that were given to the selected sample.

Maseru District gets its name from the capital city Maseru of the kingdom of Lesotho. It shares a boundary with Berea District and part of the Republic of South Africa. It is a geographical area characterised more with business activities since it is a border town.

The district has so many different churches but the case study was be focused on *Omega Fire Ministry*.

The target population of this study comprised of members of the youth movement in the church as well as the elders. The choice of this target population was as a result of the researcher's interest in knowing how the understanding of imitating God benefits them in life and the society in which they find themselves. The target population consisted of 522 individuals. The sample is a small number of observations taken from the total number making up the population. The researcher took as his sample, the Pastor and his wife, all five elders of the said congregation, as well as one hundred and ten youth members consisting of fifty five males and females respectively. Consequently, the sample constituted a total number of one hundred and seventeen (129) respondents.

A technique in which a series of both structured and instructed questions were provided by the researcher to respondents in order to obtain the respondent's view or information about the topic. The questions were only filed by individuals selected for the case study church and were aimed at gathering information on the benefits of biblical hermeneutics of mimesis on society in general

The questions were short and precise to enable respondents circle or tick an answer their choice.

In addition to the questionnaire, an oral interview was conducted on the leader of the congregation and his elders, the leader of the youth movement and five members of his executive committee as well as the assistant pastor of the church This was necessary for the researcher to observe and evaluate relevant information and also to have a critical assessment of the respondents who were given the opportunity to speak freely without fear or identification Oral interviews were also good tools since they solved the difficulties of respondents who were not able to fit the questionnaire due to their workload and time constrain

The instruments used as already mentioned were: a questionnaire of thirty questions and oral interviews. In administering them, the researcher made face to face contact with the interviewees where he gathered data and information which he analyzed. The interviews were conducted on fifteen (15) administrators of congregation because this enabled the researcher to take down all relevant information from the respondents. For the questionnaire, one hundred and fourteen (114) were made available and on the part of their administration, the researcher went straight to the respondents and distributed them. A deadline was set for collection, that is, a maximum of four weeks period was given. The researcher therefore analyzed this data within a time frame of three months for the final thesis.

The average method was used for this purpose Responses of the respondents to questions on the questionnaire were compared that is, answers for question one for example were compared on every questionnaire sect out and if there was much tied answers to that question, the researcher included a "Yes" or a "No" answer to the question. This procedure was applied in the rest of the questionnaire. On the part of the interviews, the researcher took down all answers given by the interviewees that he subsequently used for his final analysis.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

According to the data presented on tables 4.1 and 4.1:1, the benefits of imitating God following a biblical hermeneutic are clearly seen. Christian education establishes true morality and where a society mimics other imitators rather than the creator of heaven and earth, there is always a breakdown of moral development, a breakdown of sense of purpose and eventually a perverse society of counterfeit imitations that are unprofitable. Christians by now ought to understand the concept of here worship, about the impact of men and women of stature since they are the custodians of the word of God. The Bible teaches in the book of 1Thesalosan 1:7-8 that the Thessalonians Christians have become examples to the Macedonian and Achaia community. Men and women of different strata of society had come to the knowledge of Christ through their example. No one could peel away any layer of faith in the desire for the word of God and that is why their impact to society was so dramatic. All these happened, because they have learnt from Paul who leant from the Lord Jesus. Today, who are mankind's heroes? Is it not he celebrities in our streets, and the famous boxers of those days; the popular musicians in our community and the thriving dancers in our society – just to mention but a few. The Thessalonians had models that in turn, produced the kind of faith that made them models for somebody else True imitation and morality therefore are found not in the coder established by a society but that which is established by the word of God. Any moral code conduct established by society that differs from the truth established by the Word of God is not in its true definition a moral conduct because it has to stand to the scrutiny of what God has to say about The process of having God communicate Himself by Living in a human being is what He - God is absolutely committed in the scriptures.

In 1Thessalonians, we read what Paul tells Christians, "... Just you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sakes. You also became imitators of us and of the Lord having moved the word in much tribulation with joy of the Holy Spirit..."

(1 Thessalonians 5:6)

In the course of the research respondents were asked to give the compact that

Ware if we imitate someone or something else other than the God of the Bible and their responses were: a breakdown of moral conduct and formation, increased in savage behaviour, constant rebellion and chaos among members of society as well as a tremendous lack of purposeful life among humanity. These results were analysed and using the average and percent methods, more than 90% were positive. In an attempt to find solutions to the problem respondents proposed the following: That,

1. Social gathering on bible study between and among Christians should be encouraged for it will increase self-awareness self-understanding clarification of moral development and the development of responsible behavior
2. The Knowledge of the interpretation of the scriptures should be based on the Bible itself not on some philosophical thought
3. That society should be taught the benefits and the enormous output that humanity outputs that humanity gets by a correct theory of mimesis
4. That mankind in general should know who they owe allegiance to and the consequence of rebelling against their Creator

In reality, the morality and true Christians are joined by the very same foundation the word of God. The researcher discovered that morality is not found in what is right or Justified in the eyes of the society, but more on the revelation of God's view of right and wrong as given in His Word. Christianity teachers that, a true moral character of a person is found in the reflection of that person's life and how it coincides with the instructions given to us in the word of God. (Tunel, 1983)

Smetana explained that moral and social values education should be implemented in schools first by identifying a domain of moral cognition that is tied to the inherent features of human social interaction (Smetana, 1996) Smetana further explained that moral formation through education, particular Christian, may be grounded in the fear of

God leading to a universal concern of fairness and human (Smetana, 1996). It believed that Christianity refines and purifies both intrinsic behavior of man within a self-sufficing orbit of culture and a social system of defined features holds the principles of morality towards the Creator of man as well as his fellow being as such. God is at the center of whatsoever the creature does with his life.

Imitating God and knowing precisely what He wants for one's life in paramount to everyone because this offers a complete coordination of the spiritual and material aspects of human life: it also bays down a practical code and demands righteousness well within the realm of practicability. Respondents noted that, imitating God promotes every thought and action best for human survival and peace. They, (respondents) also agreed that temptation always has two elements the external event or stimulus that puts the pressure on mankind as well as his own internal sin nature both exposes him to Satan. Having a successful negotiation of such a difficult test therefore will require a complete knowledge of God's purpose in life.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Think of all the chaos that would have been avoided if we followed the example of Christ Jesus, the relationships that would have avoided painful breakups, the violence and savage behavior of mankind interpretation of what is mimesis and how this knowledge helps unlock an interpretive method for understanding how the world operates, should always be based on a biblical hermeneutic. Christianity has as one of its objectives to bring about a tranquility of mind and heart which is the peace that transcend all other virtues of this region. This focus has its foundation of the Biblical teaching about who God and what He can do. The interpretations of what is right and what is wrong, what does God say and what does God mean, go a large measure in our society today. The non-violent God is tuned as a God of violence and disorder due to various interpretations of His nature, it is within the context of this abysmal darkness that scorches the innermost feelings of God's creatures that the researcher has engaged in a study on the topic *An investigation into benefits of Biblical hermeneutics of mimesis to the moral formation of society: A case study of Omega Fire Ministry in Maseru District.*

Until recently, the pervasive and primordial role of imitation in human life was either largely ignored or misunderstood by empirical researchers but is now clear that Investigations in human imitation are among the most profound areas of research which unfortunately contribute to the future of a less unified society. This human imitation lacks insight to the proper principles of what biblical imitation advocates. Human imitation produces human forms of unhealthy relational competition, rivalry, mayhem, total annihilation of human Life and violence while biblical hermeneutics of mimesis produces a godly moral formation of society as well as practices in transforming the effects of human imitation into viable and sustainable communities. Using the Bible as a theological leitmotif, this study was conducted to find out, "Benefits of biblical hermeneutics of mimesis to the moral formation of society."

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