

A large, modern, metallic cross structure is the central focus of the image. The cross is composed of thick, rectangular beams that intersect at a central point. The vertical beam is slightly taller than the horizontal beam. The structure is made of a material that appears to be brushed metal or a similar textured surface, with some reflections and shadows. The background is a clear, solid blue sky. The overall composition is simple and powerful, emphasizing the shape of the cross.

SOUTH AFRICAN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCES

From colonialism to democracy

Kelebogile T. Resane

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South African Christian Experiences – From colonialism to democracy

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*"THEOLOGY IS:
COOKED IN GERMANY
CORRUPTED IN AMERICA
RATIFIED IN BRITAIN
PRACTISED IN AFRICA"*

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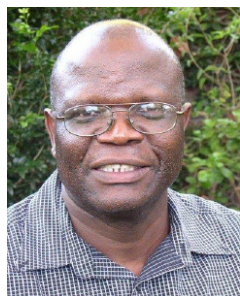
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Introduction

South African Christianity, like that in the rest of the African continent, is explosive, phenomenal, and relative in numbers. Contemporary South African Christianity is enormously vibrant and diverse. Theologians and sociologists agree that Africa is continuing to make a major contribution to the shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity to the Global South taking place in this century. Researchers on South African Christianity encounter one common trend, and that is diversity and proliferation. The increasing diversity has led some scholars to conclude that speaking about African Christianities in the plural, to emphasise that “different strands or traditions ... may not be compatible one to another” (Ukah 2007:2). As the recent dynamics and new realities encounter the emerging African socio-cultural realities that are intertwined with religious views and outlooks, it has become a highly complex task to attempt to classify African Christianity

This book is the result of just over two years of work of researching, reading, discovering, analysing, and reflecting on these dynamics in South Africa. Most of the *lingua franca* used is based on South African language philosophies and worldviews. As a norm, Chapter 1 is built on history. For one to understand the present, one needs to know the past. The past helps us understand the present. This first chapter is a *pulamadibogo* – a preface or a foreword sketching how Christianity came to South Africa. However, the chapter starts by alluding that missionaries did not enter a godless continent when they arrived in Africa with the gospel of Christ. The African God is characterised with benevolence, sustaining power for protection and prosperity of the human race. Munificence accompanied by altruism is what this God is all about. He is not remote-controlling the affairs of the universe, but a transcendent God who dwells among and reigns supreme above

For the period 1652–1820, the South African colonial society was dominated by settlers designating themselves by various names such as colonists, inhabitants, Afrikaners, Christians, Whites or Europeans. This population was composed, among others, by the Dutch, Germans, French and English. Different tribes received the gospel through different mission agencies, and their reaction to the Bible message also differed.

The big anathema highlighted in this first chapter is the *samewerking* – cooperation of missionaries with the colonial powers. The colonial era was the era of missionary boom. Colonialism and missions were comrades in arms, with one target in mind, namely, civilising and converting the pagans. Christian missionaries championed the theology of partnership with the civil state, in this regard the imperial authority. This became a seedbed of suspicion for Africans towards the Christian faith. It also laid the foundation for the unique theology embraced by Africans trying to understand the God of the Bible – how realistic and sympathetic is He to the African plight sanctioned by imperialist Western missionaries.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the Bible became a ‘white’ book and was used to justify White supremacist ideals. This led to the problem of the gospel and social justice being at loggerheads, which became the fertile soil for secessions into Ethiopianism, African Independent Churches, and syncretism.

African Christians continue to reflect on the reality of God, including this God’s colour, character, and conundrum in dealing with African affairs. In many, these affairs include marginalisation, misery, poverty and oppression.

South African Christianity is mainly Protestant, of course with significant Catholic presence. It is also seasoned by a strong African Zionism influence, a classical Pentecostal faith, and a neo-Charismatic flavour. The Christian faith in South Africa is still widely divided between Black and White people.

From this historical foundation, the narrative moves in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 towards African understanding of the Trinitarian God. Many Africans struggle to correlate the God of the Bible and the God presented to them by the

missionary imperialists. The attributes of God as taught in the Bible seem to be in collision with the 'messengers of God' who teach and proclaim the same God. The God of the Bible was full of love, mercy and kindness. Questions arose from the oppressed masses when they witnessed and experienced slavery, physical brutality, and oppression by the same people who showed and preached love to and for them. African Christianisation gave birth to numerous negative forces in African social fabric. The social analysts speak of African miseries of poverty, corruption, environmental degradation, socio-political corruption, ecological crises, and various pandemics, epidemics, and endemics. In many parts of the continent, suffering had become systemic.

African Christians continued to be caught between the gods. After 1994, authorities started to recognise the once-marginalised spiritual realities, such as African traditional religions and Rastafarianism. A maturing young adult in South Africa feels caught between the gods.

The question that continued to bombard Africans had always been, 'Is the God of the Bible or the missionaries to blame for these imbalances of the message and the messengers?' African Christians still struggle with the theology of the Whites. For them, it is the theology that justifies oppression, disempowerment, marginalisation, supremacist ideals, and discrimination in all its ugly faces.

Christ, the centre of Christianity, and or Christology, in general, is caught at the crossroads. The bone of contention in African Christianity is the identity, the person, the place, and the role of Christ versus African ancestral veneration. The Christ of the Bible is rejected either based on his distance from the African experiential realities, or his misplaced position by Western Christianity in African reality. Great contenders are Christ and ancestors. The problem exemplified on the person of Jesus Christ. Who he is took precedence over what he does. His identity in African theology occupies the central space in discourses. Soteriology based on Christology seems unrelated to African oppression. Is salvation without structural justice provided by the Christ of the Bible? Africans struggle with salvation without liberation or freedom from structural ills. The

battle in the African minds had always been of the God who seems to be distant from their experiential realities.

The other contender with Christ for salvation is the witchdoctor; and both compete for the same clientele who consult one or both for power, protection and prosperity. These three P's had been brought into African Christianity. The Man of God (pastor, prophet, apostle, papa, etc.) is equated with the *inyanga/ngaka* (witchdoctor) to bless the faithful with power, protection, and prosperity. The tactics used by the witchdoctor are not significantly different from that of the prophet, preacher, or pastor. African Christians yearn for power over demonic dominion and the structural wickedness. This power is also evoked in political sloganeering, such as 'Black Power'.

The Holy Spirit is never a disputed doctrine in African Christianity. African theology is a pneumatological theology, and African pneumatology is cosmological pneumatology. This pneumatology is inclusive regarding salvation, healing of the earth, and social justice. Every human being has the potential to be the most powerful earthly being. This is what makes life meaningful. Apart from power over darkness and wickedness, power can be either political or economic power. Africans see spiritual and physical beings as real entities that interact with each other in time and space. The Spirit gives power and frees people from the fear of demonic dominance and death. The Spirit works in individuals' needs – both personally and corporately.

The Spirit of power is always at the loggerheads with African spirituality that engages the ancestral veneration. The dilemma is how does one separate the Spirit of God in action and the spirits of ancestors in action?

It has become common to engage royalty, democracy and titles to gain power. Africa is a continent of royal powers. The king and the chief wield enormous influence for and through power, prestige, control, and dominance. The man of God does not appear as a servant, sitting with the flock to ensure their feeding and protection, but he or she is now on a higher pedestal adorning the stage with all accompanying decorum of royalty.

The real power (*dunamis*) or authority (*exousia*) are at stake. The life of the church is *dunamis* in the Holy Spirit. If one thinks of the Holy Spirit as neuter, a forceful power or just a soul, and does not realise that he is the Third Person of the blessed Holy Trinity, one will not understand this power, and it will be non-existent. The power of the Spirit (or from God) is not given for tyrannical purposes but for empowerment to live sustainably in a sinful environment.

Chapter 5 argues on how to make Christian God and theology acceptable to Africans? How to decolonise God so that Africans cannot see him as the God of the Whites or Westerners? The Bible and Christianity are still wrapped in Western ideologies and hermeneutics. Some Africans still view the Bible as a tool of oppression. Theology and Christianity need to untangle itself from Western interpretations to become relevant to the African context. Decolonisation of theology means that Africa must become independent with regard to the theological acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. It is an open knowledge that colonialism does not merely insinuate itself into the theological content but into the very structures of the curriculum. Theology is called upon to decolonise Christianity through Africanisation, which is the need to seek commonalities; affirm African culture, traditions and value systems; and foster an understanding of African consciousness. Contextualisation, whereby indigenous knowledge should be developed to ensure that theology and its transmission relate to the African context, is to be pursued. South African theology and Christianity should disconnect from missionaries' practical or theoretical assumptions of origin, priority, or essence. This is decentring, which calls for discontinuing the mistakes of the past and not using them as an excuse for not moving on towards the centre of the biblical and theological truth. Theology and Christianity in South Africa faces a mammoth task of deterritorialising the biblical truth and to stop situating the Bible as a European or a Western canon. When this process is engaged, an indigenisation and inculturation processes will ensue to make Christianity meaningful to Africans. The Bible is to speak into the contexts of injustice and African miseries for it to become a witnessing partner with African contexts.

Chapter 6 suggests that God cannot be rejected because he is perceived as the God of the rich Whites. The following questions are used to support this argument: Is God for the poor or the rich? Does God make White people rich and Black people poor? Is there any justice to reject the Bible on the basis that empowers Whites only? What does the Bible say about the poor? Some Africans associate poverty with spirituality. As far as they are concerned, the poor will always inherit the kingdom of God. This notion is enhanced by colonial Christianity that subliminally aimed to subject African Christians to exploitation and enslavement.

Since poverty is always in African worldview associated with Blacks, rather than Whites, Africans tend to interpret it not just as a curse, but also as a cushion of comfort. Racism taught us that since we are not created equal, we cannot have equal benefits. Many African Christians accepted poverty as part of who they are – something with a divine source not to be altered or tampered with.

African Christianity is historically marked for its role of disempowering Africans. It has kept Africans in a position of dependency, and it has justified the 'beggar mentality'. The colonial preaching makes an application that the true riches for a Christian (in this case, African Christian) consist of faith and love that express itself in self-denial and following Jesus.

Poverty, though significant among the African majority, has become a blanket for all racial groups. In the colonial and apartheid past, the colour of the skin offered privileges and preferences. In reality, poverty does not have colour. It affects all racial groups regardless of the continent or the province of one's origin.

Chapter 7 gives a historical sketch of the postcolonial religion and how it has impacted the South African Christianity and religion. Ethnic religions or African Traditional Religions (ATR) are gaining converts from Christianity because of the race question. Islamic propaganda lures people with Christian inclinations because of its claims of a brotherhood that is more genuine than Christianity. This is fuelled by the fact that theologically the church is one but is sociologically divided. The South African church confesses communion and unity but lives dividedly.

The legitimacy of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid was easily demonstrated from several biblical texts. The apartheid government appealed to Romans 13 as a tool to subjugate Black people. The text was used to numb the conscience to say that obedience to the government, regardless of that government's moral flaw, is a Christian duty. The new democratic dispensation since 1994 rekindled the false hope that the nation has entered the Promised Land after years of slavery (colonialism) and wilderness wanderings (apartheid).

Some external forces with some liberation proclivities entered the foray to promote true biblical Christianity. Liberation struggles were addressed through national initiatives and liberation theologies. Christianity was modified through the enactment of African Initiated Churches together with Pentecostal and Charismatic revivals.

Chapter 8 brings the reality of South African Christianity down to earth. The post-apartheid South Africa is a quarter of the century-old now. There is a new breed of the population that calls for the authenticity of Christianity. This is a younger generation in South Africa, disqualifying Christianity as an instrument of oppression. The so-called 'born-frees' are the generation that hears and reads about apartheid and its atrocities. They have never experienced or witnessed it in its naked form. They come from all racial groups in South Africa. This puts a spotlight into their identity crisis. They are happy to walk around with their egos bloated that they belong to South Africa, but deep inside their being, the reality of meaning and purpose of life reigns supreme. The vacuum that can only be filled by God still nags at the door of their lives.

The born-frees are a Bible ignorant generation. In the past, parental responsibility for entrenching religious convictions was enhanced by the schooling system. That has been taken away. The parents who relegated their responsibilities to the school are now facing dawdles uncomfortably. The Bible and the Church must become relevant to this emerging demographic reality. Other churches engage this generation, others disengage by holding on to the traditional ways of doing church, while others remain neutral. This is the time when Christ must become the centre of everything.

South African Christianity is challenged by socio-cultural menaces, perpetrated by the lack of ethics in higher places. This is what chapter 9 tries to address. The church in South Africa is still divided politically and gender-wise and carries a stigma towards people's sex-orientation and those suffering from HIV and AIDS. It is a church full of scandals in areas of dogma, finances, and sexuality. Corruption in socio-political structures signifies the church that has lost its influence in society.

Social sins and structural, systemic corruption abound. But the kind of moral perversity that harms the innocent church members and/or the vulnerable deserves no quarter. Moral laxity is rampant at all levels of the church community. This has become an obvious source of criticism of the church. Pastoral dignity and integrity are dragged in the mud. The commercialisation of the gospel is a mark of corruption in the church. The most lucrative and controversial corrupt practice used to raise funds for some church leaders is to sell points of contact such as water, oil, or cloths. People in desperation, when deemed to have sinned, are asked to pay a certain amount of money to the local church or a so-called 'man of God' instead of being led to repentance to receive grace – God's favour. The practice of milking finances out of the people easily lent itself to abuse. Initially, repentant Christians who pledged a certain amount, always dubbed planting the seed, are promised to receive multiple blessings of manifold amounts of money they have pledged. Pledgers are made to believe that salvation is attainable simply through the honouring of pledges made. The church must confront corruption and prophetically condemn it while pastorally embracing the perpetrators or corrupters to bring them to repentance and restoration.

Chapter 10 calls South African Christianity to consider the theological fundamentals that can address socio-structural miseries. Poverty, misery, sickness, marginalisation, and unemployment are the realities of South African societal landscape. South Africa is a nation that is discouraged, distressed, morally deflated, and emotionally drained. So, religiously meaningless. Politics, religion, and civility has become the demobilising factors leaving the population

in a stressful situation. Theology of dialogue should be brought to the centre of the community. What is crucially needed for South Africa Christianity is the discussion on how a theology of dialogue can be developed and how this can be applied on the practical level in the dialogue between religious communities and persons in different cultural contexts. Discussions should also cover theology and communal concerns, theology and political formations, theological and environmental issues, etc. This dialogue is as important in the theological and political landscape as it was three or more decades ago when apartheid was addressed as a heresy to be brought down.

A theology of reconciliation should be engaged as a guard against prejudices. Reconciliation enables humanity to be reconciled to God, community and self, due to human fall that separated humanity from God, human community, and self. Humans alienate themselves from themselves because hamartologically humans are not forming into what they were created to become. In human interactions, disagreements are inevitable. Conflicts and contentions are sometimes resolved and dissolved, and relationships continue normally. Reconciliation is the restoration of friendly relations. It is the action of making one view or belief compatible with another. Reconciliation means restoring one's relationship with one to be compatible and friendly with one another again.

In the process, South African church is to strive towards a theology of transformation which leads towards a new way of being a theological community. Transformation theology offers a theological recognition of the place of the commissioning Christ in our lives and the lives of others. This theology is a response to cultural pluralism like the one we encounter in South Africa. It may also be a response to the pastoral need for the Christian community to give a clearer witness to the oneness of Christ in a multi-faceted world. These theologies will shake the church out of the parochial mentality and make a theological voice vocal in the world.

The last chapter serves as a grand finale – an appeal to theology to be practical to the South African situation. Historically, theology in South Africa came wrapped under the blanket of colonialism. The Bible was interpreted with the

imperialist's lenses. White supremacy prevailed over the biblical hermeneutics, while Black inferiority was wrapped under the blanket of indignity, slavery, and inhuman treatment. White normativity became the central spoke of the theological turning wheel. Every facet of life was evaluated from the White European perspective.

Theological decisions based on racial supremacy, and an incorrect interpretation of Romans 13, led to separate churches, mission churches, entire separate denominations, the doctrine of separate development, and finally to full-blown apartheid. South Africa is a convergence point of Afrocentric and Eurocentric cultures and has the highest White population in the continent. The country is one of the most misunderstood parts of the world when one considers the notion of God, including worship and belief systems. This creates challenges for doing theology in South Africa. And this is a rationale behind the proclivity towards syncretism whereby Eurocentric theology is mixed with Afrocentric religious worldviews.

The trinitarian God remains the foundation and the pillar of Christian theology; and the hallmark of Christianity. God remains transcendent God. Christ remains the very God of the very God and the very man of the very man. Holy Spirit remains the third member of the trinitarian God, whose ministry is uniquely to reveal Christ to humans. Theology continues to speak to bring order out of chaotic social miseries caused by irresponsible human activities. South Africa theology should remain steadfast; and her Christianities, in all their diversities and proliferation, should synergise to bring order to the hurting world.

Chapter 1

Those walking in darkness have seen the light

Africa was never a dark or godless continent before the arrival of Western missionaries. The concept of 'God' has always been part of African belief system. The African God is characterised by benevolence, sustaining power for protection and prosperity of the human race. Christianity arrived in South Africa at the time when African spirituality was embedded in the cultural worldview. Africans find it difficult to divorce religion from culture or vice versa. Colonialism and Christianity were intertwined and worked in synergy for civilisation, Westernisation, and Christianisation of the indigenous groups of current South Africa.

Different missionary societies from Europe and North America spearheaded missionary expansions among different populations on the frontiers: The London Missionary Society (LMS) became prominent among the Batswana and the amaXhosa people. The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) exerted their influence among the Basotho people.

There are three major forces in the form of missionary societies that pioneered the Christian faith among the amaZulu people. These are the London Missionary Society, the American Board, and the Norwegian Missionary Society (Lutherans). The first two societies were non-denominational and were predominantly Congregationalist-oriented.

Among the amaSwati people, five missionary forces included the Berlin Mission, Rev. Joel Jackson's mission station in New Scotland on the Swazi border in 1871, the United Society of the Church of England, Lutheran missions, the South African General Missions, and the Scandinavian Alliance Mission.

The VaTsonga people's evangelisation cannot be referenced without the role of the Swiss Mission in South Africa.

The Berlin Mission Society enhanced missionary work among the vhaVenda people since like the VaTsonga, evangelism was indigenous through migrant labourers who shared the gospel after receiving it in Johannesburg and Kimberley mining areas, respectively.

Generally, the Berlin Missions Society focused on the Transvaal tribes of the VaTsonga, VhaVenda, and Bapedi.

South African Christianity, tainted by colonialism and later by apartheid through the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church, developed a unique, though unpalatable theology of racial segregation.

1.1 Introduction

Africa has always been dubbed a dark continent, a continent in crisis, or an uncivilised continent. The southern part of the continent, with South Africa as a focus of this book, is seen by many people, here and abroad, as the most progressive and enlightened part of Africa. The mission agencies of the seventeenth century did not enter the 'godless' territory, though justifiably, a Christ-ignorant turf. Africans had always believed in a 'God' as shown by some tribal names attached to some form of a deity. One of the errors made by colonial missionaries was to perceive and report that Africans had no religion, but only superstitions (P'Bitek 2011:29). The concept of God in Africa is diverse but ultimately leads to one conclusion that there is a God. Mawusi (2015:18) highlights this when he writes, "the traditional religion has preserved a belief in the Supreme Being, the Great God ... who is the Creator and Lord of the universe". This God had always been deemed as the Creator of the universe, the Protector of human welfare, the ultimatum of human existence, and the apex of life. The African God is characterised with benevolence, sustaining power for protection and prosperity of the human race. Munificence accompanied by altruism is what this God is all about. He is not remotely controlling the affairs of the universe but is a transcendent God who dwells among and reigns supreme above life. It is a God who is involved in land productivity as much

as human relations in the here and beyond. The God of Africa is a God of life and life in its abundance. The African continent that was invaded with the evangelistic missions from Europe in the seventeenth century, was indeed not a 'godless' land, but a very spiritual territory. However, its spirituality differed significantly from the Eurocentric spirituality that is couched and encased in the metanarratives of the holy scriptures. For most of Africa, God is in and above the environment. All the visible objects and items in the universe are not idols, but signifiers of the direct revelation of God.

Africans may use all the materials that their environment puts at disposal in order to express their ideas about God. For them, everything that surrounds them exhibits a sort of transparency that allows them to communicate directly with heaven. (Zahan 2011:5)

Therefore, Africans generally believe in God. They do not doubt the existence of God in this world. Africans have a sense of awe and reverence for God in every aspect of life (Mawusi 2015:47). There is a strong belief in God as the "Maker of heaven and earth" (Kato 1975:30).

As in most, if not all Western missionary–African encounters, the missionaries always regarded Africans with low esteem.

Missionaries were not only perceived as turning Africans away from their culture but were also understood to be undermining African culture by being arrogant, in the sense that they compared African culture to their so-called superior culture. Consequently, missionaries were regarded as part, or agents, of the colonising of Africa. (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013:1)

Manganyi and Buitendag continue to point out that there was a common perception in missionary circles that Africa had no prior religion, and hence, was a 'dark' continent. Africans regarded this view and the actions flowing from as using "the gospel to declare the superiority of Western value systems [and] using this claim to justify European conquest and exploitation of Africa" (Goba 1998:19).

In the eastern frontier, the missionaries in their diverse affiliations, depicted the amaXhosa as a rude and warlike people with barbaric customs and practices, people of gross darkness and superstitions; and or even worshippers of demons

(Elphick & Davenport 1997:76). Missionaries saw Africans as immoral, godless, and primitive – in need of enlightenment through the Western schooling system to become humans. In this case, enlightenment meant to eat, dress, and act like a Westerner.

Christianity arrived in South Africa at the time when African spirituality was embedded in the cultural worldview. Africans find it difficult to divorce religion from culture or vice versa. The two are intertwined and cosmological atrophy. The European colonists, who started to arrive in the Cape around 1652, called themselves Christians. They came from Western Europe, especially from the Orange Republic (Holland); and were of Protestant heritage with Calvinistic convictions. They expanded themselves into the interior – what was called frontiers. These were and are still seen by many as the colonists who carried with them to the frontier a set of attitudes, most important of which was the notion that as ‘Christians’ they were culturally superior to the ‘heathens’ whom they often associated with crudeness, conflict and tragedy (Giliomee 1987:302-303).

The escalating mortification of supremacist ideals and attitude tainted the ensuing theology that these colonists brought along. The imperialist attitude and perceptions of the dignity of Africans will always remain an indelible mark in the conscience of Western Christianity. Christianity that was cloaked and intertwined with Western civilization is deemed as a chagrin that undermines the values of African culture. Western Christianity’s superiority complex enmeshed itself into the African worldview with a common goal in mind: to change or to civilise the African culture.

But the missionaries had cultural change as their main endeavour, and almost all other Europeans regarded their own culture as vastly superior to anything in Africa. They reflected this attitude in all aspects of their behaviour. They were therefore culturally abrasive to African, whether consciously or unconsciously. Nor was the clash of cultures muted by the occasional European effort not to change African cultures, though such efforts did exist. (Curtin, Feierman, Thompson & Vansina 1990:523)

The attitudes they carried were embedded in the notion of being unable to accept a situation whereby ‘heathens’ could lord over them as ‘Christians’. This did

not hamper the expedition of proselytisation by the colonists. A profession of Christianity at baptism was a passport to freedom and inclusion into a civilised European society. For many indigenous people, a profession of Christianity was regarded as substantial grounds for claiming emancipation. This created some tensions and conflict, as resistance emerged in the response of this cultural onslaught. Emmanuel Martey (1993:13) highlights this historical truth when he writes: “Evidence shows how strongly Africans resisted the attempts of both the colonial administrator and the missionary to dehumanise and obliterate their cultural identity.”

1.2 How Christianity came to South Africa

During the period 1652-1820, the South African colonial society was dominated by settlers designating themselves by various names, such as colonists, inhabitants, Afrikaners, Christians, Whites or Europeans. This population was composed of Dutch, Germans, French and English, amongst others. They were from different denominations, such as the Dutch Reformed, Lutheran and Anglican. Their cultures were also different (Giliomee 1987:359-360).

One observes that the Dutch colonists arrived in the Cape “with a somatic norm image in their minds, a complex of physical characteristics which formed their norm and ideal of human appearance” (Giliomee 1987:362). Unfortunately, these Dutch Christians inhibited these ‘somatic preferences’ whereby the indigenous populations were regarded as sub-humans or people of lesser humanness. This influenced even their sexual preferences. Giliomee record that “Colonists preferred Blacks over Khoikhoi as sexual partners and chose marriage partners roughly in this order of preference: Europeans, mixed blood, Asians, negro Africans and Khoikhoi” (Giliomee 1987:362).

For over one hundred and fifty years, the ninety original Dutch explorers who disembarked from the three ships in the Cape grew in number and their Reformed faith. The so-called Dutch Period of one hundred and fifty years, saw the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) growing as the only church permitted in the Cape. Roy (2017:1) comments that congregations grew from one to seven.

The Christian faith spread from the Dutch community to the indigenous communities such as the Khoikhoi people, the imported slaves, and to the Coloured community.

The Napoleonic Wars in Europe led to some migrations to the new territories of the African continent. British migration to the Cape was phenomenal. From 1815 to 1910, the British controlled socio-political spheres of Cape life. For the first time, the English churches such as Anglicans, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and the Baptist entered the South African territory. The upsurge and the resurgence of the missionary zeal dominated this era. The foreign missionary societies from different European territories and North America escalated and exerted their pioneering endeavours on the African continent, especially in southern Africa. These agencies were mainly of the Protestant faith, with very few of the Catholic faith. During this period, the modern-day mainline denominations were planted and took roots. The expansion of Christianity into the interior was simultaneous with European colonial endeavours.

Political tensions between the British and the Boers in the Cape initiated what is commonly known as *Die Groot Trek*, the 'Great Exodus' of the Dutch-dubbed Boers from the Cape into the frontiers; a step that led to the formation of the two Boer Republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal. The arrival of the French Huguenot settlers in 1820 also made some impact on the expansion of Christianity in South Africa.

The period is not only marked by colonial expansion, but also by British-Boers tensions, inter-tribal wars, missionary expansion, the extension of racist ideas, and above all, the development of ideologies that marginalised the indigenous populations. Denominational expansion marked the influence of colonialism in church growth and development. By the end of that era, Christianity was firmly planted in South Africa, with extensive psychological suppression of African religion and spirituality.

In his book, *The Story of the Church in South Africa*, Kevin Roy gives a clear summary of Christianity or churches at the end of this period:

As a result of immigration and missionary work during the nineteenth century, the church saw significant growth, both in numbers and in the complexity of its makeup. In addition to the original Dutch Reformed Church (which had been virtually the sole representative of Christianity for more than a century), there were now also Anglicans, Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, as well as smaller groups such as Quakers and the Salvation Army. Further divisions, resulted in two Anglican churches, three Dutch Reformed churches and several Lutheran churches, and so on, which complicated the ecclesiastical scene even more. But that was not all. Conflict and tensions between the indigenous African people and the politically and economically dominant white people inevitably affected church relations. The closing decades of the nineteenth century saw groups of African Christians separating from mission-established and controlled churches to form African-initiated churches wholly controlled by Africans. The small trickle was to become a mighty flood in the twentieth century. (Roy 2017:3)

1.3 Christianity among the Batswana

Different mission agencies concentrated on different ethnic groups in some geographical areas. For instance, the London Missionary Society (LMS) played a pioneering role among the Batswana tribes. The Batlhaping of Dithakong were the first Batswana tribe to receive missionaries around 1801. History of the time shows how Christianity evolved among the Batswana people, including how Jan Mathys Kok was slain by Batlhaping men in 1806. Later, the missionary work of William Edwards shows how he left Dithakong for Kanye and laid the foundation for missions in Kuruman. These two missionaries lived in poverty, with no support from the LMS.

The Batswana people were introduced to Christianity in four different stages. The first stage was under the missionary endeavours of John Campbell between 1812 and 1814 and from 1818 to 1881. He was an LMS director and traveller and was accompanied by two missionaries, James Read and William Anderson. This missionary team travelled from Griqua Town to Dithakong. Campbell's message was to establish order and encourage conversion of the heathen, and at the same time to promote their civilization (Westernisation). Chief Mothibi, who wanted non-interference with the Tswana customs, vehemently resisted

Campbell's ministry. However, the chief welcomed instructors, especially for the Dutch language. He vouched for missionary activities and involvement with the aim of the possibility of trade with the Cape, especially for guns, and not conversion.

The second stage was the flourishing era under Robert Moffat (1821–1870) who was dubbed as patriarchal preacher and translator. Kuruman, where Chief Mothibi settled, became a central point for missions through the interior. It was a new missionaries' reception point and ministers' training centre. Kuruman was indeed a focal point of missionary activities among the Batswana people. It is the place where Moffat joined Robert Hamilton. Moffat played a peacemaking role between the Batlhaping and the Colony; and between Batlhaping and Mzilikazi's amaNdebele. Moffat's stayed in Kuruman for forty years, preaching and translating the Bible into Setswana. He is noted for refusing the role of political and military activities to deal with strife. The departure of Chief Mothibi from Kuruman gave Moffat liberty to establish a mission station, however, his views about the Batswana morals made him unpopular with the locals.

The third stage was under David Livingstone (1841–1852), who was a physician and explorer residing among the Bakolobeng and Bakwena. He was liked by locals for healing their ailments, and because he was Moffat's son-in-law. The Batswana also liked him for being sympathetic toward their Setswana culture and traditions. Livingstone played a significant role in converting Chief Sechele I of Bakwena and explored central Africa after sending his wife and children back to England.

The fourth and the final stage was under John Mackenzie (1860–1899), widely known as a missionary imperialist. He arrived in Kuruman in 1860 and moved to the Bangwato territory in Shoshong, where he laboured for fourteen years. He was the last great Scottish missionary to Batswana in the second half of the nineteenth century. In collaboration with King Kgama III, he built a huge church in Shoshong. Mackenzie's legacy extended to the field of education when he trained teachers and ministers for indigenous ministry. He Involved himself in Cape politics and missionary work and apologetically favoured British dominion

in the subcontinent. This resulted in him playing a critical role in the formation of the British-controlled Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885.

1.4 Christianity among the Basotho

From the Christianisation of Batswana, we turn to the Christianisation of the Basotho. Moshoeshoe reorganised the Basotho nation made up of the Sotho/Tswana and Nguni groups surviving the Difaqane upheavals. He established his capital in Thaba Bosiu where he appealed for missionaries to come and teach his people. The famous missionaries among the Basotho are Eugene Casalis, Thomas Arbousset, and Constant Gosselin. They established a mission station in Morija, 40 kilometres southwest of Thaba Bosiu. In 1837, Casalis moved to the stone house at the foot of Thaba Bosiu and became an advisor to Moshoeshoe, who respected him very highly.

While the LMS played a crucial role in Christianising the Batswana people. The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) worked among the Basotho from 1833 and PEMS missionaries stood with Moshoeshoe through a series of wars that resulted in decimating his territory. The year 1848 is historically referred to as the 'Golden Age' of mission advances. By this time, the PEMS established mission stations among the Basotho and Batswana in Bethulie, Beersheba, Mekoatleng, Berea, Cana, Bethesda, Hermon and Hebron. The tensions were intensified during the years 1848 to 1854 when there arose a counter-reaction to Christianity. The Boers, Kora and the Griquas attacked Basotho and King Moshoeshoe and his subjects were under tremendous pressures. These tensions within the kingdom led to chasing the missionaries, the British and the Boers out of the territory. As a result of the tense situation, some Basotho abandoned the Christian faith. These tensions with the British and the Boers led to some political decisions regarding territorial boundaries

The post-1854 period is known as the period of consolidation. This period was marked by the arrival of the Catholics, Anglicans and Methodists. Their arrival challenged the PEMS' supremacy over missions among the Basotho. Of importance is that for survival, the PEMS cooperated with the LMS in the

Cape. This synergy enhanced the spread of Christianity among the Basotho and the Batswana. Samuel Rolland and Prosper Lemue went to work among the Bahurutshe in Mosega, in Zeerust where their missionary endeavours were disrupted by Mzilikazi. They consequently went to Kuruman to establish a mission station at Motito.

The Basotho were more receptive to the gospel than the Batswana. Christianity thrived among the Basotho due to Moshosho's influence and cooperation with missionaries.

1.5 Christianity among the amaXhosa

The nineteenth century was the time of the sowing of Christianity in the sub-continent. Just as it happened among the Batswana and the Basotho in the north and central frontiers, the eastern frontiers were never left unimpacted by the Christian wave accompanied by imperialist triumphalism. In the eastern frontier, the amaXhosa people encountered Christianity in three phases.

The period from the end of the eighteenth century to 1820 was a time of simple encounter with foreign elements into traditional beliefs. The two worldviews lived side-by-side with a mutual understanding of cultural divisions. Elphick (1981) summarises this era as an open frontier when several polities zone without dominance on each other.

The period between 1820 and 1860 was one of conquest. It is a period characterised by British settlement and missionary expansion into the Xhosa territory. The British imperialism over the indigenous population was at the zenith. The imperialists claimed the ownership of the land together with sacred symbols whereby African traditions were interpreted as pagan while Christianity was a norm.

During the period between 1860 and 1910, Christian imperialism reached the summit of White dominance. It was unquestioned and regarded as the norm. This led to the beginning of an African struggle for the liberation of their

indigenous symbols, aiming to integrate these with African understanding of Christianity (Elphick & Davenport 1997:68).

The frontier was a battleground for the British, Boers and the amaXhosa people. From 1799, the outstanding missionary, known as J.T. van der Kemp sent by the LMS, laboured among the amaXhosa people. He was unapologetically an evangelical Christian, who emphasised personal conversion through grace. For him, the Word expressed in preaching and prayer, was a central channel of God's grace. His mission was, in the earlier stage, accepted by the British, but was later rejected, even by the Boers. The reason for this rejection was his strong dogma that all people of all races are created equally by God.

Christianity among the amaXhosa is coloured with the emergence of indigenous prophets such as Nxele, Ntsikana and Tiyo Soga. Their role in the amaXhosa Christianity is well documented, but it evolved out of White settlers' invasion and occupation of the land that belonged to the indigenous people. In 1819, Nxele formed a military force to attack the English for the repossession of 23 000 cattle of Ndlambe. He claimed to have received a divine mission from the Great Spirit to revenge through the calling of the spirits of ancestors. He intended to drive the English across the Zwartkops River and into the ocean. Ntsikana was a renowned singer and orator. He was revered for interpreting aspects of missionary beliefs and practices in terms of his Xhosa worldview, thus incarnating Christ in his African context as an African expression of Christianity (Elphick & Davenport 1997:77). Tiyo Soga (1829–1871) was the first Black South African to be ordained in a Presbyterian Church. He epitomised the ambiguities of the dependence of the new African (Elphick & Davenport 1997:83). He translated many Western hymns into isiXhosa and became a cultural historian whose folklore enhanced his followers' nationalist aspirations as African Christians.

From the latter part of the eighteenth century, the eastern frontier saw the arrival of various missionaries such as J.T van der Kemp (mentioned previously), John Philip (LMS), and Methodists such as William Shaw and Stephen. From 1820 onwards, the Methodists missionaries preached the gospel to all sectors

of society, though with patriotic alignment with the British imperialism. Their message was the link between the cross and the crown – Christianity and Colonialism as Siamese twins joined heart-to-heart. The Glasgow Missionary Society (GMS) entered the fray in 1823 through William Thomson, John Bennie and John Ross. The Moravians made a short-lived entry in 1823, while J.L Döhne opened the way for the Berlin Missionary Society (BMS) in 1836.

1.6 Christianity among the amaZulu

There are three major forces in the form of missionary societies that pioneered the Christian faith among the Zulu people. These were the LMS, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, more familiarly known as the American Board or the Board, and the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) who were Lutheran. The first two societies were non-denominational and were predominantly Congregationalist – oriented. They were the loudest exponents of domestic renovations among the Zulus (Healy & Jackson 2011:3). The early Christianisation of the Zulu people and other Nguni groups, such as the Xhosas, AmaNdebele and the Swazis, may be largely attributed to the American Board. The Board began to look to Africa as a field for missionary work in 1825.

John Philip of the LMS is noted for initially encouraging the Americans to set out for Natal, where most of the Zulu people were settled. He claimed that these unevangelised people resided in centralised societies in which private family life, in bourgeois Protestant terms, was impossible. The Zulu kingdom conglomerate was interpreted as if the royal aristocracy owns the land, people, and livestock.

Under the supervision of H.P.S Schreuder, the NMS began its endeavours among the Zulus in Natal during the 1840s and in the Kingdom of Zululand north of the Tugela River during the following decade. The church influence and numerical growth was slow and remained so until after the British conquest of Zulu territory in 1879. During the remainder of the nineteenth century, the Lutheran faith among the Zulus experienced significant exponential growth as

rural congregations multiplied. In 1890, the NMS initiated its ministry to Zulus who had migrated to Durban (Hale 2011:2).

Apart from these three main missionary forces into the Zulu kingdom, there were others on operating on a lesser scale, but with a heartfelt impact. For instance, the Berlin Mission and the Hanoverian Mission both planted their roots around 1847. The Anglican Mission in the Colony of Natal and within Mpande's empire began with the arrival of Bishop John Colenso on 20 May 1855. It could be argued that this was not their first attempt because in 1835 Dingane permitted Capt. Alien F. Gardiner of the Royal Navy to commence missionary operations (Shamase 2015:6). Dr M.J.F Allard of the Roman Catholic Mission and two or three priests were making some efforts to introduce their faith among the Zulu people. Mpande also permitted them to start missionary work within his empire.

The occupation by both the British and the Voortrekkers of the then British Port Natal could not just happen without cultural collisions. The three forces (British, Boers and Zulus) entered a point of conflict, which escalated into the series of battles culminating in the major Battle of Ulundi, which subjugated the Zulus and subjected them to British empirical rule. The missionaries were not overtly imperial agents but acted as informants on affairs within the empire for the benefit of the British colonial establishment in Natal (Webb 1978:75). This assertion is, however, debatable and disputable. The mission stations suffered sporadic attacks by the Zulus, especially during the rules of Mpande and Dingane.

Western Christianity and the Zulu traditions were on a serious collision course. New converts brought traditionalists from their extended families to the mission stations for mutual residency and support. Those groomed by missionary education adopted a new identity and embraced some aspects of the new beliefs. The new educated elite emerged, and "as mission Christians became increasingly wealthy, they sought to translate this new wealth into prestige" (Houle 2001:3). As in all missionary-African encounters, the counter-cultural conflicts were epitomised by commitment, character, relationships, and socio-cultural religious views. Issues such as witchcraft,

polygamy and nudity made missionary work among the Zulus very difficult. One outstanding American Board missionary, Reverend George Champion demonstrated the hostility that mounted due to the Christian gospel's anti-Zulu connotations and cantations:

Yet it is doubtful that the Zulus got much from their Sundays at Ginani other than socialising and a close look at the curious strangers. Belief in witchcraft and ancestral spirits was still strong among them. They also laid much stress on ceremony, holding great dances that began in the day and continued into the night by the glow of bonfires, but these were more harvest celebrations or preparations for war than strictly religious observances. Champion, the sober Yankee, deplored the bizarre costumes and the frenzied stamping, shouting, and clapping as 'senseless mummery.' (Lancaster 1978:5)

Lancaster also records:

One reason Champion, like many other missionaries, made little headway with the Christian message was that he was so unbending in his attitude toward native ways. He was quick to condemn, and, for all his intellectual attainments, he often made little attempt to understand the Zulus' customs. One of the noisy celebrations that offended him, for example—the Feast of the First Fruits—had the practical purpose of ensuring that no grain was harvested prematurely. Nakedness seemed an abomination to Champion, and he and [his wife] Susanna passed out dresses made by 'some kind Christian friends at home' to the girls at the mission school. Champion also deplored the Zulus' polygamy. With differences like these creating such an immense gap, it is little wonder that the Zulus responded to the missionaries' sermons on the mysteries of creation and salvation by 'conversing, smiling, taking snuff, & retiring from the audience.' (Lancaster 1978:5)

The Zulus were so embroiled and ensnared in their cultural morals and customs, in traditional religion and animism that they did not want to give those up. The struggle between traditions and the new missions culture planted a deeply seated conflict rationally and emotionally. Amid this cultural conflict and collision, the missionary message reverberated and echoed soundly that by accepting this gospel, the Zulus' identities as Christians could be translated into lives of both temporal and spiritual greatness. Abandoning the traditional beliefs, difficult as it might, was turning one's life towards a new life with a new identity in socio-cultural space.

1.7 Christianity among the amaSwati

In his thesis, *The Early Encounter between the Swazi and the Western Missionaries: The Establishment of the Evangelical Church in Swaziland, 1894–1950*, Sonene Nyawo writes:

According to Swazi tradition, one night in 1836, King Somhlolo dreamt of people of a strange species, coming out of the sea and entering the country. They were the colour of red mealies, and their hair resembled the tail end of cattle. They were carrying two objects: a book (*umculu*) and money (*indilinga*). A voice cautioned the king that the Swazi should take the book and avoid the money and that they should not fight against these strange people. He interpreted the vision to mean that Europeans would be coming to Swaziland with money and the Bible. He advised the Swazi to accept the book wholeheartedly. Soon after the vision had been related to royal councillors, the king died. (Nyawo 2004:9).

The Swazi king sent a delegation of indunas to Lesotho to recruit a teacher who would come to live in his royal village and instruct his son, Mswati. In 1884, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society led by Allison and Giddy responded enthusiastically. Their arrival led to the founding of a mission at Mahamba, the site designated by Mswati, who had succeeded his father. The then political turmoil in the royal house planted a bias against missionaries in the mind of Mswati and his successors. This continued until the advent of His Excellency, Sobhuza II. The Methodists re-asserted themselves in 1895.

The arrival and pioneering of Christianity among the Swazis is complex as missions explorations were intertwined with the royal dictates. In his dissertation, *A History of Christian Missions in Swaziland to 1910*, Floyd Perkins sketches the historical development follows:

- The BMS sent the Revs D.A. Merensky and H. Grutzner on an exploratory mission to Swaziland in 1860, but they were refused permission to establish a mission.
- Rev. Joel Jackson established a mission station in New Scotland on the Swazi border in 1871, from which he made constant contact with King Mbandzeni for nine years.

- A larger presence of missionaries began in 1881 when members of the United Society arrived to establish the presence of the Church of England.
- Lutheran contact was made with Swazi people living around Ermelo from 1887 onward and became established in the country.
- In 1891, Rev. John Bailie accompanied by Rev. Dudley Kidd of the South African General Mission made an exploratory journey to Swaziland to visit the king and secure his permission to establish a mission station in Mankaiana.
- In July 1893, a group of four young missionaries from the Scandinavian Alliance Mission began the construction of a mission station at Bulunga on the Usutu River. This was the final mission group to enter the country before the Anglo-Boer war (Perkins 2016:53-130).

As it happens in Africa, Christianity followed by Swazi people incorporates rituals, singing, dancing and iconography of the traditional Swazi religion. The primal Swazi expressed their religious world in myths (Nyawo 2004:50). Stories about divinities in all spheres of life form the worldview. Furthermore, polygyny and patrilineal descent characterise the kinship system. Missionaries came to evangelise the Swazis from different countries of Europe and North America, including South Africa. Their cultural backgrounds and differences squeezed them into corners to either criticise, radicalise, or compromise. As Kuper (1946:177) writes: “They brought with them local as well as doctrinal differences, and established themselves side by side with centres of the traditional ancestral cult.”

1.8 Christianity Among the vaTsonga

It is not within the scope of this monograph to give historical and anthropological origins of South African tribes, but to give some highlights, taking into consideration their missionary encounters of how they received the missionary message. Maluleke describes the vaTsonga or Shangans as follows:

The VaTsonga are an ethnic group composed of a large number of clans found in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Xitsonga (the language of the VaTsonga) is spoken in all four of these countries. In South Africa alone, Xitsonga is a language spoken by over two million

first-language speakers and is one of the official languages of the country.
(Maluleke 2017:iii)

It is impossible to reflect on the history of Christianity among the Shangaan people without a reference to the Swiss Mission in South Africa. Their first missionaries, who had spent three years in Lesotho, arrived among the Tsonga or Shangaan people, who were in the old Transvaal and across in Mozambique. *The Tsonga Messenger, A Quarterly Bulletin of the Swiss Mission in South Africa amongst the Shangaan Tribe* gives the historical sketch that the missionaries had to learn the new language, translate the Bible, and produce a translated hymnbook. The first of these – the *Buku* – appeared in 1883, containing parts of Genesis, a ‘Harmony of the Gospels’ and fifty-seven hymns. In 1894, the New Testament was published, and in 1907, the whole Scripture (Brookes 1950:10).

One of the primary occupations of the missionaries was to teach Bible literacy, which was reading and writing. Rev. E. Creux, who was the first teacher, opened a school in one of the huts of the old establishment, at Valdezia. Already in 1879, a few young men were ready to be sent to the Bible and Teaching Schools of Morija (Lesotho). *The Tsonga Messenger* continues to inform us that wherever a church was founded, a school followed, and they multiplied rapidly. In 1899, a Bible school was inaugurated at Shiluvane, near Tzaneen, which was to serve the two mission fields. However, after the Anglo-Boer War, it was closed for various reasons, one of which was that the Portuguese government of Mozambique prevented its young people from attending school in neighbouring South Africa.

1.9 Christianity among the vhaVenda

The vhaVenda traditionally occupy an area in and around the Soutpansberg Mountains in the north-eastern section of Limpopo Province, South Africa close to the borders with Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The name ‘Venda’ refers to both the people and the territory they inhabit. The eastern boundary of this region is formed by the Kruger National Park on the border of Mozambique. To the south is the vaTsonga cultural group. To the north is the Limpopo River,

the international boundary with Zimbabwe, where many Venda people live under six chiefs in the southern and central parts of that country. This territory was encroached by the various Western missionary societies from as early as 1863. By 1940, most notable missionaries were almost well established in Venda (Mapaya).

It is widely speculated that Christianity was first introduced into the Soutpansberg area by Africans, rather than White missionaries. The individuals were converted to Christianity while working as migrant labourers in Natal and the Cape Colony during the 1860s. In 1872, Carl Beuster of the BMS established a mission station in Sibasa. It seems that the Berlin missionaries were more predominant among the VhaVenda than any of the other missionary societies. They built a missionary station in Tshakhuma, between Mutandabinyuka and Makuvhukuvhu and in Elim. Erdmann Schweltnus and Johannes Mutshaeni also worked for the BMS among the VhaVenda at that time (Mathivha 1985:42-43).

1.10 Christianity among the Bapedi

Around 1859, Alexander Merensky and Heinrich Gratzner of the BMS settled among the Kopa near Lydenburg, where they founded the Gerlachshoop mission station. Merensky later left Gerlachshoop and established a mission station in Chief Sekwati's territory. This mission became successful among the BaPedi and the society established two more stations. But Sekwati's son and heir to the Pedi throne, Sekhukhune, mistrusted the growth of Christianity among his subjects and when Merensky wanted to baptise his first wife, the chief turned against the Christians and forbade the preaching of the gospel.

By 1865, matters were very unsafe for missionaries and Merensky decided to leave Sekhukhune land. He sought refuge among his Christian converts in the Middelburg district and founded the mission station at Botshabelo (City of Refuge). Soon, Botshabelo became the convergence nerve of the BMS in South Africa. Merensky developed this station and established a school, seminary, workshops, mill and printing press. It is important to highlight the indigenous missionary zeal prevailing at the time. Under the influence of Adolphe Mabile

of the PEMS, the first Sotho foreign missionary was Isaiah Seële, sent to pioneer among the BaPedi of the then Transvaal in 1863. Much research is needed to recover this vital part of the history of missions in South Africa.

Botshabelo, under the BMS, gave birth to many mission stations throughout the Transvaal. Some good examples of those stations include Blauwberg, Tshakoma, Pretoria, and Medingen. By 1900, the society had established more than 36 stations and there were nearly 30 000 converts. German missionaries studied the African languages and customs and soon became authorities on the subject. To use Poewe and Van der Heyden's words), they were expected "to think and live their way into the specific culture of the people" (Poewe & Van der Heyden 1999:18). Men like Merensky, Knothe, Trampelmann, Schwellnus and Eiselen greatly advanced the knowledge of African languages and customs. Alexander Merensky and Albert Nachtigal were the first Berlin missionaries to work among the BaPedi. These, together with others translated the Bible and wrote a variety of hymnbooks. Missionary work was retarded by the Anglo-Boer War and by both World Wars. The society found it increasingly difficult to obtain the funds for the upkeep of the mission work and many stations had to be closed. After World War II, the society's Berlin headquarters fell into the Russian zone of occupied Germany and no new missionaries could be sent to the field. In 1962, the society gave independence to the young mission churches and in time these amalgamated with other Lutheran mission churches to form the independent Evangelical Lutheran Churches.

Regarding the then Transvaal areas, Boer authorities allowed mission societies they considered to be loyal to the socio-political order of the republic's ideals. The Northern Transvaal of the mid-nineteenth century developed into one of the most intensely missionised areas in South Africa. The Berlin Mission, which started work in 1861, became the largest in the area. It was followed by the Dutch Reformed Church from 1863, spearheaded by Alexander McKidd, but later through Stefanus Hofmeyr and others. The Swiss missionaries operated from 1873, followed by the Wesleyan missionaries from 1885. As in the rest of the subcontinent, these missionaries frequently claimed to be non-partisan,

while they identified more closely with the Boer and British invaders into the area than with the local African rulers.

The Berlin missionaries left the Presbyterian legacy among the vaTsonga and to a certain extent among the VhaVenda, while among the BaPedi their legacy was the Lutheran faith. The history of BaPedi missions inevitably culminates in the formation of the Bapedi Lutheran Church, which is not a scope of this monograph. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most, if not all cultural and ethnic groups were exposed to the Christian faith. It can be observed that the LMS exerted its efforts among the Khoisan, Batswana, AmaXhosa and AmaZulu. The PEMS focused its mission among the Basotho, while the American Board concentrated among the AmaZulu. On the other hand, the BMS zeroed their eyes on the Transvaal tribes of the VaTsonga, VhaVenda, and Bapedi. The subcontinent was introduced largely to the Reformed faith, which ultimately made pre-1994 South Africa one of the most Calvinistic countries in the Global South. This status quo has changed of course since the 1990s when the new dispensation of democratic secular state started to take roots

1.11 Christianity intertwined with colonialism

It is difficult to separate or distinguish Christianity from colonialism or imperialism. As West (2016:76) reminds, the Bible was brought to Africa with the wave of explorers, traders and ecclesial representatives of the medieval Catholic Church, directed by Portugal. Through the establishments of slave and trade posts with chaplains in attendance, strategic sites, especially along the African coastline, were established, and these became the springboards of missional activities into the hinterland. Mugambi also attests to this:

The exploratory expeditions included chaplains to care for the spiritual needs of the crews. Wherever they stopped along the African coast they erected sanctuaries, which became the initial entry points for missionaries. (Mugambi 2016:107)

Most of the colonialists who entered the African terrain “did not do so with the idea of helping or ‘civilizing’ the Black people, but for reasons of self-

interest” (Bujo 1992:39). Colonialism was accompanied by ideologies that were inhuman and ungodly for Africans – believers or not. For instance, imperialism is interpreted as the conquest of a weaker country or territory by a stronger country for political, social, and economical gain. The colonisers were searching for new raw materials and markets. Imperialism caused the Africans to be treated as inferior. They were divided through a divide-and-rule governance system, which enhanced tribalism, ethnicism, and racism at large and still causes conflicts today. The imperialists wanted to convert others to their religions. They also wanted to be superior over their new encounters to acquire more land as they industrialised. Another ideology that was cloaked in colonialism was paternalism, which is the policy of treating subject people as if they were children by providing their basic needs but not giving them basic freedoms and rights. Colonisers, especially the French and the Portuguese, applied an evil system known as ‘assimilation’. The British did it too but skirted around it through indirect rule. This ‘assimilation’ is the policy of forcing or encouraging people to adopt European customs and institutions. The missionary societies that evangelised South Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were the champions of assimilation whereby the indigenous populations had to adopt the Western-style as proof that they have been Christianised. From the early days of colonialism, mercantilism was employed as the economic theory that trade generates wealth and profit, therefore, the government should encourage it. Mercantilism was used to get new markets to sell finished products. It is for this reason that some missionaries worked symbiotically with the imperialists for their material benefits. As Paas attests:

Britain’s imperialistic activities in Africa were aimed at finding new markets and raw materials, attaining world prestige, and spreading the English style of orderly government. (Paas 2016:374)

The literature contains abundant information that missionaries worked in comradeship with the colonial rulers. They were in many ways instrumental in the consolidation of colonialism’s pinnacle of dominance over Africans’ welfare, education, church, and governance structure. For instance, John Mackenzie of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society pushed vigorously for British

intervention in Bechuanaland in the 1870s. He was a missionary imperialist – the last great Scottish missionary to Batswana in the second half of the nineteenth century. He involved himself in Cape politics and missionary work and is noted for favouring British dominion in the subcontinent. He significantly played a role in the formation of a British-controlled Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885. He, together with other missionaries of the same thoughts, consorted with colonialists, to “protect African peoples from incursions from the two Boer republics established after the Great Trek” (Mills 1997:339-340). The White missionaries living in Zululand actively supported the British invasion of the Zulu Kingdom in 1879. Later we learn that Volker was in favour of the British invasion and annexation of the Zulu Kingdom to make missionary movement among the Zulus feasible and untampered.

The colonial era was the era of missionary boom. Colonialism and missions were comrades in arms, with one target in mind, namely, civilising and converting the pagans. Christian missionaries championed the theology of partnership with the civil state, in this case, the imperial authority. Missionaries and colonial powers were allies in oppressing Africans. Mills indicates (1997:340) correctly that “the trinity of Christianity, commerce, and civilization is often interpreted as evidence that missions were driven by the needs and interests of European capitalists”. They were partners in the crime of imperialism. “The selfishness and cruelty of colonialism began to be ameliorated by important developments in the field of religion” (Paas 2016:338).

No book can be written on this subject without referring to the great explorer, David Livingstone, who “opened up new markets for British commerce, believing that trade and conversion went hand in hand” (Beck 1997:109). It is widely documented, and without any rejection, that missionaries were the religious imperialists. In many ways, they were encouraged to cooperate with the colonial regimes. They abhorred African culture and religion and went out into an arsenal of destroying it and replacing it with the Western culture. As far as they were concerned, African culture was devoid of any value to be appreciated or adopted. Missionaries laboured hard to control the heart and the

mind of the Africans. The kind of education they introduced was the sharpest tool to fashion this desire. Together with the colonisers, they were not content merely with replacing the African social system with another. As Bujo recounts:

They had recourse to every available means to impress upon the black people, in word and deed, that they were inferior to whites, and that the inferiority was due to the colour of their skin. Black people had to be convinced that their inferiority was irreversible, unchangeable. (Bujo 1992:43)

The missionaries held on to the control of the church, as they suspected that Africans were incapable of taking church leadership roles. Paternalism reigned supreme, as African elders were treated as children still immature to think and do things for themselves. Pietism was a tool for missionaries, emphasising spiritual and inward aspects, and neglecting socio-political aspects. Hence the arrival of the liberation theologies in the mid-1960s was and is still met with resistance by some Western and African Christians who imbibed this pietism. They claim that heaven is their goal as their citizenship is in heaven, not here on earth. Social justice is considered or equated with evil communism or irreligious Marxism. Indeed, missionaries and colonialists were soulmates, bedfellows bound with the chord that could not easily be broken. Colonial politics and Christian missions were intertwined. The lesson was learned that political matters always divide the church. In the nineteenth century, the abolitionist and secessionist movements as political forces flowed from Europe and North America and split the missionary churches of southern Africa (Sundberg 2000:27).

African culture and religion suffered a severe onslaught in the hands of missionary theology. In partnership with the state, the missionary church attacked some African practices and intended to eradicate them by all means possible. For instance, Robert Moffatt's views about Batswana morals made him unpopular with the locals. This cultural onslaught was done without any attempt to understand the African worldview regarding issues such as polygamy, witchcraft, and ancestral veneration. Moffatt went to as far as concluding that Batswana had no religious beliefs, despite their reverence for ancestral spirits, and for their supreme spirit, *Modimo* (Beck 1997:109). Bujo (1992:44) rightly points out that "the attacks on polygamy and the ancestor-cults of Africa were

conducted by both secular and religious authorities”. In a similar vein, Madise comments that “Though the London Missionary Society was to see the church grow among the Batlhaping, the society failed to recognise the value of some of the local customs” (Madise:2010:5).

The same notion is highlighted by Munyai who relates:

The first missionaries who brought Christianity to the VhaVenda were inconsiderate towards traditional religion; they did not take cognizance of the prevalent religion. This predicament was most alienating, as the VhaVenda came to accept what was concluded about their religion and as a result, they became total strangers in the new religion. (Munyai 2007:3)

For missionaries, the genuine evangelisation was the emphasis of stamping out heathen and immoral customs. They were insensitive towards Africans and their culture. African spirituality suffered in the hands of the ignorant pietists who adopted an attitude of blanket condemnation of African culture in all its aspects (Bujo 1992:45). The Bible message that was preached and practised by missionaries labelled cultural practices by natives as demonic and barbaric. Colonisers understood the indigenous people who practised their culture as being of lesser intelligence and incapable of apprehending reality correctly. They vehemently vowed to impose not simply their Christian beliefs but also their cultural, political and commercial values (Beck 1997:117).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the era when politics, religion, and commerce were closely intertwined. The colonial governments authorised themselves as the supporters and caretakers of religion. The goal was to destroy the ‘heathen’ culture and replace it with a Western Christian civilization. As imperialists were concerned, everything African was barbaric or idolatrous, therefore needed to be annihilated and replaced with a normative worldview. Madise enlightens us that during Isaac Hughes’ mission to the Griquas in 1837, he decided to take a journey to the north. He preached and travelled until he got to Taung. There, he discovered that the Batlhaping were people who lived a simple life which, to him, was without ‘faith’. He found that the Batswana people, like other African tribes at the time, were polygamous, which he interpreted as

sinful and unacceptable. This view was based on the Western belief system of 'moral values'.

It is to be noted that there were missionaries who, during the colonial era, did not ascribe fully to these perceptions of the African people. These missionaries were a festering sore for the imperial rulers as they opposed the ideologies that reduce Africans to *tabula rasa* or *non-persona*. "They sought to defend blacks from the injustices of colonial rule, not to question the colonial rule itself" (Elphick 2012:64). The Shite settlers and their harsh treatment of indigenous peoples troubled some missionaries. There are some fine examples of this. For example, Robert Moffatt, who laboured among the Batswana in Kuruman, strongly disagreed with the use of political and military activities to deal with strife. David Livingston was liked by local Batswana for healing their ailments and because he was Moffatt's son-in-law. The Batswana also liked him for being sympathetic toward Setswana culture and tradition. Another example is that of the PEMS, who during the counter-reaction to Christianity between 1848 and 1854, stood with Moshoeshe through a series of wars that decimated Basotho territory. PEMS missionaries, especially Casalis and Philip, together with the Wesleyan missionaries, were the reliable advisors of Moshoeshe during the land disputes covering the era of 1843 to 1849. This was the time when the Boers were vigorously decimating the Basotho territory by self-imposing settlements in the Caledon Valley. The missionaries also took sides with Moshoeshe in land claims.

The missionaries were, in some cases, regarded as sell-outs by the imperial regimes. This was due to their solidarity with the indigenous people, especially when these were dispossessed of their land.

Missionaries and churchmen who became involved in political activities, particularly those who defended Africans against the onslaught of white political and economic expansion and domination, were anathema to settlers and colonial officials. (Ballard 1979:7)

Another notable example is the close cooperation of the Bahurutshe (Batswana tribe) Chief Moiloa II who worked closely with the Lutheran missionary, Zimmermann. Heinrich Bammann narrates the incident when

both the chief and the missionary were summoned to appear before the Supreme Court of the Boers in Potchefstroom. The reason for the summons was Zimmermann's criticism of the Boers inhuman treatment of their Bahurutshe labourers. The missionary took sides with Africans and went as far as encouraging them to rebel against harsh treatments they were given by these Boer invaders. The outcome of this case is elucidated:

After several hours, when the charge failed to produce a successful outcome, the President, in his capacity as counsel for the accusers, was the first to leave the court, followed by all the others. The only people left were Zimmermann and Moiloa II. A court decision was never handed down. The hall was totally deserted. This episode in court was a lesson to the Boers. They had to concede that the missionary had asserted himself. No further charges were brought against Zimmermann in Dinokana. (Bammann 2016:62)

Consider Dr David Livingstone who was horrified by some Afrikaners who slaughtered more than a hundred people in a bloody slave-hunt in 1852. These Afrikaners invoked biblical text of Deuteronomy 20:10-14, and appealed to the Divine Law of Joshua, "providing themselves with biblical warrants for exterminating indigenous people" (Schapera 1974:84-85). Such warrants or pretexts came out as allegorical interpretation that enhanced the Afrikaner nationalism of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Brett 2009:15).

The missionaries of that era were evangelically convicted to embrace what came to be known as *gelykstelling* (racial equalisation). This became the colonists-missionaries' basis of tension. Both the missionaries and the colonialists believed that Africans and the European settlers could not find a common ground. Europeans, both the British and the Boers, were starting to draw lines of division between the races. Africans were at the receiving end of discrimination. This was the beginning of Africans' denial of their civil rights. During the mid-nineteenth century when missionary explosion was engulfing southern Africa, colonialism was starting to develop an embryo evolving into a mature chicken – apartheid. The structures of apartheid were beginning to become apparent, even though there were no official laws to that effect. The historical dictum is that "black people were nonetheless treated in a discriminatory and

derogatory manner” (Bammann 2016:201). Racial inequality started to take shape in the emerging industrial economy that was surfacing in the land due to urbanisation. This urbanisation was the result of the discovery of diamonds and gold, extensive commercial farming, and the re-settlement of Europeans in the interior of the land.

John Philip of the LMS was known for taking sides with the indigenous people, though in some instances, in a paternalistic way. Reading about him sometimes leaves me confused, especially when I read some of his sayings regarding the indigenous people and the imperialist government. During the zenith of his ministry among the AmaXhosa people, for instance, he declared:

While our missionaries are everywhere scattering the seeds of civilisation, social order, and happiness, they are, by the most unexceptionable means, extending British interests, British influences and the British Empire ... Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way ... and every genuine convert from among them made to the Christian religion becomes the ally and friend of the colonial government. (Philip 1828:ix-x)

Chief Maqoma consulted Philip seeking counsel regarding the brutality of the British Governor, Sir Benjamin D’Urban. Philip gave the following advice:

If they (the soldiers) drive away you people to the point of the bayonet, advise them to go over the Keiskamma peaceably; if they come and take away your cattle, suffer them to do it without resistance. If they burn your huts, allow them to do so; if they shoot your men, bear it till the governor comes, and then represent your grievances to him, and I’m convinced you will have no occasion to repent for having followed my advice. (Philip 1828:x)

Do these two narratives leave any reader with a question of Philip’s allegiance: oppressed indigenous communities or British imperial regime? His actions later, when he ascended the pinnacle of London Missionary Society’s governance structure in the Cape, he viewed things differently. For instance, he proposed that the Khoisan should acculturate by showing the outward signs of civilisation rather than been denied civil rights as the colonialists did. (Elbourne & Ross 1997:38) point out that Philip pleaded for equal civil rights for all free people in the colony, irrespective of colour. This, as far as he was concerned, would be consonant with the abolition of slavery. He championed the cause of Khoisan by

promoting equal economic rights that will consequently lead to the fundamental cultural change. His conviction was that the Khoisan should regain their lost land from the settlers, participate in the White economy, and adopt Western civilisation as expressed, for example, in property ownership, hygienic practices and Western clothing.

Some missionaries broke the shell to enter the embryo of racial imperialism by marrying African women. For instance, Van der Kemp at age fifty-nine in 1806 married a fourteen-year-old Malagasy slave girl, who bore him four children. His second marriage to the Khoisan woman added salt to the wounded Puritan conscience of his contemporaries and colonial counterparts (Elphick 2012:16-17). His successor James Read also married a Khoisan woman and is reported that he had some sexual relations with another Khoisan woman. Further in the interior, Johannes Winter of the BMS identified strongly with Africans to the point of offering his daughter to marry the Bapedi Chief Kgolokoe. He aligned himself with the Bapedi Lutheran Church, which broke away from the Berlin Mission in 1890 (Elphick 2012:59). One sad story is that of 1889 when a Zulu woman called Dalita Isaac made an open confession of having sexual relations with a missionary of the American Zulu Mission (AZM) known as Erwin Richards. Erwin was White and was married while this extra-marital affair happened. There were debates about the nature of this physical act. Was it a *coitus interruptus*, as there was no resultant pregnancy or just a physical touch? Literature abounds in how this revelation blazed in the mission field as sin beyond forgiveness. The letter she wrote to reveal this “reflects much about the association between sex and sin in the context of Christianity, more specifically Christian mission” (Couper 2017:61).

Thomas Jensen, like Livingstone, was a socially concerned missionary, taking interest in the welfare of the people he ministered to. He was not only concerned about the salvation of their souls. “During times of distress he offered his help by providing a social, charitable and medicinal service to all people.” (Bammann 2016:149). The missionaries were in some incidences a fortress of hope, especially after many inland areas had been destabilised by Mzilikazi and the

invasion of the Boers in their territories. They “sought emotional security in the Christian faith, as well as moral protection with the missionaries” (Bammann 2016:198).

The bottom line is that Christianity suffered rejection due to missionaries’ ignorance or naïve approaches of dealing with Africans. My former colleague at the University of the Free State, Dr Joel Mokhoathi correctly points out that:

Within the modern missiological debate, there are scholars who contend that the attitude of early missionaries towards the African cultural and religious heritage was often misguided. Early missionaries are accused of being too much involved with their own culture (colonialism included), did not understand much of the African culture, and worked hard to destroy what they did not understand. (Mokhoathi 2018:18)

1.12 Christianity in current South Africa

By the end of the nineteenth century, after a century of political upheavals, religious revivalisms, and extensive African proselytism, most, if not all the people groups in current South Africa were exposed to the Christian missionary message. The church had established mission stations, educational centres and healthcare facilities. Kumalo gives these as some reasons why the churches have been hailed for their work in Africa:

First, they provided much-needed education, which produced the first cadre of African elites who would later lead their people to independence. Second, they provided much-needed healthcare systems by building hospitals and clinics that saved lives, especially during the time when colonial governments had less value for African life. Third, and most important for this article, these churches participated in the struggle for the liberation of the African people. (Kumalo 2014:226)

The political landscape metamorphosed periodically, affecting the socio-economic dynamics in some very significant observations. Population dynamics and settlements developed a new complexion. The Brits were at the zenith of their imperial ideology, Boers were emerging out of British brutality, and the Black population groups were subjected to oppressive laws regarding their land ownership rights, suffrage, and political franchise. British colonialism, which

was enhanced by apartheid in the middle of the twentieth century had exerted its influence in all areas of life for South Africans. It became an *oedema* that swelled and ruptured into racism, bigotry, and prejudice that negatively affected the validity and authenticity of the Christian theology.

The current South African Christianity evolved into White Christianity, mainly from the West; African Christianity seceded from White Christianity with aspirations of African churches governed by Africans; and Afrikaans Christianity which evolved and is encapsulated by and within Afrikaner nationalistic ideals. South African Christianity is mainly Protestant, of course with significant Catholic presence. It is also seasoned by a large African Zionism, Classical Pentecostal faith; and neo-charismatic flavour. The Christian faith in South Africa is still widely divided between Blacks and Whites. It is divided significantly more on a Sunday than any other day of a week.

1.13 The church and apartheid

From the mid-nineteenth century, the Bible became a 'white' book. It was used to justify White supremacist ideals. Bibliology was warped in enhancing an emerging 'White African tribe' concerned with preserving its identity and authenticity in socio-religious strata of the society. The year 1652 is remembered as a catalyst that gave South Africa a new epistemological landscape. The new Dutch settlers in the Cape were not intended to settle permanently, but to establish a half-way station that could supply fresh consumables for the European crews to the Dutch East Indies. These settlers were Calvinists and belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), which was ecclesiastically under the Amsterdam presbytery, and financially under the United East Indies Company (Schaaf 1994:199).

The population dynamics took a new complexity as slaves from Asia and other parts of Africa arrived in the Cape. The indigenous people (Khoisan) and the settlers mixed both romantically and otherwise to create a new people group that is today termed 'Coloured people'. The Cape colony was forming and was enhanced by the arrival of the French Huguenots in 1688. The German

immigrants appeared in the nineteenth century. Later, the British entered the scene and by 1806, took over the Cape politically and intellectually. The British missionary societies entered the fray and mostly treated Africans as equals.

The year 1857 is crucial in South African church history. The first indigenous people, the Batswana, received the Bible in their language through the efforts of Robert Moffat. In the same year, the DRC passed a resolution that it was humane and biblical that the heathen converts be received into existing congregations. "Church finally and decisively succumbed to popular pressure 1857, when at a stormy Synodal meeting the practice of ministration of white and non-white was sanctioned." (Ritner 1967:19). This 1857 decision has become the major watershed church's racial policy by which the Afrikaner community sanctioned and institutionalised racial separation along colour lines that enhanced some prejudice. The resolution not only settled the question of the of Coloured members but laid down the pattern for the future relations with non-Whites, unwittingly providing print for what was to become the cornerstone of the apartheid ideology – *eiesoortige ontwikkeling*, or group development along indigenous lines (Ritner 1967:19). They saw it necessary to establish separate churches for the converted heathens. The man who played a pivotal role in this resolution was Rev. A. Murray – one of the Scottish ministers who came to strengthen the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The DRC, in its missionary zeal brought by Scottish revivalist spirit, developed the notion of separate churches for people of Black and Coloured descent. So, separate churches were both a bibliological and missiological intent. It was around 1856 when a Xhosa girl, Nonqause uttered some prophecies about the destruction of the invaders (White people) by some supernatural powers. The event known as the cattle-killing tragedy left many amaXhosa poverty-stricken after losing their treasured livestock.

Consequent to the so-called Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) the British emerged victorious while the Boers emerged squashed politically, socially, economically, and intellectually. This led them to the struggle for spiritual emancipation. Out of the British brutality in the concentration camps, they emerged determined

to fight for the survival of their volk. The path of war's perceived destination was freedom from British oppression, gaining economic, and spiritual freedom. Hence in 1948, when they came into power, their first prime minister was a Dutch Reformed minister and a theologian, D.F. Malan. By the time they had ascended to the power of the government, the Boers had already made some indelible strides. They had formed their new language (Afrikaans), adopted a revised schooling system (basic education in their language and three universities offering tuition in their language), and printed a Bible in their own language (1933). Economically, they had emancipated themselves by opening their own bank (Volkskas), insurance company (Santam), and few other entities that worked towards their self-assertion and liberation from the British imperialist oppression. Schaaf paints this picture well:

God's hand brought Dutch Calvinists to the Cape; enabled the group of the free burghers to grow into a people; freed from the Great Trek from the degeneracy of anglicised and liberal Cape colonial society; preserved them from black attacks (the Blacks were the Canaanites in the promised land!); and established them in the freedom of republican independence. But the Evil One continued his attacks on the chosen Afrikaner people; British imperialism pursued them; a century of injustice culminated in the Boer War, which brought in its train the loss of independence, and thus poverty, oppression and anglicisation. Only through courageous faith and uncompromising obedience to their calling can the Afrikaner people have a future. In this belief the Afrikaners set themselves apart, organised their own nation and finally in 1948 won the election against their liberal British opponents. Thereafter, with unbending faith in the rightness of their conceptions, they built South African society on the model of separate development, under white national Christian Afrikaner rule. They themselves called this the policy of separate development; the rest of the world called it apartheid. (Schaaf 1994:201)

Looking at this assertion, one picks up the fundamental Afrikaner theology which promotes White supremacist ideals. The doctrine of election and the theology of covenant is all-inclusive in this theology. Bibliology is at the crossroads in Afrikaner theology. The Bible is used to justify this dogma that promotes the division of humanity into race classifications, peoples, and languages as the conscious work of God. Genesis 10 and 11 are used to justify

these classifications. Inevitably, the notion is clearly the master-servant attitude towards other people. It is paternalism that regards 'others' as nonentities that cannot think for themselves. The 'civilised people' must think and decide for these 'others'. This bibliology vies for conclusions that people are of equal value before God but not alike. It claims that the Bible points out that there are masters and servants in respective positions where they must excel.

I do not intend here to sketch a well-known historical unfolding of the DRC's justification of apartheid. But to point out that it has cluttered Christianity and shaped theology in South Africa. It created a bedrock for liberation themes in theological debates. Apart from the African Initiated Churches (AIC) and the latest Black charismatic formations, no church in South Africa can dub itself immune from practising apartheid. They embraced it by vocally or biblically supporting it, developing apartheid-aligned ecclesiastical structures; or remaining silent and mutant instead of being prophetic. Mashau and Mangoedi (2015:2) correctly point out that these churches "have created religious codes that keep the 'different others' in the margins". The Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed traditions, and the classical Pentecostals were there when people suffered the brutality of ungodly ideology that undermined humanity created in and carrying the *imago Dei*. The approach of quiet diplomacy is in many ways subliminal support of the status quo. A theology of silence is not an option when social justice is at stake. This was demonstrated by Ray McCauley of the Rhema Bible Church at the Rustenburg Conference when he stood up and confessed:

Despite our short history, we recognise our guilt in that, for some of us, our opposition to apartheid did not go far enough ... we *were often silent* when our sisters and brothers were suffering persecution

We confess that *our silence* in these areas was in fact a sin, and that our failure to act decisively against all forms of apartheid made us party to an inhumane political ideology. (McCauley, cited in Alberts & Chikane 1991:26, italics added for emphasis)

For evil to flourish in society, it only requires a good church to do nothing. When politicians destroy, theologians must build and bind. Silence in the face of oppression of humanity cannot be justified. I heard the statement many

times, and I don't know its source: Evil flourishes when good men do nothing. The Sharpsville shootings of 21 March 1960 became a decisive factor for both the church and the state. The World Council of Churches (WCC) convened a conference at Cottesloe in Johannesburg, where government brutality was condemned. Politically, the then prime minister, H.F. Verwoerd, vehemently opposed WCC proposals. The church faced a difficult decision. Most English churches condemned the brutality of the state, whilst the Afrikaans churches, especially the DRC, defended the government's right to counter violence with violence as a means of preventing chaos and revolution (Roy 2017:161). Theology and Christianity in South Africa started then to chart the way forward exerting the efforts of relevance in a wounded society. Resane correctly notes:

This is *exitus acta probat* – the event proving the act that charted the way to the future. Political responsibility is part of prophetic function of the church. Disengagement from the cries of the masses is not consonant with Christ's character and attitude. (Resane 2017:22)

Apartheid and church symbiosis are an oxymoron. It is theologically water and oil that cannot mix. The strength and the power of South Africa rely on the prophetic church that is ritually cleansed of apartheid and its byproducts of prejudice, racism, bigotry, and all sorts of colour bars. Bible-believing and Christ-exalting churches cannot rationalise any form of discrimination. The church should be original by speaking the truth that is embedded within the metanarratives. Theologically and in practice the church should strive towards the principle of the Communion of the Saints, there should be the equality of believers within the church irrespective of colour or status. Common membership and common worship should be the norm. Scripture teaches the unity of the races. All people are created in the image of God and are of equal worth.

The church and the Spirit dwell together to release the freedom to those who are attached to Christ. Just as the church and the Spirit are intertwined, so should the redeemed of the Lord. The church is a unit that cannot express its joy in division, separateness, or disconnection. Church unity is church strength. The divided church is crippled prophetically and wounded biblically. It is erroneous

theologically, and bankrupt spiritually. I believe that all races are one in Christ, but this unity is a super-national, spiritual unity which does not cancel racial differences and colour-boundaries but recognises and sanctifies the diversity in unity (Ritner 1967:26).

1.14 The gospel and social justice at loggerhead

For many years there have been two voices in South African Christianity regarding the gospel and justice. One stream embraces a sharp division between the two, with no blurry lines or grey areas. They perceive the two parallel streams without any intersection whatsoever. The other stream perceives the two as one unit that cannot be separated. They claim one cannot be gospel-relevant without socially concerned and that social justice is inclusive within the gospel. From the time Christianity was introduced in South Africa in the middle of the seventeenth century, the division has always been propagated through pietism that promoted inner experience of Christ as above any social involvement. On the other hand, there were those missionary activists who were at the forefront to promote the incarnational gospel by promoting a social welfare of and for the indigenous people. They built hospitals and schools to that effect. They insisted on the prophetic role.

Prophetic ministry immerses itself in natural and social justice. *Kerygma* and *incarnation* operate in synergy. Jesus proclaimed the news of the kingdom, and cared for the socio-physical needs at the same time. (Resane 2017:23)

As stated earlier, some missionaries were both Christ-activists and colonial imperialists. The consequences of this approach impacted South African Christianity, especially in the twentieth century. While those who were kerygmatically audible were regarded as sell-outs in some quarters, those who were incarnationally involved were sometimes regarded as communists or terrorists. Preaching the gospel for the conversion of souls, and nothing else, was the focus, whilst the thought that preaching should not be divorced from social justice was eyed with suspicion. The prophets in the nation like Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, Allan Boesak, Buti Tlhagale, Beyers Naude and many

in the faculties of theology, and some ecclesiastical formations, were at some stage referred to as communists by the regime. Preachers who never made any political statements such as Nicholas Bhengu, Reinhard Bonnke and others were regarded as pacifists ... messengers of peace. The gospel and social justice cannot be separated.

The fact remains that theology and public policy are open for scrutiny. Theology plays a role of challenging the public policy if it overrides natural and social justice. The church's prophetic voice must not recoil into obscurity when the state repression escalates to the total onslaught of human dignity. Privatised religion is dangerous. (Resane 2017:23)

The gospel of peace was preached in and to the wounded, crying, and divided society. *Kerygma* took precedence over incarnational justice. In the latest developments, the neo-charismatics promote the gospel of health and well that comes by following the planting-a-seed system. This is giving financially to the church leader, with the faith or hope of getting more returns. The masses' poverty and the desire for more have become some form of parochial self-enrichment.

For about three centuries, the state brutalised the African masses through colonialism, imperialism, and apartheid, with little or no condemnation by the church. Africans were de-culturised, disenfranchised, marginalised, and balkanised through the justification from ecclesial formations. The oppressors had always been avowed Christians who adored Christ and cherished His Word, the Bible. Like the real slave masters, the whip on the right hand was accompanied by the Bible on the left hand. A cruel master is a saint on Sunday when during the week vulgar is substituted with kind biblical utterances. My friend told me that his mother works for the Jewish family in Johannesburg. From Monday to Friday afternoon, the Jewish master is a raging bull, but come Friday, the bull becomes a lamb walking to and from the synagogue, walking in humility and greeting everyone he meets with *Shalom Aleichem*. What is proposed here as a viable option is that preaching and social justice move together in synchrony.

Proclamational activities in *missiological* endeavours must be balanced with *incarnational* (presence) endeavours. Proclamation must be balanced with

presence or incarnation ... The proclamational activities synthesised or enthused by the Holy Spirit should address the human misery brought about by the decadent political regimes at hand. *Kerygma* is theology in action. Proclamational activities without incarnational exertion nullify the validity of theology in context. (Resane 2019:2)

The problem of the gospel and social justice at loggerheads has brought a different kind of faith ontology. It became the fertile soil for secessions into Ethiopianism, African Independent Churches, and syncretism. When proclamation and incarnation are at loggerheads, the sparks of reaction become inevitable. For instance, Ethiopianism came into being, not due to disagreement regarding dogma or liturgy, because proclamation by missionaries was not consonant with lifestyle especially of treating fellow Christian African leaders as equals. African Independent Churches came into being due to the imperial church's dominance over the church, without allowing Africans to emerge as leaders. Syncretism is the African efforts of aligning African spirituality with biblical spirituality.

The truth remains that withdrawal from the socio-political landscape (world) is anathema.

There is some tendency for many evangelicals like the Baptists, to withdraw from any discourse that involves *incarnational* expression of the love of Christ in socio-political spheres. Contextual engagement is regarded as being political, therefore not being spiritual enough. (Resane 2017:25)

The withdrawal as opposed to immersion, cannot be an option. Christianity should immerse itself in the world where justice is at stake and play a prophetic role there. For "The prophet brings the church back to confession" (Sundberg 2000:27). The church should become more prophetic and pastoral, thereby contributing social capital, time, allegiance, and talents to the development of the society rather than becoming parochial and inward-looking (Kumalo 2014:229).

1.15 African Christians reflect

Our society is full of imbalances. It is characterised by opposing binaries in many ways. The rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, Black and White,

believers and non-believers, the educated and the uneducated, the civilised and the uncivilised, the qualified and the unqualified – the list can go on. As a result, Africans start to reflect on these things and interrogate aggressively about their origin, knowledge systems, spirituality, and such like. Questions arise about the reality of God, including this God's colour, character, and conundrum in dealing with African affairs. These affairs in many cases include marginalisation, misery, poverty and oppression. Africans ask questions that their oppressors find difficult to answer. Their Blackness becomes a spotlight that zooms into their consciences.

Imbalances that breed these questions result in frustration and demoralisation. The reality of God becomes a suspect. God seems to be the God of the 'Whites'. No matter the economic viability in the country, the Whites seem to be enjoying better benefits. Their places of worship are elegantly structured and super-clean. Their missional endeavours, such as providing food and clothes for the poor, are always a success. The supermarkets – Pick-n-Pay, Spar, Woolworths, and others – listen and respond to their appeal for food to the poor, while ignoring their Black counterparts' same appeal. White missionaries in the field do better than Black missionaries. The infrastructure and the necessary tools are always available to them. Are these two serving the same God? Is God hospitable enough for people of different skin pigmentation?

These socio-economic imbalances put theological reflections on a spot. The God of wonder beyond the galaxies is confined to the laboratory test tube. Hence Africans wander in and out, seeking some supernatural interventions in their miseries. They run after miracles, seeking some divine interventions that can lift them out of devastations of life. The God who does not come to their rescue becomes questionable. 'Where is God when it hurts?' Africans ask. During the apartheid era, Africans expressed their emotions in songs such as 'Senzeni na?', which means 'What have we done?' What have we done to deserve this maltreatment? What have we done to be so dehumanised? Most of African music has some military rhymes and rhythms to express the war they are caught

in. African limericks and jingles are the emotive expressions of misery with the hope of victory arising in the horizon.

Christ becomes a 'brother' not sympathetic to African conditions. This put mainstream Christology at the crossroads. Christ is now inside the ring competing with ancestors. Questions such as who is superior in dealing with African misery? Christ or ancestors? A later chapter addresses this subject.

These imbalances drive Africans to reflect on their spiritualities. The African Traditional Religions are re-called into some turbulences of the soul. The resurgence of spiritual connection through ancestral veneration comes into play. The witchdoctor or spiritist who was marginalised is now at the centre stage in addressing questions that the God of the Bible seems to be unable to answer. The ecclesiastical declarations seem to be answering questions that the masses never asked.

Amid this scenario, there comes a prophet, an apostle, a pastor, man of God, Papa, who surfaces himself as a *di ya thoteng di bapile* (comrades in arms) and the witchdoctor. This pastor and the witchdoctor are not rivals at all. Both are consulted for the same reasons: power, protection, and prosperity. Africans like to know who their allies or enemies are. They desire to hear someone telling them mysteries that surround them. For them, spirituality is a deeper connection with the spiritual world to behold the hidden mysteries in the unknown world. Like the Apostle Peter at Jesus' grave, they would like to stoop down and see the inner part of the grave. They like to search intently and with the greatest care (1 Pet 1:10). In African worldview, the prophet and the witchdoctor both deal with and are connected to the spiritual world. They are prepared to pay whatever it takes – cent, chicken goat, sheep, or a cow – to consult someone who can reveal the hidden things in their lives, especially things that relate to spiritual activities such as witchcraft.

Chapter 2

Strange God colludes with the gods of the land

The missionary God of the Bible presented to Africans seems to conflict with the real God. The attributes of God as taught in the Bible seem to be in collision with the messengers of God who teach and proclaim the same God. The God of the Bible is the real God, but the God of the missionaries is a fake God, who does not verbally or incarnationally express the God of or in the Book, the Bible. Africans question the validity of the virtue of the brotherly love preached by the White people as per the dictates of the Bible, yet the same love is not evidenced by lifestyle, conduct, and relationships of White people with Africans. The God of the White people is cruel, merciless, and lacks a sense of empathy and sympathy with African masses. He is the God who sees 'white' only, not 'black'. He is the God of the privileged elite who command other people's public and private affairs. He seems to be elevated above his creation and remote controls the universe and its eventualities. The Whites are God's favourites, hence endowed with all life orientation faculties to rule ruthlessly and regard the less fortunate as nonentities or non-persona. The God of the Whites is legitimised by the sporadic biblical texts that Black people are the cursed Canaanites to be subjugated as slaves or servants, else cleansed from the face of the earth.

Africans were not accepted as genuine Christians until they succumbed to European culture. The Bible message has been used as a thoroughly White supremacist strategy of imperial force, but this later led to a realisation that the God of the Bible is not the White God. So, the White people were and still, in some instances, regarded as failures when coming to the endorsement of the metanarratives. The Bible has not changed. It is the same Bible that the White missionaries brought to Africa. This Bible remains the rule of faith – the message with potent transformational power speaking to people in all geographical and circumstantial settings. The Bible is not the property of White people,

even though they are the ones who brought it after they received it from Asia. It remains the message of peace and hope to the hurting world.

Theologians must realise the importance of appreciation of African cultures and traditions. African theologians must find ways to integrate some aspects of African cultures and practices within Christianity. Cultural identity should be viewed as a historical continuation into Christianity rather than as its opponent.

Theology is expected to answer human miserable conditions. It has a legitimate right to rise above the situation. God's voice is expected to be loud and clear to raise awareness and his character of loving-kindness and mercy. This can be done through the audible voices of theologians, which can break silence and usher in the message of hope in the hurting world.

2.1 The God of the Bible, White supremacy and normativity

Many Africans struggle to correlate the God of the Bible and the God presented to them by the missionary imperialists. The attributes of God as taught in the Bible seem to be in collision with the messengers of God who teach and proclaim the same God. The holistic worldview that Africans carry find it difficult, if not impossible, to separate the sender and the messenger. Roberts (1987:23) correctly declares that Africans possess the vision of wholeness or integration of life, wherein sacred and profane are relative terms. The messenger is expected to be a replica of the sender. An ambassador does not sell his ideology or product, but those of the sender. This oxymoronic synergy of the God of the Bible and the European missionary drives Africans to the corner of the crisis of conscience. In their view, the God of the Bible is the real God, but the God of the missionaries is a fake God, who does not verbally or incarnationally express the God of or in the Book, the Bible. Africans question the validity of the virtue of the brotherly love preached by White people as per dictates of the Bible, yet same love not evidenced by lifestyle, conduct, and relationships of the White people with Africans.

Africans were expecting the missionaries to be preachers of the word. As preachers, they were expected to be the heralds, whose chief requirement was

absolute fidelity. As heralds and God's ambassadors, the missionaries did not express their ideas, but delivered a message mandated by God to them. They were not asked of their own opinions relating to issues at stake, they were merely the mouthpiece of the God who has commissioned them. By this very fact, they were invested with the authority which they represented. Their speeches were endowed with an unquestionable prestige. Indeed, the herald is nothing in him or herself. In the Christian context, the herald (missionary) is mandated to speak as a representative of the God who has sent him and on behalf of the message which has been entrusted to him. Unfortunately, some missionaries who entered Africa in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries disregarded or misrepresented the fact that they were the agents, simply spokespersons. They could not grasp the reality that their mission was based not on the strength or the sincerity of their convictions, but on the God, who sent them, on what God has done in the very event of the coming of Christ. To associate the gun and the Bible contributed towards indigenous apprehensions of missionaries by Africans in general (West 2016b:90).

For some Africans, the White people's God is cruel, merciless, and lacks a sense of empathy and sympathy with the marginalised masses. This God seems to be the God who sees 'white' only, not 'black'. He is the God of the privileged elite who command other people's public and private affairs. He seems to be elevated above his creation and remote control of the universe and its eventualities. The Whites are God's favourites, hence endowed with all life orientation faculties to rule ruthlessly and regard the less fortunate as nonentities or *non-persona*. The God of the Whites is legitimised by the sporadic biblical texts that Black people are the cursed Canaanites to be subjugated as slaves or servants, else cleansed from the face of the earth. The curse of Ham in Genesis 9:20-27 was and still is regarded by supremacist Whites as a "universal curse on black peoples" (Brett 2009:10) to be condemned to slavery. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Livingstone was horrified to come across the mass killing of Black people by Afrikaners, who invoked Deuteronomy 20:10-14.

Africans struggle in their consciences, to perceive the God of the Bible as the God who seems to promote and favour the White supremacy and its ideals.

Whiteness seems to be a position of status. In this sense, Diangelo (2018:24) declares that Whiteness “is a social and institutional status and identity imbued with legal, political, economic, and social rights and privileges that are denied to others”.

Diangelo expands the notion of White supremacy as a phenomenon characterised by invisibility, and I can add, also by subliminality. It is, like racism, a structural and ideological issue that has historically shaped a system of global European domination. Therefore, White supremacy is felt consciously in countries that have a history of colonialism engineered by Western nations (Diangelo 2018:29). It is the “unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today” (Mills 1997:122). Indeed, it is “a socio-political-economic system of domination based on racial categories that benefit those defined and perceived as white” (Diangelo 2018:31). Looking closely into it, one discovers that this system is a structural power that privileges, centralises, and elevates White people as a group endowed with extra privileges above others. Supremacist ideals and notions are intertwined with racism. Racism thrives on misinformation and stereotyping. Instead of portraying people as the careers of *imago Dei*, racism opts to devalue the worth of the people who look different from us – based on the colour of the skin. Goto is correct when he maintains:

Discrimination based on race includes more than making value judgements about skin pigmentation, since it also involves, for example, evaluations based on natality and degrees of assimilation. (Goto 2017:42)

It is with great sadness that the White supremacist ideals pervade South African societal structures in such a way that resistance to equality and respect of racial differences suffer in the hands of both sides of the race spectrum. There is a certain resistance to abandon this ideology, while there is also some resilience to fight against it both politically and ecclesiastically. Wekker highlights this sad state of affairs in the new South Africa as follows:

For many white people, there is an automatic equivalence between being black and being lower class; these two axes of signification are closely related, quasi-identical. Retaining the connection between whiteness and class superiority, that is, securing white superiority, requires automatically assigning blacks to lower-class status. (Wekker 2016:47).

The God of the Bible is in contrast with the God of the Whites. For some Africans, White people are the best hypocrites ever. The people who preach what they do not live. Their message (Bible) contradicts their sender (God). The rejection of the Christian faith should not be based on the missionaries' misdirected evangel, but on a human fallacy that they were not aware of the damage, they were caused by failing to harmonise the message (Bible) with the sender (God). It is understood that naturally, it is difficult for Africans to see the difference between the Christian God of the Bible and the White person's attitudes and customs. Missionaries found it difficult to differentiate the Bible message from European customs. For them, Christianity and Western customs were intertwined. Mokhoathi highlights this when he writes: "Following Western precedence, conversion was determined by behavioral norms, in which African converts had to abandon their traditional African customs and adopt the Western ones." (Mokhoathi 2018:18).

This misunderstanding mingled and influenced the way of worship, clothes, instruments, etc. To embrace Christianity was, as far as they were concerned, to embrace European customs. South African theologian, Mokgethi Motlhabi aptly observes:

The Western approach was mainly to recreate in the Western image everything that seemed alien to the Western worldview – to transform and refashion all that was different and anything that the missionaries and their colonizing partners did not understand. (Motlhabi 2008:34).

Africans were not accepted as genuine Christians until they succumbed to European culture. The Bible message has been used as a thoroughly White supremacist strategy of imperial force, but this later led to a realisation that the God of the Bible is not the White God. So, the Whites were and still, in some instances, regarded as failures when coming to the endorsement of the metanarratives. The Bible has not changed. It is the same Bible that the White missionaries brought to Africa. This Bible remains the rule of faith – the message with potent transformational power speaking to people in all geographical and circumstantial settings. The Bible is not the property of the

Whites, even though they are the ones who brought it after they received it from Asia. It remains the message of peace and hope to the hurting world.

African Christians embrace the Bible for its authentic rationale for existence. The African experience of the Christian faith is centred in the Bible. African biblical scholars have emerged to illustrate some fresh and powerful interpretations of the Bible. According to Roberts (1987:25): “Exegesis from below, seen in solidarity with the oppressed, yields insights missed by those who read the Bible in solidarity with the privileged.”

The message of the Bible is the message of hope for the oppressed and marginalised African Christians. They took it upon themselves to interpret the Bible from the unfortunate social context they found themselves in. They follow Robert’s suggestion above – that the Bible interpretation ends up in solidarity with the oppressed and the disadvantaged. Context shapes the theological questions as well as the theological response. In analysing the South African Black theologian, Itumeleng Mosala, Hopkins concludes:

To ascertain and appropriate the specific biblical God, then, requires a double mediation, that is, a dialectical interplay between the historical experience of the oppressed classes in the Bible and the historical experience of the black working class and peasants in South Africa. The God found in both historical experiences will be the biblical God of liberation. (Hopkins 1989:131)

The theme of the Religious Education Association (REA) global conference in 2018 was dealing with White normativity. The first question that comes to one’s mind is the meaning of normativity. Generally, normativity is an evaluative standard used to designate actions as good or desirable, while others that may differ may be undesirable or impermissible. It is a standard used to judge or evaluate behavioural outcomes. In a paper presented at the 2018 REA conference, Joseph V. Crockett defines normativity as standards “that designate some actions as right, some views as correct, and some outcomes as valuable, while other acts, perspectives, and results are labelled wrong, incorrect, or worthless” (Crockett 2018:362).

Examining this definition closely, one can conclude that White normativity is the way Whites are privileged to establish and maintain certain norms and standards to which non-Whites must adhere. Crockett (2018:362) takes this definition of white normativity further – that white is good and black is evil. A white lie is a harmless or trivial lie, therefore can be legitimately tolerated, even when it is naturally not acceptable. On the other hand, black is often portrayed as negative. This is expressed in annunciations such as 'black sheep', 'black soul'. Whatever is done by Whites should be correct and, therefore, accepted unconditionally. All that is black is evil or false, hence black magic, Black theology, etc. are terms to describe the meaning of falsehood. Normativity elevates white supremacy. White normativity is a question of power, where others are lesser beings (Winnings 2018:354). Leonardo (2018:372), another participant at 2018 REA conference 2018 highlights that “the purpose of Whiteness has been remarkably predictable, which is to elevate the status of people considered White at any given point in history.”

Even after South African liberation in 1994, White normativity continues to control the norms, ethos, and ideologies in institutions such as the places of learning and worship, and business transactions. The education curriculum is still monopolised by a colonial mindset. Mainline Christianity is to a certain degree, still dictated by the White normativists who regard their polity and liturgy as sacrosanct and sacred. This puts the Bible and the Christian faith under the spotlight. Its reading becomes disarrayed as African readers struggle to understand texts as a divine anthology that addresses their miseries and devastations. On the other hand, they see that binaries (black-white, poor-rich, heterosexual-homosexual, etc.) still exist whereby divided society is visible. These societal binaries, due to their historical existence, seem inviolable for the White supremacists who develop intolerant attitudes in any human interaction. Winnings (2018:353) is right when he comments: “Expressions of intolerance, experiences of discrimination, and our inability to embrace those who are different have plagued us for centuries.”

White supremacy and normativity 'de-authenticates' missiology, nullifies theology, destabilises Christology, dethrones the authenticity, authority and

infallibility of the Bible, hence making bibliology a scum in the eyes of the secularists, and dehumanises anthropology. It has left the missionary endeavours of bringing the Gospel to the unevangelised Africans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a darker outlook to both Africans and of the postmodern minds. It has created an almost impassible bridge of theology that brings God to people, and people to God. It has cluttered Christology in such a way that Christ is either equated with other messiahs or is rivalled with other incarnated deities. Humanity has been stripped of the dignity of carrying the *imago Dei*. The Bible has become an open book critiqued by theologically elite readers who ask questions that mainstream theology are unable to answer. The emergent voices from the human slums of poverty, political oppression, and social marginalisation are reading the Bible, and are awestruck by findings that negate the contemporary gospel brought and preached by West-oriented hermeneutists. Akoto-Abutiate agrees that “many hermeneutical winds of biblical interpretation have blown and continue to blow across the globe in the field of biblical studies in both academia and the faith community” (Akoto-Abutiate 2014:3).

The voices are regularly becoming louder and are expressive in the contemporary theologies, such as the liberation theologies and participatory theologies in the twenty-first century. I concur with Akoto-Abutiate, who maintains:

In the aftermath of the Enlightenment, with its vigorous rationalism, colonialism, postcolonialism, modernism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and other ‘posts’, room has been created to hear scripture amid a cacophony of voices. These voices include those of liberals and conservatives, minimalists and maximalists, revisionist, liberationists, feminists, womanists, and other minorities. In the midst of this turbulence, ‘Hearing Scripture in African Context,’ is very appropriate. (Akoto-Abutiate 2016:5)

The last statement in the above quotation is very crucial for African Christian Bible readers. Unfortunately, this voice is so loud that the world cannot hear. It has become a peripheral echo treated lightly with very little attention. The bottom line is what many theologians had echoed before: Theology is both ‘descriptive and constructive’. The biblical theologian attempts to get back where he deals away with the temporal gap by bridging the timespan between his or her day, and that of the biblical witnesses. He or she does

this using a historical study of the biblical documents. Let me take some liberty to associate myself with the famous Christian economist, Barend A. de Vries that all actions and initiatives intending to address poverty must be guided by the message of the Bible, which confronts poverty with simple but penetrating rules.

- It [the Bible] expresses concern for the poor and the conditions in which they live and urges that the poor be an integral part of the community.
- It proclaims the rule of love above the rule of money, profits, and power.
- It recognises the dignity of the individual, created in the image of God. In God's world, all people are equal; there is no place for a downtrodden class or race.
- It proclaims that all of creation's resources belong to God, that they are good, and we must care for them with love.
- It calls for reform of financial and property structures when they become oppressive. (De Vries 1998:5)

The concluding fact is that "hearing scripture in Africa must begin from the African interpretative or cultural context" (Akoto-Abutiate 2016:13). The Bible must be meaningful in the African social, cultural, economic, political, and theological contexts. Indeed, the quest for human dignity and the perpetual desire to bridge the gap between people of different classes, races, sexes, etc. make it imperative that scripture be read with African spectacles and heard in African as well as other contexts (Akoto-Abutiate 2016:15).

2.2 God's attributes are sacrificed for *self-aggrandizement*

When the Bible and the Christian faith were introduced to Africans, the message was loud and clear. The God of the Bible was full of love, mercy and kindness. Some recipients struggled to understand how a good man like Jesus suffered in the hands of his fellow men. The gospel preachers seemed to display these characters. They loved the people they served and went all out to bring enlightenment to them. Africans were the lost masses trapped in the chains of the dark heathenism. Questions arose from these oppressed masses when they

witnessed and experienced slavery, physical brutality, and oppression by the same people who showed and preached love to and for them. Many negative ideological and literary forces in the world were either carried out or sanctioned by Christians. Think of the Crusades organised by Western European Christians after centuries of Muslim wars of expansion. Their primary objectives were to stop the expansion of Muslim states, to reclaim for Christianity the Holy Land in the Middle East, and to recapture territories that had formerly been Christian. It was in 1095 when Pope Urban II called for the First Crusade in a sermon at the Council of Clermont. He encouraged military support for the Byzantine Empire and its Emperor, Alexios I, who needed reinforcements for his conflict with westward migrating Turks colonising Anatolia.

Slavery in various forms has been a part of the social environment for much of Christianity's history, spanning well over eighteen centuries. The majority of slaveowners defined themselves as Christians. They articulated their belief and justified their slave trade and ownership by texts such as Genesis 9:18-27 and Ephesians 6:5-7. In the eighteenth and nineteenth-century debates, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, passages in the Bible were used by both pro-slavery advocates and abolitionists to support their respective views. Today, the broader Christianity in its various forms believes that the Bible does not in any way approve of or endorse slavery. It is an evil system that needs to be opposed at all levels of society. Christians find it a bitter pill to swallow that, for eighteen centuries, slavery was accepted just like all other cultural realities. It was the very same Christianity that took upon itself to abolish slavery. In the eighteenth century, the abolition movement took shape among Christian people across the globe.

The same argument was used to justify Apartheid in South Africa in the twentieth century. Highly educated and seemingly godly Reformed theologians developed an impressive biblical case for apartheid. They were convinced that the Bible endorsed the separation of the races. They insisted that their policies were pleasing to God because they were grounded in Scripture.

The Reformed Church of South Africa was the largest denomination in the country by far. They had several large and well-supported theological seminaries with high standards. Their best scholars had doctorates from mainly Afrikaans universities such as Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Free State, and Potchefstroom. They argued that the Bible taught that humankind, by the will of God, was separated into different races that should each have their lands. They insisted that apartheid was pleasing to God because it was endorsed by Scripture. What is more, they were very evangelistic and worked tirelessly to see Black South Africans converted and worshipping in their churches, without mixing with the Whites. They abhorred the African belief systems. They did not exert any effort in trying to learn these belief systems. Their goal was to see them eradicated and replaced with the Eurocentric Christian ideologies. To pick up Willard's (1998:308) sentiment that instead of trying to drive people to do what we think they are supposed to do, we should by inquiry, teaching, example, prayer, and reliance upon the spirit of God, work together with them to change the belief systems that are contrary to the ways of Jesus.

Many other forces can be added to this debate that the character of God was assassinated by the very same people who were supposed to defend it. Chapter 1 says much about colonialism, which will not be repeated here. South African history is full of incidents when the character of God was at stake – and all for the egoistic ideal that the oppressor was fighting for. Think of the famous Slagtersnek Rebellion (15 December 1815) when Afrikaners rebelled against the British for favouring Blacks above them. About five were sentenced to a public hanging.

Think of Tuesday, 24 May 1921, and what is known as Bulhoek Massacre; a battle that lasted less than 30 minutes between police and Israelites (followers of Prophet Enoch Mgijima). More than 180 people were killed. The battle started after police issued an ultimatum demanding that the Israelites evacuate land they were squatting on and warned that if they failed to comply, their leader would be arrested and their homes demolished. Soon afterwards, a group of around 500 white-robed men, armed with sticks and spears, challenged the machine

guns of an 800-strong police force sent by Jan Smuts to remove the Israelites who had settled at the holy village of Ntabelanga, Bulhoek in Queenstown to pray. The issue was the so-called illegal occupation of the land by the Israelites.

The God who said, 'You shall not kill' and that 'You must love your neighbour as you love yourself' became peripheral. His loving-kindness and long-suffering were sacrificed to satiate the greed of the politically powerful and privileged elite. Social forces, such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, are sanctioned by those who want to rule over others. They amass wealth at the expense of others they regard as nonentities and are deemed as sub-human or robots without any feelings. Corruption in higher places is caused by self-seeking *aggrandizement*. The human ego has overtaken the conscience of doing good to others as you would like them to do good to you. God is dislodged from human affairs and one's interests take precedence over ethics of life. The termination of unborn babies is the avoidance of disturbance in life. The baby will interrupt the life of cosiness and pleasure, so must be aborted before birth. Making hay while the sun shines is a driving philosophy that empowers the powerful leaders in politics and economy to loot so that their time of exit will lead them into enjoying their booty.

African dignity was stripped of its grandeur since their customs and theistic practices were regarded as pagan. Consequently, it had to be routed and replaced with the Western Christian civilisation, which was regarded as sacred and pure. Mawusi writes disparagingly of this situation:

Western missionaries, who came to Africa and condemned our systems of religious practices, have urged us to change our ways to adopt theirs. They saw our system as pagan practices unacceptable to God. For that reason, Africans must reform their system to what they brought to them. What they deliberately withheld from the Africans was to tell them that even their so-called 'pure' Christian religion, is nothing more than a blend of several collective European cultural and pagan religious practices. In view of this fact, the question for us is, what makes theirs more legitimate and acceptable to God, than the African system of natural revelation and worship? Mawusi (2015:10-11)

Theologians of our era must come to the full realisation of the importance of appreciation of African cultures and traditions. African theologians, in

particular, must be determined to find ways to integrate some aspects of African cultures and practices within Christianity. Cultural identity should be viewed as a historical continuation into Christianity rather than as its opponent. There is a cultural revolution in Africa, and this is intertwined with some religious fervour. As Mawusi (2015:10) points out; “it is the desire to make our cultural infiltration into the so-called organised religions within the continent a reality”. The character of God was assassinated on the altar of missionary imperialism. This sidelined and marginalised the proper understanding of the biblical God as the God of love, mercy, justice, and kindness. Some Africans turned their backs on this God, as he appeared to be the God of injustice, murder and oppression.

African theologians are realising that African cultures have a part to play and a potential to enhance Christian understanding of the Bible. An appeal is made that explorations of African traditions that are not in contrast with Christian ethics and practices be incorporated into theological and biblical studies as object lessons for understanding the metanarratives. The richness of African cultures should be utilised for understanding Christianity. I take some liberty to echo Martey’s thesis here:

Indeed, gone are the days when it was imperative for African Christians and theologians not only to defend the religiosity of African people, but also to prove their cultural maturity. (Martey 1993:13)

This is the rationale behind African theology, whose original goal was to free Christianity from the Western cultural cloak and clothe it anew in the dress of African culture (Motlhabi 2008:37). It is the whole matter of deculturation and inculturation. It is an exercise of legitimising the character of God and the authenticity of the Bible in the African mind. It is a decolonial process whereby the Bible’s accent becomes relevant and familiar to the African reader. When thus read, it becomes relevant and starts to speak to the African miseries and demises. All questions of life, including the person and soteriological functions of God through Jesus Christ, become relevant to the African context.

2.3 Where is God amid African social decay?

African Christianisation gave birth to and led to numerous negative forces in the African social fabric. Social analysts speak of African miseries of poverty, corruption, environmental degradation, socio-political corruption, ecological crises, various pandemics, epidemics and endemics. Suffering in many parts of the continent had become systemic, and in some instances, regarded as irreversible and ineradicable. The areas of African sufferings are found in the spheres of politics, economics, religion, and mortality in general. African politics are marked with distorted democracies, ailing economies, conflicting religious contours, and life quality threats. The unfortunate reality is that when society faces some crises, the poor become the victims. They are at the receiving end of political decisions and socio-economic meltdown. They pay the highest price for environmental degradation.

The predicament of the poor calls for attention beyond the realm of economics; it is essential to establish the ethical base for action and the importance of personal responsibility. (De Vries 1998:4)

Social decay had become the norm. Trying to theologise in these hazy social strata had become a challenge for Christian theologians. The imbalances in society call for deep theological reflections. God is to be located amid African miseries. The relevance of the Bible in cultural decadence calls for inner reflections. Spirituality becomes anathema in the situation. Political oppression comes in the form of denying the citizenry the right to express themselves. This comes through the banning of freedom of speech or expression, limiting or muzzling the freedom of journalism, and denying the people access to information. Economic oppression comes by capitalistic ideals that make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Most of the wealth is in the hands of the few rich individuals. De Vries highlights this as he declares:

[Poverty] deeply divides the world with a seemingly permanent and intolerable separation, with a minority of rich and a majority of have-nots, a situation drastically different from the Judeo-Christian idea that all people are equals. (De Vries 1998:2)

Religion is unfortunately viewed with huge suspicion. Christianity, because of its prophetic role on the socio-political landscape is seen by politicians as a threat that exposes corruption and social injustice. Theology is invited and encouraged to reconsider its mandate:

Theologians are beset with struggles for political reactions, economic crisis, and human dignity degradation perpetuated by the neo-colonialist regimes in the highest echelons of political occupations. The silent and suffering masses find themselves in this sphere and try to philosophise in order to interpret their demise and misery. (Resane 2017b:2)

Many expect theology to supply answers to these miserable conditions. It has a legitimate right to rise above the situation. God is seen to loving, kind and merciful and his voice is expected to be loud and clear to raise awareness. This can be done through the audible voices of theologians, which can break silence and usher in the message of hope in the hurting world.

Theologians as the depositories of empirical knowledge of dogma walk together for mutual support to form the united voice, especially in the corrupt socio-political landscape. Theological silence in times of crises is not justified. (Resane 2017b:3)

For over the last 100 years, churches in South Africa endeavoured to address numerous massive social challenges. The predominantly Afrikaans churches made efforts to address the poor White problem through a series of *volkskongresse* (congresses of the people) in the 1930s and 1940s. The apartheid policies that followed those endeavours nullified those efforts due to their narrow racial focus. There were efforts to address the poverty of the masses, especially of the indigenous populations and there was an intriguing critique of capitalism, However, racism escalated and was met with violent repressive measures by the apartheid state.

The 1970s and the 1980s were marked by an insistent church struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The efforts were marred by deeply divided churches within this struggle. Such divisions were found amongst denominations but also within particular churches.

Since 1994, numerous efforts from churches, ecumenical formations and Christian organisations have responded to a wide range of societal challenges.

These include the long-standing commitment of churches to address the many faces of poverty in South Africa. For instance, in discussions at a conference on 'Theology on the Edge' hosted at Stellenbosch in September 2014, an initiative emerged amongst participants from various organisations and institutions to foster a concerted and massive response from Christians in South Africa to the triple problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality that is radically undermining the social fabric of our society. This would require an in-depth analysis of the deepest roots of such problems, a spiritual discernment of what is at stake and, especially, a coordinated response.

The problem of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa must be addressed adequately. This is a non-negotiable Christian mandate, as per De Vries' (1998:69) assertion that: "Refusal to take a position against poverty would deny an essential part of the Christian message." It is clearly a Christian responsibility, therefore, which calls for cooperation with all levels of government, business and industry, trade unions, other groups in civil society, and other religious traditions.

2.4 Africans caught between the gods

South Africans are left in a sea of confusion regarding Christianity. No wonder! With the advent of democracy in 1994, the first learning area or subject to be rescinded from the school curriculum was Religious Education or Biblical studies. The new kids on the block (politicians) drew their swords to ensure that religion did not tint the school curriculum. Removing religion from schools is synonymous with removing God from growing adolescents, as the young people spend 60% of their time at school going through schooling rubrics. The youth spend more time with their teachers than with their parents. Removing religion from school curricular opened a wide door for hooliganism, gangsterism, substance abuse, gun-totting, and some unfortunate incidences of murdering teachers and learners. The authority of discipline was not shifted but repealed. The saga opened for maturing

young people of all races the confusion of reality of God and pursuance of a disciplined life. Willard (1998:312) captures this situation clearly;

But at the present time intentional, effective training in Christlikeness – within the framework of a clear-eyed apprenticeship commitment and a spiritual ‘engulfment’ in the Trinitarian reality – *is just not there for us.* (Willard 1998:312)

In attempts to compromise, authorities started to recognise the once marginalised spiritual realities such as African Traditional Religions and Rastafarianism. Maturing young adults in South Africa feel caught between the gods. Although from some nominal Christian background, now the mind is invaded by strange philosophies of life. In the name of equality, the young mind became a battleground for worldviews. Inevitably, this builds what Sykes (1992:13) calls a nation of victims. He writes: “The politics of victimization has taken the place of more traditional expressions of morality and equity.” It is disheartening to realise that:

Victimism has so infected our culture that one might even say the victim has become the very symbol – the mascot – of modern society. (MacArthur 1995:28).

South Africa was once noted as the most Calvinistic state outside the USA and Western Europe, where Christian ideals were shaping the social life in its all aspects. All that is gone; the bottle of Pandora is opened, and there is a new kind of perfume in the air. It is like the pigeon has been thrown to the rats, and survival is only reserved for the fittest. The caged lion had been let loose, and the roars are intimidating the naïve and the ‘vulnerable’.

Ethics, morality and values in South African society are scrutinised and left bare as a matter of choice by the individual. Choices have become more personal, and decisions about an individual’s interests, without considering the impact of other human beings. It is the philosophy of ‘It’s all about me’. Hurts, subjugation, intimidation, and all sorts of suppression have become the order of the day. Human life has become cheap. Individualism has become the order of *self-aggrandisement*. Everyone is for herself. *Ubuntu/botho* is gone. It is preached when the preacher has become a victim, otherwise, it’s a forgotten philosophy

of life. The kind of Christianity that results out of this is that of 'Falling in Love with Love'. This gives birth to hatred for God. It is true that:

The bane of the more liberal branches of Christian theology today is that they are unable to present a God who could be actually loved. They say a great deal about love – especially in connection with things such as community and respect and liberation – but what comes out in the end is something very like the words of the song, 'Falling in Love with Love'. (Willard 1998:329)

Inevitably, this leads to the title of one American author, Philip Yancey: *Where is God when it Hurts?* (1990). In this book, Yancey explores the baffling and difficult issues surrounding the mystery of suffering. He uses examples from the Bible, as well as personal experiences, to speak sense amid suffering. Amid pain and suffering, the inevitable question from human nature is 'Where is God?' Many Black South Africans ask this question all the time. They yearn for prompt answers, and since these answers delay, resorting to other gods becomes the immediate and accessible answer.

2.5 Who is right and who is wrong in this saga?

It is ironic to point out that South African Christianity is at the crossroads. African Christians still struggle with the theology of the Whites. For them, it is the theology that justifies oppression, disempowerment, marginalisation, supremacist ideals, and discrimination in all its ugly faces. For Africans, history defines their identity and sympathy, while for South African Whites – if they wished, history should be forgotten. The hatchet should be buried, and life moves on. On the other hand, though Africans know history cannot be undone or reversed, they appeal for acceptance of the historical evil, as a way of healing.

There is a finger-pointing game around who is right and who is wrong in the whole saga of historical evil. The injustices of the past with all its imbalances are difficult to align. Good examples are those of land redistribution and the imbalances in the economy. Many public service deliveries have taken a reverse mode of some sort. Health services and public schooling are the two areas that make finger-pointing a norm. The state is trying to make health facilities

accessible by opening all health facilities to all population groups. The White sector of the population points fingers, not realising that historically the majority of the population (Blacks) did not have access to adequate health facilities. So, they get annoyed and impatient when they have to join long queues at the hospitals, Home Affairs offices, Post Offices, etc. They forget that in the past the 'Whites Only' sections of these facilities served the minorities, and so there were no long queues or waiting periods.

The same scenarios overflowed into churches. Somebody needs to write a book on experiences of how some Blacks were prevented from entering a church building on Sunday morning because the worshippers were Whites. A dear friend of mine was driving to Durban from Mahikeng with his family, and it happened that it was Sunday morning when they normally, as a family, attend a church service. In the middle of the Free State, they parked at the church just to break for spiritual refreshment but were told directly that they do not belong there – *Kan julle nie sien hier is die Afrikaner kerk en net Afrikaners kan hier aanbid?* ('Can't you see this is the Afrikaner church and only Afrikaners can worship here?'). The church I lead in Kempton Park does not have its own property, therefore rents from the NGK (*Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk*). Our church, though different from the NGK, is English-medium and made up mainly of Black people. Sometimes, Afrikaans-speaking people who happened to be from the same NGK tradition are barred from church and advised that their English service starts later at 11h00. These visitors are 'Coloured' people from the Reformed tradition and prefer to worship in their Reformed style, using Afrikaans (which is their home language) as the medium of communing with God, but are barred from entering the church service because of the colour of their skin.

South African Christianity is swimming in the series of puddles of murky waters because of the historical socio-political ideologies and events that were justified theologically by the church through colonial dictates and apartheid self-assertion. It is a history that carried the bruised and bulged wounds of negative social justice. For the past three centuries, this history was marred by sporadic

events that showed a reaction of humanity that was under oppression. Some examples are the Slagtersnek Rebellion (1815), Nonqause (1856/7), the Bulhoek Massacre (1921), the industrial actions of the 1920s, the Sharpville riots and massacre (1960), the student riots of 1976, and the Boipatong massacre in 1992. The country was always put into the flames that left humanity in despair and distraught.

Historically, colonialism and apartheid are the ideologies to be blamed for South African Christianity's porous outlook to the Christian faith. The messengers (missionaries) adulterated the unadulterated gospel by consorting with colonialists and both intertwiningly propagated the disempowering systems that robbed Africans of their dignity and selfhood. Apartheid ideology drove the nail into the coffin by its fraternisation with the Dutch Reformed Church to theologically justify this ideology.

Chapter 3

Christology at the crossroads

Why is Christ rejected in some African religious landscapes? Is this because the biblical Christ is distant from African experiences or realities? Or is this because the Christ of the Bible is misrepresented by those who present him to Africans, especially the Western theologians? The African Christianity experiences Christ as the contender with ancestors. The main question is where are Christ and ancestors placed in a theological situation?

Christ and ancestors became the great contenders. The problem exemplified on the person of Jesus Christ. Who he takes precedence over what he does. His identity in African theology occupies the central space in discourses. His identity articulates progressively into what he can do for the debased Africans in the evil social structures created by colonialism, apartheid, and White supremacy.

The person, works, place, and role of Christ in the African situation had been articulated and stressed by some African theologians – some like Bujo formatting the Proto-Ancestor concept.

Is Christ for all people regardless of whether they are Black or White, or is he specifically for Whites? The imbalances can be seen in diverse spheres of life, especially for those called into ministering this Christ. These imbalances bring up the question of God's nature when coming to justice, especially his salvific works and promises. Africans experience God's salvation in hurts, agonies, and misfortunes. God ends up becoming a pillow where one can pour out sorrows. Spiritually and emotionally African Christians feel liberated, but socially, culturally, and environmentally, feel bound. They do not have a holistic joy of salvation as may be expected. Is salvation without social structural justice justified?

Not only ancestors are contenders with Christ in African Christianity. There is also the witchdoctor, who is consulted regularly, even by those who profess and confess

the Christian faith. The witchdoctor is consulted for three reasons: power, protection, and prosperity.

This discussion clearly shows that there are two champions inside the boxing ring. The champions are Christ and the witchdoctor, Christ and the ancestors, Christianity and African cultures – and the binaries can go on and on. The tournament jeopardises Christology in Africa, and Africa is a stage on which the battle of the gods is taking place.

3.1 Can God walk among the Africans?

One of the bones of contention in African Christianity is the identity, the person, the place and the role of Christ versus African ancestral veneration. The Christ of the Bible is rejected – either based on his distance from the African experiential reality or his misplaced position by Western Christianity in African reality. There are Africans who reject Christ completely because he is not an African, and therefore cannot be a legitimate mediator between the God-Creator and his people. On the other hand, some accept Christ as an authentic ancestor who is like a sympathetic big brother who had been dehumanised and dethroned by Western theology. The latter view is very rampant in the current debates. This view deems Christ as the champion for the poor, the downtrodden, and the marginalised members of society. It goes further to promote Christ as the sympathiser for socially ill-treated members of humanity or parts of creation. It is from this theological vantage that we have theologies of liberation such as African, Black, feminist, and eco-theologies.

From the West, theological voices reverberate with the question: “Can Jesus walk among Africans?” The classical Western theology looks at theologies of liberation as Christless and pneuma-less theologies that in some quarters are labelled ‘heresies’. It is an anathema that from a very young age, most Africans were exposed to pictures of Jesus as a White man with a sharp nose, and a long flowing hair. Christianity is presented to us through the theology that is pro-West or pro-White. Blackness had been identified with *isinyama* (bad luck), misfortune, irreversible lower social status, and of course with the devil himself. The Christ of the Bible cannot be considered as the God of the Black continent

(Africa). Everyone Black is associated with Africa, so the “White” Jesus cannot be for Africa. This is a sad situation and puts Christology at the crossroads. In the late twentieth century, the revivalist movements, in sympathy with socio-politically distressed Africa, made a rallying call: ‘Africa for Jesus’ or ‘Jesus for Africa’. Many Africans from the evangelical wing of Protestant faith found comfort in this call. This led to some sharp division between social reality and spiritual experience. Many African evangelicals joined their Western counterparts, especially those from North America, that heaven should be a goal, as abundant life promised by Jesus was an eschatological fulfilment through soteriological processes that has heaven as a destination. Friendship with the world (political activities, entertainment, aesthetics. etc.) was enmity with God. Christ was a sole spiritual liberator, and nothing else. Those who defected by proposing a different view were seen as heretics and excommunicated or disowned. Christ’s presence among the Africans was questioned as to the house (*Oikos*) divided itself and punished its own. So, the holy God suffered in the hands of sinners!

3.2 Great contenders: Christ and ancestors

Christ and ancestors became the great contenders. The problem exemplified on the person of Jesus Christ. Who he takes precedence over what he does. His identity in African theology occupies the central space in discourses. His identity articulates progressively into what he can do for the debased Africans in the evil social structures created by colonialism, apartheid, and White supremacy.

In African worldview, one’s identity locates him in the rightful position to either exercise authority or to undertake a task – divine or social expectation. It is for this reason that African personhood discussions are around *O mang?* (Who are you?). I am reminded of a South African television advert when a lady comes for an interview and the panellist asks: ‘Tell us about yourself’. She starts with a recital of her clan poem in her Zulu culture, and after that talks about her qualifications. When people ask me: *Kelebogile, who are you?* I will answer by saying:

*Ke Letebele le lentsho la ga Masedi-a-Mphela
A ga selala le namane lethakoleng
Dirobaroba matlhakola di a robile di satla go a lala ...*

Those listening to these few lines and are the Batswana tribe will immediately deduce that:

- I come from the Batswana ethnic group called *Balete*.
- My totem is a buffalo.
- My ancestors are connected to the Zulu tribe, hence *Masedi a Mphela* (maZulu a mampela – the real Zulus).

This will open some door for me to be accepted and made comfortable in the group. It may determine the seat I must occupy at the *kgotla* (courtyard for civil affairs). It determines the position I must take during the initiation rituals. It may even determine which side of the king or chief I must sit, “because recognition of differences in the public (political) forum has an impact on the formation of identity” (Coetzee & Roux 2000:354). Coetzee continues to point out that it is required to recognise distinct identities, particularly cultural identities, as morally significant categories. Totemism among Africans plays a major role in identifying a person’s roots, and the contribution one can make towards social stability and sustenance. The origin of Africans defines their selfhood and identity. The question: *O morwa mang* or *O morwadia mang?* (Whose son or daughter are you?) is very loaded in African worldview. A person is an African, not only because of geographical origin or location but also because of “being born and bred in the African environment, one of whose fundamental elements is culture” (Teffo & Roux, cited in Coetzee & Roux 2000:176). African identity is more socio-centric and less egocentric. This is reinforced by an *ubuntu/botho* philosophy of ‘I am because we are’.

Christ’s origin should be traced to some African roots to be accepted by Africans – maybe even to be equated as one of the ancestors. His family tree should show some African ancestry or parentage. This is a thought that has influenced some scholars to substantiate Christ’s identity as more African than European.

It should be noted that the heart of the Christian faith is the person (identity) of Jesus Christ. Christology is an orbit around which theology revolves. It is not only the soteriological acts of Christ that resonate as the apex of Christianity

but also Christ's person or identity. The well-known father of African theology, John Mbiti captures this truth:

Christian Theology ought properly to be Christology, for Theology falls or stands on how it understands, translates and interprets Jesus Christ, at a given Time, Place and human situation. (Mbiti 1971:190)

The person, works, place, and role of Christ in African situation had been articulated and stressed by some African theologians such as Kwame Bediako, John Pobee, Mugambi, Magesa, and lately Benezet Bujo, who have developed an African Christology in terms of the ancestors. For these and many other African theologians, Christology is central to Christian theology. Mugambi and Magesa (1989:x) assert that "theology is not Christian at all when it does not offer Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the answer to the human quest". Regardless of the laborious work of some African scholars regarding Christology, the subject remains stuck at the crossroads. As mentioned above, the salient point regarding African Christology is the person or the identity of Christ. The answer to who Christ is, especially in the African misery of poverty, civil wars, genocide, HIV and AIDS and epidemics of diseases is indeed difficult.

The question to who Christ is, is one of the most important and difficult questions that have to be answered. The answer has to be given by people according to their knowledge of Jesus Christ. The answer to who Jesus Christ is, is not a clear-cut answer, because everyone gives his or her answer according to his or her experience of Jesus Christ. (Beyers & Mphahlele 2009:2)

Broadly speaking, Christ is not appropriated authentically. Christ is seen as White or a European who possesses no empathy or sympathy with African realities. Christianity is viewed as a White man's religion – a religion that promotes and celebrates the demise of African Traditional Religions. The White man's missiological tasks are seen as some form of endeavour that uproots and dislocates Africans from their roots and values. Africans had, in reaction, rejected or accepted the Western Christian religion for different purposes. Experiencing Christ possesses some proliferation of Christ as for some it is through extra-biblical revelations such as dreams, visions, trances, or a prophetic annunciation

from a cult leader. For others, it comes through a direct revelation of Christ through his written Word.

Apart from the emergence of nationalistic movements leading to the independence of African states, the resurgence of ethnic religions, especially those related to ancestral veneration also took an upsurge. The belief in ancestors is central in the traditional African worldview. It is an essential pillar of religion practised in Africa (Stinton 2004:133–134). Ancestor veneration is reinstated by some African Christians, while others try to “Christianise” the concept by referring to Christ as the supreme ancestor (Afeke & Verster 2004:48). Bujo, in his masterpiece work, *African theology in its Social Context* (1992) has been at the forefront of articulating Jesus as the Proto-Ancestor. Nyamiti, in his publication, *Christ as our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspective* (1984), points out that there is no uniform system of beliefs in ancestors in Africa. I agree with Nyamiti and others that there is no unified or harmonious system of belief regarding ancestors. The general notion, which African scholars such as Bujo conclude, is as follows: “It is an approach that seeks to completely identify Christ with African Christians by treating Christ under the category of ancestor.” (Magezi & Igba 2018:4). It is, however, lately accepted that there should be a difference between ancestral worship and ancestral veneration. It is generally held that African worshippers make a distinction between the worship offered to the Supreme Being, and the worship they offer to the ancestors. The line of thought followed by many scholars is that worship is to God, and veneration to ancestors.

This agrees with the anthropological assertion that there is no such a thing called African culture, but we do have African cultures. Issues differ from tribe to tribe, from ethnic group to ethnic group. The question that bombards scholars all the time is ‘Who is the ancestor?’ (Jindra 2005; Kolos 2000; Kopytoff 1997; Mbiti 1969; Nürnberger 2007; Setiloane 1976).

To answer this question, one first needs to understand that ancestral veneration is an embodiment of the ancestors (departed ones or the living dead), who link the visible community to the world of the spirits. It is a general belief that

ancestors connect the community to the spiritual realm, with the interest of the well-being of those still in life. It is the African spirituality experienced through a continuous relationship between the living-alive relatives and their ancestors who “are vested with mystical powers and authority” (Kopytoff 1997:412). A record of those who have lived and died is kept in the memory of the living members of the community. It is a belief that the departed (ancestors) “retain a functional role in the life of their living kinsmen; indeed, African kin groups are often described as communities of both the living and the dead” (Kopytoff 1997:412). Ancestors continue to interact and to engage in the affairs of the community of the living. The living dead are venerated by family or community members through materialising their spirits into specific objects, which function as media of encounters with the living-dead (Nürnberg 2007). Ancestors are considered to be in an ontological position between the other spirits and human beings, as well as between the Supreme Being and human beings (Oosthuizen 1977:273).

Their identity is further explained as transcendental beings representing the religious, ethical and institutional values of society in their community. Their abode and influence range from the physical to the spiritual world (Bae & Van der Merwe 2008:1300). The identity of ancestors differs from tribe to tribe, from one ethnic group to another. In patrilineal societies like the AmaZulu and Basotho, the ancestors will be the departed spirits of the chief male figures in the family. In some tribes, both the patrilineal and matrilineal descendants can become qualified ancestors. Since ancestral veneration somehow impacts Christology, it should be understood that African theology broadly points out that Christ, by his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension into the realm of spirit-power, can rightly be designated, in African terms, as Ancestor, indeed Supreme Ancestor (Bediako 1995:217).

Many societies have some installation rituals of promoting the living-dead to the level of ancestors. One may be qualified as an ancestor due to many descendants he or she had. A funeral rite may be performed to effect the position, or an induction ceremony that the AmaZulu call *ukubuyisa*. The Batswana people

perform *mogoga*, which is to bring back (*goga*) the deceased. The purpose of this ritual is to make a closure (*tlhoboga/latola*) so that the bereaved may accept the reality that the deceased is gone. But it also has another purpose of paying tribute to the deceased who has joined the spiritual world to join others who had gone before him.

Ancestors can be classified according to rank and file. For instance, the royal ancestors have their focus on tribal or national issues and cannot play a role in the personal lives of individual members. Theron (1996:31) enlightens us that these ancestors are invoked during the occasions of rites like agricultural rites, rainmaking ceremonies, or in times of national crises.

The crux of the matter that brings Christology to the crossroads with the so-called ancestral cult is not just on the identity of the ancestor, but also on the function of the ancestors. For Christians, “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). In many African Traditional Religions, there is one God, but many intermediaries between God and men. These intermediaries are ancestors. Ancestors are not worshipped but venerated. It is believed that since they have been part of the present life, they know this life, hence the best mediators to Creator God on behalf of the living. Their main functions in individuals’ lives include protection against natural disasters and evil intentions of witches, guidance, the fertility of the land and livestock, health and prosperity. “The ancestral spirits are also the guardians of the community’s morality.” (Theron 1996:32). Any transgression invokes misfortune on one’s life or the whole tribe.

A Christian who goes through negative circumstances of life, after much praying to the Christian God, and feels there is no answer forthcoming, will in many ways turn towards the ancestors for help. This happens especially when one’s faith in God is not deeply rooted in the biblical teachings. Christ and ancestral cult become the two boxing champions inside the ring; and whoever wins by giving the victim a release, breakthrough or deliverance gains an upper hand of acknowledgement. This is why syncretism is gaining ground in Africa. Many African Christians embrace the Christian God of the Bible and ancestral

veneration at the same time. It is either deliberately or by ignorance that the unity and the uniqueness of God are shelved and under-carpeted. The biblical teachings like the first and second of the Ten Commandments, The *Great Shemah*, and all the New Testament Christological declarations of ONE God, are reserved for a time of crises when need be.

3.3 Salvation without structural justice: Is this the Christ of the Bible?

One of the struggles that Africans had to contend with is salvation without liberation or freedom from structural ills. The battle in the African minds had always been the God who seems to be distant from their experiential realities. Observing their White European counterparts flourishing physically and economically calls Africans to question the meaning of salvation found by faith in Christ. The issue is exacerbated by a very short physical distance between Africans and White Europeans. South African human settlement is unique from settlements around the world. The dividing line is either a river, a hillock, a railway line or in some cases even a street. These demarcations are physical and exert a pressure of divisions between racial groups or economically between the poor and the rich, the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. Architectural designs tell stories of divisions loud and clear. Infrastructures such as streets and electrification networks all attest to the divisions in the society. Africans are asking that if we serve the same God, 'Why does he serve and provide for us differently?' This question is subliminal to the injustices of the past.

A White minister or pastor resides in a beautiful manse in a suburb, traditionally constructed and a few meters from the cathedral or a sanctuary. The Black pastor of the same denomination across the dividing line resides in a small manse, that always looks dilapidated, with his family including some members of his extended family, and/or including some needy members of his flock. Looking at these two men or lately women of God, one observes:

- Both claim to have received a call from the same God to serve.

- Both might possess the same qualifications (though the quality of qualifications may be unbalanced as they may come from different institutions dictated by the racial laws of the land).
- Both belong to the same kind of synod, presbytery or council that may be racially divided.
- Both lead, teach and promote the same liturgy, confessions and dogma, although they may experience these differently.
- Both are expected to dogmatically promote the same gospel of salvation to the lost humankind.

The differences between these two clergymen are not just racially or economically observed. It is a division that questions the validity of salvation in the minds of Africans.

- The White clergy's salary is generally higher than the Black clergy's.
- Their living conditions are too wide apart
- The White clergy will always or most of the time be mobile, while the Black clergy is always a pedestrian.
- The White clergy's church bank account is usually attractive with a good balance after all accounts are paid. The Black clergy's church bank account is normally on zero, with temptations to go into the overdraft

This imbalance brings up the question of God's nature when coming to justice, especially his salvific works and promises. Africans experience God's salvation in hurts, agonies and misfortunes. God ends up becoming a pillow where one can pour out sorrows. Spiritually and emotionally, African Christians feel liberated but socially, culturally, and environmentally, feel bound. They do not have a holistic joy of salvation as may be expected. These anomalies stress the fact that Africans experience spiritual and material struggles, and as Oduyoye points out, these struggles prompt people to adopt Christianity (2004:19). Oduyoye continues to point out that the Christ of Christianity touches human needs at all levels, and Africans are but ordinary members of the human race feeling the need for salvation.

Particularly in South Africa, the message of salvation is always questioned. The situation is worsened by the fundamentalists who opt for a parochial view of God, that spiritual freedom is what humanity needs. Sins in social structures are the evil world to be avoided as much as possible. Discussions or association with those prophetically addressing evil structures are to be avoided, and to some extent, the participants are labelled heretics. There was a time when anti-apartheid activists were labelled communists. English grammar was distorted as the opposite of apartheid was never communism. The prophetic voices from the clergy and pulpits were labelled as 'false prophets' or 'antichrists'. The salvific works of Christ were stripped naked and clothed null and void for oppressive realities experienced in sociopolitical structures. Christ and the salvation he offered was either for eschatological desires for a better life in heaven or appropriated into realities where hope is to be awakened for a better life now and forever.

The doctrine of salvation in Africa is to be studied deeper, and it can only become meaningful if it is appropriated ontologically and epistemologically as promoted and embraced by liberation theologies. It should be both spiritual and realistic. It should become an ecclesial responsibility to bring back Christ and his reality into African social life and engagement. When the late president, Nelson Mandela instituted the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the intention was to let both the perpetrators and the victims walk together in the light. As wounds of the past were opened, guilt, confessions and reconciliation were enacted. Individuals, churches and civil formations had to come forth to state what happened and how they feel about it. Regrettably, some churches did not take up this opportunity, yet Christ was sacrificed on their altars by aligning themselves with the status quo, or even by opting for quiet diplomacy amid human degradation and hurts. The pastors of the same denomination would be treated differently by those in power, and the White privileged pastors, receiving better treatment failed to take side with their Black counterparts.

So, the doctrine of salvation was sacrificed on the pulpits where the same Christ was proclaimed as the Savior, Deliverer, and the Redeemer. Discrimination

based on colour, gender and economic status was rife in the church. The crisis of conscience becomes real when African Christians enjoy fellowship in community with other fellow believers on Sunday for few hours; and thereafter go back to the real-life of hunger, poverty, overcrowding, and in some cases, diseases. The question remains: 'Where is Christ when it hurts so much?'

Up to the early 1990s, the South African church was nationally divided but internationally united. One of the sad events that I experienced on a few occasions was when South Africans of all races, denominations, or any religious formations, had to converge in a foreign country for some ecumenical colloquiums. Normally, on the first night, these events are officially opened by 'flag ceremonies'. Conference hosts struggled, for instance, as to who should carry the then South African national flag during the ceremony. The flag, which was supposed to be a symbol of unity and patriotism, was the symbol of oppression for most. Many White Christians in these events wanted to start rubbing shoulders with their Black counterparts – something that they dismally failed to do back home. In the meantime, Blacks were crying, calling and appealing to the international Christian communities to heed their oppression and treatment as nonentities in the country of their birth. One can see how these ecumenical events were intended to demonstrate that salvation by Christ is show-cased by togetherness and comradeship at all levels. In the meantime, the majority of Black South Africans did not experience this salvation that bears fruits of togetherness. Although salvation was experienced by personal faith in Christ, it was socially unknown.

One of the anathemas was that some White South Africans (mostly non-Afrikaners) carried two passports – one South African and one of the European or North American countries. Wherever South African passport were not welcome, these dual citizens would have the privilege of travelling there on a foreign passport. In the past, most African countries in upper Africa did not allow South African passport holders into their territories. Some even refused other nationals including Americans who had their passports stamped with South African entry or departure endorsements. Americans missionaries,

instead of showing solidarity with apartheid victims, opted for two American passports – one for South African embarkations and one for other African countries. This contributed towards hostility towards those people who denied the victims social justice at the time they needed it most. The oppressed masses, with or without Christ, yearned to see these messengers of the gospel opting for Jesus' style, who saw it right to go through Samaria rather than circumventing or avoiding the 'pagan territory'. The example of Christ of crossing the physical racial, cultural, and gender divides was and still is ignored by those who profess the Lordship of the same Christ.

Christology is indeed at crossroads in Africa. Some competitors occupy the same place as that of Christ. I have mentioned ancestors earlier. I am not in the right position now to talk about other contenders such as dictators. In the next section, I mention the other contender so salient in current African Christianity. This is the witchdoctor, who is in fierce competition with Christ, locating African Christology at the crossroads.

3.4 Christ and witchdoctor compete for the same clientele: Power, protection and prosperity

In the typical African culture, a witchdoctor is consulted for different reasons. One of the reasons is for power. This can be power to prevail over the enemies, power to control, or power to repel bad omens or to overcome certain life-challenging circumstances. The enemies can be some jealous relatives, neighbours, co-workers or competitors in fields of business, profession, or even romantic attractions. It is in a male ego fabric to prevail and to command control over other species of the same kind. People, especially those associated with possessions of wealth, would always consult the witchdoctor in order to control or have dominion over the possessions. Not only that, a witchdoctor is consulted to control the households, especially where polygamy is involved. A polygamous man would like to possess some power to control or manage his wives to abate some rivalries between his wives. The consultation might go to an extent where a manager or a leader (sadly including some pastors)

would consult a witchdoctor to control his or her congregants or subordinates. One constantly hears of the pastor, school manager, cabinet minister, director-general, etc. consulting the witchdoctor to gain control over those he leads. Some domestic workers consult witchdoctors to win favours from their masters in the households. Some parents take their children to the witchdoctor before or during the school examinations to seek breakthroughs (control) for their academic achievements.

Africans believe in witchcraft and curses. They believe that some enemies or ancestors may send bad omens to them so that they fail in life. Failures can be in areas of marriage, parenting, academic performance, diseases, and so on. So, the witchdoctor is consulted to allay these omens. These are curses that may be associated with *seriti* (dark shadows) or *senyama* (bad luck). Rituals may be prescribed by a witchdoctor where a cleansing ceremony may be prescribed. Once this ceremony is performed, life is normalised.

Life is vulnerable, hence should be protected. This is the second reason Africans consult a witchdoctor. There are shadows following a person, these shadows accompany the enemies' wishes. Humans need to be protected from the attacks by these curses. In many ways, consultation is done for protection against the enemies' crafty tactics, protection of possessions against natural disasters such as lightning strikes, floods, livestock miscarriages, and even death. In a real sense, Africans do not believe in natural disasters. All disasters are human inventions and are directed by jealousy from the enemies. Even death is not natural in Africa, the cause is always human intentions. African God and ancestors are occupied with life, not death, especially the so-called premature death through natural and human accidents.

The third reason for witchdoctor's consultation is for prosperity. People want to succeed in all areas of life: employment, wealth, health, fertility, and all the rest. The consultation is for success in life. Africans regard misfortunes as curses and disregard for their ancestors. Poverty, though rampant and always on the human face, is unacceptable. The disjointed life that needs some mending can be aligned and rectified by a witchdoctor.

One feature that the witchdoctor is familiar with is to prophesy to an enquirer as to who the enemy is and what the enemy's intentions are. It is to reveal the hidden and evil secrets by showing the enquirer that dangers waiting for him or her. Today's man or woman of God applies the same tactics by claiming that this is prophetic, or a revelation of knowledge. They tell enquirers issues surrounding their circumstances, and how to abate these misfortunes. These days, they claim to call enquirers by personal names, identity document numbers, or by the kind and colour of a car one drives. Sometimes they are descriptive of a family member's circumstances. All these are claimed to be the direction of and by the Holy Spirit. The atmosphere created where "The prophet 'declares and decrees', and the faithful 'Receive', no questions asked." (Mochechane n.d:36).

These three P's (Power, Protection, Prosperity) had been brought into African Christianity. The channels had become the Neo-Charismatic churches. Christians from the mainline Christian churches flock to these churches for the same reasons they consult a witchdoctor. The man of God is equated with the *inyanga/ngaka* to bless the faithful with power, protection, and prosperity. The tactics used by the witchdoctor are not significantly different from that of the prophet, preacher, or pastor. Christ and the witchdoctor are the two rivals or competitors. They rival over the same clientele. Most of the clients are from some form of Christian tradition or background. The witchdoctor uses divination methods such as drawing lots, using a mirror and cantations. In some cases, he uses points of contact such as water, piece of cloths, and clothes items of the enquirer. Today in many Neo-Pentecostal and Neo-Charismatic churches, points of contact had become a norm. The charms are employed as divine points to reveal secrets, heal, prosper, or give directions to the enquirer. Sometimes a Bible, wrist bands, handkerchiefs, staffs or towels are brought in as points of contact. These practices put Christology at the crossroads. The question is: Who is in control of people's lives? The subsequent questions following this question present options for a Christian. Confusion is exacerbated by the witchdoctor's visible performance, while

that of Christ is by faith, and by faith only. This leaves many Africans opting for a traditional or syncretic route.

This is the historical background of Africans who moved out of the missionary churches to churches that accommodate their African culture. It is as if they were going back to what they were before encountering Western missionaries, but they were going back as Christians. (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013:4)

African Christians become traditionalists during the week and Christian practitioners over the weekend. This is particularly true of the liberal and nominal Christians. The evangelicals, including the Neo-Pentecostals, weigh themselves towards faith alone, though in some cases, embrace divination approaches and points of comfort to enhance their faith. Most of them still hold on to evangelical theology with its parochial and eschatological leniencies. Within its mainstream, a shootout had emerged called 'prosperity theology'. Timothy Palmer gives some definition of this theology as theology that holds to some of the same presuppositions as African evangelicalism. It believes in the power of prayer and the possibility of miracles; in the power of Jesus to meet the daily needs of individuals, and in the power of Jesus to overcome evil spiritual powers. But prosperity theology differs significantly from African evangelicalism. It assumes that every Christian has a right to be prosperous and that God will make every Christian prosperous if the believer does the right things. Furthermore, this theology assumes that a faithful Christian will be rich and that poverty is an indication of lack of faith. Prosperity theology is a syncretistic form of Christianity. It is a deviation from African evangelicalism since it has become a celebrity cult (all eyes are on the prophet, pastor, apostle, Man of God, Papa) and is now driven by commercialisation ideals. One wonders if it is still based on the Bible since extra-biblical revelations in the form of prophecy are taking some upper hand.

The fact remains that whenever life becomes hectic and the situations enhance hopelessness, African Christians will resort to consultation with a person of higher spiritual authority, such as a witchdoctor or a pastor. Steve Mochechane paints this picture of hopelessness as follows:

Whether the pressure is around health or wealth, one cannot help but pick up the thick atmosphere of people who are convinced that God, through

the prophet, will finally engage their debilitating situation. Often, they've been to places far and wide trying to rid themselves of bad omens, that can or cannot be identified, that are responsible for their adverse situations. But in this 'atmosphere of miracles' all powers of Satan, known and unknown, are crushed and the faithful walk away shouting, 'I am free'. (Mochechane n.d:32)

During sickness, death, poverty, misfortune, sorcery, oppression, injustice, witchcraft, evil spirits, and natural disasters, such as famine, floods and thunder strikes, there is a yearning for some supernatural intervention that will enable one to cope. These misfortunes birth the desire for some external enabling power to come into play to calm or balance the situation. One needs to note that natural disaster, including death, are not natural phenomena, but accidental with some power behind them. Every inhumane event is disastrous and emanates from the enemy's jealous intention. Hence, you find that if a car driver knocks somebody over, there must be a consultation to assess or determine the cause. It does not matter if the pedestrian has died or just injured, it cannot just be an accident but some causal intention by the enemy who desires to destroy the driver or the victim. Diseases are never natural because after all, the settlement of the issue is that *bolwetse jo ga bo tsamaye bo le nosi* (This disease is not natural, somebody is the reason behind it).

These consultations affirm or promise deliverance, breakthrough, and/or healing. Mochechane (n.d:37) continues to highlight that "these promises expose a dangerous naiveté, or faith, on the part of the prophets that feeds on the gullibility of their followers". Fear and anxiety are the two driving forces compelling African Christians to consult either the prophet or the witchdoctor. The prophet is no more the messenger of Christ calling people to repentance and become the followers of Jesus. He is fulfilling the Pauline prophecy that:

For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (2 Tim 4:3-4)

It seems that it is still difficult for Africans to see the difference between Christianity and Western culture. The early missionaries had a crisis of conscience to differentiate Christian faith from their Western practices. This resulted in

Christianity and Westernisation becoming intertwined and antonymous to African cultural practices. Western Christianity populated itself into African cultures through arts and music, clothing and grooming, architectural designs, and seating arrangement (in rows facing forward to the leader or preacher, as against African seating norm of a circular system to enhance communication and intimacy). “Therefore, most of the Africans who accepted Christianity also accepted all the European customs.” (Britten 1984:25). Assimilation became a strategy and a method of measuring the success of evangelism and discipleship. In Western terms, to become a Christian was to become less ‘African’ and ‘more civilised’ (Nel 2019:2). African cultural practices were classified as a form of darkness, wickedness, and ‘uncivilisation’. African converts entered a journey of confusion, hence a syncretic religion of mixing African Traditional Religions with Christianity. Bruce Britten reinforces the point:

Often an African was not accepted as a true Christian unless he agreed to throw away his own culture and conform to European culture. This confusion between Christianity and European culture has contributed to the false impression that Christianity is indeed a white man’s religion. (Britten 1984:25)

It is also worthy to note that Christ’s position in Africa is equated to that of the politicians. The ‘pastors’ labelled ‘Men or Women of God’ live the royal lifestyle, and always position themselves as politicians. Many of these pastors travel in a protocol befitting the head of state – with motorcades and streams of German sedans (Mercedes Benz, BMWs, etc.). A politician and the pastor compete for prestige. The elegance of the two is noted by royal attire, jewellery, not to mention the accompanying ‘First Lady’ – *MaMfundisi* or *Mmamoruti*. These days one hears of ‘pastress’. Politicians in Africa possess a proclivity towards dictatorship. Dictators are detached from the people. They do not mingle or socialise with the populace because of fear of animosity of enemies masquerading as a loyalist. Heads of states or presidents are also titled like pastors with accolades such as ‘Papa’, ‘uBaba’, ‘General’, ‘Doctor’, ‘the big man’. These have become cult personalities. Africa has become reputed as a continent of ‘the big men’. Paul Gifford belabours the image of ‘the big man’ as he appears

in Africa under single-party rule, although this rule system had dramatically changed in the past two decades. He writes as follows:

The big man's face is on the money. His photograph hangs in every office in his realm. His ministers wear gold pins with tiny photographs of him on the lapels of their tailored pin-striped suits. He names streets, football stadiums, hospitals, and universities after himself. He carries a silver-inlaid ivory mace or an ornately carved walking stick or a fly-whisk or a chiefly stool. He insists on being called 'doctor' or 'conqueror' or 'teacher' or 'the big elephant' or 'the number one peasant' or 'the wise old man' or 'the national miracle' or 'the most popular leader in the world.' His every pronouncement is reported on the front page. He sleeps with the wives and daughters of powerful men in his government. He shuffles ministers without warning, paralyzing policy decisions as he undercuts pretenders to his throne. He scapegoats minorities to shore up popular support. He bans all political parties except the one he controls. He rigs elections. He emasculates the courts, he cows the press. He stifles academia. He goes to Church.

His off-the-cuff remarks have the power of law. He demands thunderous applause from the legislature when ordering far-reaching changes in the constitution. He blesses his home region with highways, schools, hospitals, housing projects, irrigation schemes, and a presidential mansion. He packs the civil service with his tribesmen. He awards uncompetitive, overpriced contracts to foreign companies which grant him, his family and his associate's large kickbacks. He manipulates price and import controls to weaken profitable businesses and leaves them vulnerable to take over at bargain prices by his business associates. He affects a commitment to free-market economic reform to secure multi-million-dollar loans and grants from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. He espouses the political philosophy of whatever foreign government gives him the most money.

He is – and he makes sure that he is known to be – the richest man in the country. He buys off rivals by passing out envelopes of cash or import licenses or government land. He questions the patriotism of the few he cannot buy, accusing them of corruption or charging them with 'serving the foreign masters.' His enemies are harassed by 'youth wingers' from his ruling party. His enemies are detained or exiled, humiliated or bankrupted, tortured or killed. He uses the resources of the state to feed a cult of personality that defines him as incorruptible, all-knowing, physically strong, courageous in battle, sexually potent, and kind to children. His cult equates his well-being with the well-being of the state. His rule has one overriding goal: to perpetuate his reign as Big Man.

Big men in their attempt to secure total personal power, have in many places coopted the mainline churches. The mainline churches have thus effectively become part of the structures of dominance.

In many countries, Big Men with a dubious commitment to accountability or human rights hold important offices in mainline churches. Often churches have allowed themselves to be bought by favours and privileges, and fete and honour the Big Man on whom they depend. Of course, there is nothing particularly African about this. (Gifford 1993:60-61)

Christ and the Big Man become contenders in the consciences of the citizens. The Big Man becomes the Messiah who liberates people from the colonial or socio-historical oppressions. This puts Christianity at the crossroads when people's allegiance is on the spotlight. Choices are to be made regarding allegiance, and the intimidation by the 'Big Man' reigns supreme as people opt for safety and security – human rights. The 'Big Man' can easily take from those not in alliance with him or his policies. The politician and the pastor compete between themselves and the two, in turn, compete against Christ.

This discussion clearly shows that there are several champions inside the boxing ring. The champions are Christ and the witchdoctor, Christ and the ancestors, Christianity and African cultures, Christ and the politician – and the binaries can go on and on. The tournament jeopardises Christology in Africa, and Africa has been a stage on which the battle of the gods is taking place.

Chapter 4

The concept of power in African Christianity

In African Christianity, power is associated with the liberation by the Holy Spirit from the shackles of darkness in personal and social experiences. The African worldview of the Spirit is synonymous with power. The invisible move of the Spirit is always considered as the power behind the scenes. This may be one of the reasons for the phenomenal growth of the 'Spirit Churches' including Pentecostalism in all its diversities in Africa. Power is preferred because it exerts its effect unseen.

African theology is a pneumatological theology. African pneumatology is cosmological pneumatology. This pneumatology is inclusive regarding salvation, healing of the earth, and social justice. The Spirit pervades all things. So, the Spirit is not just a Giver of Power, but he is power himself. Power is sought after, as to live is to have power. Every human being has the potential to be the most powerful earthly being. This is what makes life meaningful. Apart from power over darkness and wickedness, power can be either a political or economic power.

The contender continues to be a witchdoctor, especially if he or she is syncretic in applying relief, deliverance, healing, prosperity, or protection. Using African magic with or through the Bible makes an appeal to African Christians since the Bible, the Holy Book is used as an object of guidance or revelation. Power is at stake and becomes abused in various ways.

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we saw that one of the contentious issues yearned for by Africans is power. African Christians yearn for power over the demonic

dominion and the structural wickedness. This power is also evoked in political sloganeering: 'Black Power', hence in political gatherings or events there are shouts in Nguni languages, like 'Amandla' and the response from the crowd is 'Awethu' or in Sesotho languages 'Maatla' and the crowd response is 'Ke a rona'. When a leader or any presiding officer shouts, he means 'Power' and the crowds say 'It is ours'. Anderson (1991) describes the Black Power slogan as an expression of the determination of the oppressed Black masses in the face of White domination. In African Christianity, power is associated with the liberation by the Holy Spirit from the shackles of darkness in personal and social experiences. The African worldview of the Spirit is synonymous with power. The invisible move of the Spirit is always considered as the power behind the scenes. This may be one of the reasons for the phenomenal growth of the 'Spirit Churches' including Pentecostalism in all its diversities in Africa. Power is preferred because it exerts its effect unseen. One does not need to go far to remember the 2016 massacre of mineworkers in Marikana, near Rustenburg. The story became popular that the witchdoctor was engaged to nullify the barrel of the police guns, to an extent that should there be shootings, instead of bullets firing out, there will only be some air. Muthi (witchcraft) was applied to some miners to make them invisible to the counter-insurgents. This is believed to be the active invisible power behind the scenes. "The belief in powers plays an important role in African traditional religion and is an underlying factor in many cultural customs." (Theron 1996:2). Life is power. No power, no life.

4.2 Holy Spirit or mystical power?

The Holy Spirit is never a disputed doctrine in African Christianity. African theology is a pneumatological theology. Generally speaking, as many scholars can attest, African pneumatology is cosmological pneumatology. This pneumatology is inclusive regarding salvation, healing of the earth, and social justice. The Spirit pervades all things. The manifestation of the Spirit at work is observed through and in physical manifestations such as trances, shakings of the body, supernatural and mystical revelations, social harmony, and of course,

power over everything that is deemed evil or as a social menace. Allan Anderson has done fine work in his publication titled *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Context* (1991). This is the masterpiece of the concept of power and the Holy Spirit in the African worldview. One South African Dutch Reformed writer rightly summarises the four roles of the Holy Spirit in African pneumatology:

1. The Holy Spirit as the Savior of Humankind
2. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit as Healer and Protector
3. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Justice and Liberation
4. The Holy Spirit as the Earth-keeping Spirit

4.3 Power for what?

Power is sought after, as to live is to have power. Every human being has the potential to be the most powerful earthly being. This is what makes life meaningful. Apart from power over darkness and wickedness, power can be either political or economic power. The latest discoveries testify that African Christianity believes that God is the ultimate source of power. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, power is one of the reasons for seeking intervention by either Jesus or the witchdoctor. Power is in most cases sought for manipulation purposes. Some church leaders, especially those from the 'Spirit Churches' such as Pentecostals and Charismatics, secretly consult the witchdoctor to win masses of followers and to manipulate or control them. The basic reason for this power-seeking is for fame (glory) and money (gold) and in a few circumstances, for sexual potency (girls/guys). These three 'Gs' are rated as the main driving forces of power-seeking endeavours. Recently in South Africa, three Charismatic pastors are either behind bars or have looming court cases. Amazingly, all three of them are foreigners. One is charged for human trafficking; one for fake or orchestrated miracles whereby human dignity is degraded (as he claimed to have raised somebody from the dead – investigations so far had led to conclusions that this was orchestrated miracle); and the last one is charged for illegal money laundering. While South African Christianity

was still trying to bring itself to its senses, the media became dominated by the personal testimony of Pastor Makhado Ramabulana, the Pentecostal pastor who went to Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique to consult for followership and money. He re-tells his story that has left many Christians sitting on the edge with some gaped jaws. Normally, the question is 'power for what?' and so far, we have seen the reason. Glory and gold drive Christians to consult mediums or spirits, even those in the deepest waters or the deepest earth

Another yearning for power is sex prowess, hence, especially in South Africa men (Christians and non-Christians) consult either a witchdoctor or a pastor for enlargement of their penises. Manhood (penis) is seen as an instrument of power by some African men, hence the numerous attempts to enlarge it by all means possible, as the misconception of the bigger the better. Sexual prowess over women to use them as objects of rituals through sexual activities had in some cases become a way of obtaining power. This is the case with the current scenario of the pastor in the Port Elizabeth High Court. Sex has been so repressed and demonised that it comes out in unhealthy expressions. In its most extreme and violent forms, the unhealthy expression of sexual and power dynamics shows up as rape and sexual abuse, which are more about power than sex.

4.4 Holy Spirit and power

Contemporary church historians bear witness that one of the marks of African Christianity, especially in the AIC and the Neo-Charismatic movement is that they "are heavily pneumatologically and charismatically loaded in their spirituality and theology" (Kärkkäinen 2006:148). For just over a century now, the Holy Spirit has become a salient subject in ecclesiastical and theological circles. With the advent of the Pentecostal Movement at the dawn of the twentieth century, the Holy Spirit as a subject has become the central portrait in the gallery of church debates and Christian formations. The Pentecostal Movement came into being as a reaction against cold liberalism and passive faith at the time. While the Reformation imprisoned the Holy Spirit in the doctrinal formulae;

and opened a wide door to the sectarianism that enhanced individualism, Pentecostalism desired to break free from the past and institutionalism of the Spirit (Kärkkäinen 2002:113). This justifies why many Pentecostal preachers of the twentieth century were silent on socio-political issues. For them, if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed. A good example is that of Nicholas Bhengu of the Assemblies of God (AOG) in South Africa who “never openly spoke prophetically to condemn apartheid and its social injustices” (Resane 2018:46). The chairman of the General Executive of the AOG notes that Nicholas Bhengu

(A)lso believed that through the Gospel, Black people would be brought to liberation from political and economic oppression. He believed in the uplifting power of the Gospel and that by coming back to God Blacks would be prepared for nationhood and political power. (Watt 1992:155)

Africans who experience socio-economic and political injustice find it easier to associate with the intrinsic liberating power of the Holy Spirit. For many morning stars of the Pentecostal Movement, the Holy Spirit became the power over sin, liberal thoughts, and above all, over human miseries. Many Christians since then started to associate the Holy Spirit with power – power over sickness, infertility, social miseries such as unemployment and broken relationships. The person and the soteriological functions of the Holy Spirit were and still are not questioned. What is at stake in African Christian mind is ‘How powerful is the Holy Spirit over one’s personal needs?’ The question goes further to try to investigate the competitive power of the Holy Spirit with other forces such as demonic powers, witchdoctor’s schemes, or other hidden mysteries associated with innate powers active in human affairs.

Africans generally see spiritual and physical beings as real entities that interact with each other in time and space. They reject the secularist worldview and the Western’s conception of reality distinct from the spirit. For Africans, the reality and spirit are intertwined and indivisible. The Spirit gives power and frees people from the fear of demonic dominance and death. The Spirit works in individuals’ needs – both personally and corporately. The living testimony is the dynamic growth of Spirit churches throughout the continent. Since the Spirit is associated with power, and that people seek power, wherever there is

any evidence of the Spirit in action, there will be some attractiveness. The Spirit has the power to attract. And in ecclesial circles, the pastor who has the power to attract the masses is the man or woman of power, while at the same time, this power is deemed as the power of the Spirit. So, the Spirit contributes to quantitative church growth. Even the power of the witchdoctor is measured by the size of the clientele. Power is measured by gregariousness.

In the ecclesiastical circles, church growth is equated with the presence of the Spirit. Where there is no Spirit, church growth is stunted if not absent. Many leaders of Spirit churches come from the mainline Christianity where they witnessed a lack of dynamism in their spiritual life. They have seen the church struggles in all areas, and after becoming part of the Pentecostal or Charismatic group, they experience and witness some dynamic explosion – both in their personal and church or ministry lives. Some two examples to recall here can be that of Nicholas Bhengu of the AOG coming out of the Lutheran background. One of the biggest churches in Soweto, Johannesburg is the Grace Bible Church, founded and led by Bishop Mosa Sono. Allan Anderson (1992:52-55) gives a biographical background of Mosa Sono, and how he was dramatically called into the ministry after spending all his life in the Dutch Reformed Church.

4.5 Who are the war parties?

The Spirit of power is always at the loggerheads with African spirituality that engages the ancestral veneration. The dilemma is how does one separate the Spirit of God in action and the spirits of ancestors in action? This is where syncretism has gained some access to African Christianity. It is not unusual to find a spiritist who boasts the ability to use both *ditaola* (divining bones) and the Bible to discern the source of misery and the direction or prescription for the cure. This sounds attractive as the two diagnostic approaches are balanced on the equilibrium of tradition and Christianity, ancestors and the Christian God, ancestral spirits and the Holy Spirit, the witchdoctor/diviner/spiritist and Christ.

The Bible and *ditaola* are the two tools or points of contact at a loggerhead, but with African Christians, especially those from the Catholic and mainline Protestant traditions, to consult a *doctor o tlhakantseng bongaka le boporofeta* (one who combines traditional practices and prophecy in a biblical sense) attracts multitudes. In South Africa, there is a phenomenal spirituality called *sephiri* or *Kereke ya sephiri*. This African spirituality is so common, and the name carries the connotation of secrecy or mystery. Swedish missionary, bishop, and academic Bengt Sundkler refers to it as the underground prayer movement taking the form in the 1940s during the years of World War II. It gives an impression that it helps to foster a new piety, a biblical mysticism with African signature. "It is a uniquely and characteristically African approach to the unity of the Church." (Sundkler 1976:291-292). Mzondi (2019:10) refers to it as a close religious group and part of *Bapostola* (apostolics) in South Africa.

There is a need for some deep scholarly research of the *Sephiri* phenomenon. What I can highlight about it is that it is a hidden but civilised mystical witchcraft exercised under the guise of biblical dictates. It is ecumenical, hence found in both African Independent Churches (its stronghold) and mainline Christianity. Attendants or adherents cannot be identified by any symbolism, such as the cross, or literature in hands. The meetings are held secretly and always at midnight to the early hours of the morning. Devotees attend mostly on Saturday nights and attend the normal church services on Sunday. They have a unique catechetical process whereby devotees are to recite seven or ten tenets of confessions called *dipaki* (witnesses) whenever they face challenges, such as when sick, robbery, attacks or suspect being subjected to any curse such as witchcraft.

Sephiri is one of the platforms where the Spirit and traditional beliefs are sometimes the warring parties or the comrades in arms working together towards healing, deliverance, or any form of breakthrough one is facing in life. The movement is wrapped up in secrecy as to liturgies or confessions followed, regalia, symbolism, ritualism and any form of faith expression that may be associated with it. The Bible, especially the Old Testament Mosaic texts, is engaged. The regalia items are kept secretly in the house. A spouse can be a

devotee, and the partner, unless he or she belongs, may not even see or know of the presence of these items in the household. Should a devotee pass on, it can be observed that by midnight, all the non-devotees are requested to leave the room where the corpse in the casket or coffin is kept. Devotees with a higher position dress the corpse with colourful paraphernalia and deposit any item associated with the *Sephiri* movement into the coffin.

Some African Christians go to the *Sephiri* prayer movement to seek power, protection and prosperity. Just as a traditional doctor deals with the crisis not only by treating the observed or acknowledged problem at surface level, the *Sephiri* devotion probes more deeply to find the underlying cause and healing. They also go there to seek answers for their spiritual adequacy. Christian spirituality seems to be not adequate as people need to be healed of their diseases – physical and spiritual. Thorpe (1991:123) highlights this fact that “there is a need for healing which enables people to recognise not only what they are, but what they are becoming as they face repeated crises”. The devotees are schooled that their steps to become are genuine and justifiable since Nicodemus also went to consult Jesus at night, hence no *Sephiri* activities should be conducted during the day. Due to its ecumenical composition and its power-seeking rationale, the movement enhances syncretism.

4.6 Royalty, democracy and titles used to gain power

Africa is a continent of royal powers. The king and the chief wield enormous influence for and through power, prestige, control and dominance. Multiple leadership in Africa exists, but the first in command is regarded as the head of organisation where the buck stops. A leader is a leader by people, not by a small circle. *Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho, e seng ka lekgotla kgotsa ka khuduthamaga* (King or chief is king because of the people, not by a council or by a committee). The multiple leadership from the West finds difficulties in Africa, hence the Episcopalian church polity prospers in Africa. The archbishop or the bishop who is seen as a king is the head of the church community with all powers invested on him or her. Churches that are synodical and congregational in polity

find it difficult to fit in. One finds that in these two polities, the moderator, superintendent, president of the presbytery or council chairperson ends up becoming the head of the session, acting like a king or a chief. There is some power struggle between democratic church leadership and Episcopalian leadership. Many African church founders and leaders wield a potent Messianic power over their followers. Africans look at one person as a leader, not to a group of people such as committees, synods and councils. Followers follow a leader. They do not blindly or out of allegiance follow the leaders.

In the past two decades, we observe some mushrooming of apostles, prophets, majors, generals, etc. within the Neo-Charismatic movement – an influence that seems to be emanating from West Africa. The emerging phenomenon of apostles, prophets, and such like in the Neo-Charismatic churches testify to this effect that African Christians believe in a leader who possesses apostolic or prophetic authority. An apostle is regarded as someone who is not just a pioneer, but an overseer with prophetic or evangelistic authority over his followers. Added to this, the Neo-Charismatic movement is familiarising Episcopalianism into this section of Christianity. Since their Pentecostal forbears are from the Western Pentecostal traditions, they adopted Presbyterian or congregational systems, but are now moving into Episcopalian bishopric systems. South Africa is experiencing an upsurge of not only the apostles and the prophets, but also of archbishops and bishops in Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. This Episcopalian prestige is not only by titles or positions but also by attire that reflects royal prestige from head to toe. The man of God does not appear as a servant, sitting with the flock to ensure their feeding and protection, but he or she is now on the higher pedestal adorning the stage with all the accompanying decorum of royalty. Furthermore, we observe the inductions of church leaders capped with honorary doctoral degrees and professorships from fictitious institutions by certain obscure ecclesiastical leaders. People receive laughable titles of being Drs and Profs, who can hardly fill in an A4 form. All these endeavours are signs of people seeking power. These predatory toils leave many recipients with useless titles. Royal status in its secular form had entered the

church as a way of seeking power. There is power in the title, and people will go all out to seek titles, even paying some exorbitant amounts.

4.7 Real power at stake

Power (*dunamis*) or authority (*exousia*) are at stake. The life of the church is *dunamis* in the power of the Holy Spirit. If one thinks of the Holy Spirit as neuter, a forceful power or just a soul, and does not realise that he is the Third Person of the blessed Holy Trinity, one will not understand this power, and it will be non-existent. The power of the Spirit (or from God) is not given for tyrannical purposes but for empowerment to live sustainably in a sinful environment. The tyrannical desire for power elevates the human ego and undermines the transcendence of God. Desires to possess power for selfish gains and egoistic fulfilment makes God too small, as if God has normal human power, only infinitely greater (Van den Brink & Van der Kooi 2017:242).

Power (*dunamis*) speaks of ability, possibility, or power in physical, intellectual or spiritual realms. The term appears 118 times in the New Testament and carries a strong meaning of strength.

It is the normal word for power, might, strength or force, and is often used in the plural to refer to miracles ('wonders') in the phrase miracles and wonders, as in Acts 2:22, 2 Corinthians 12:12 and Hebrews 2:4; or to supernatural beings ('powers'), as in Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21 and 1 Peter 3:22. (Kraft 2000:66-67)

Power (*exousia*) speaks of the ability to act. It appears 108 times in the New Testament and speaks of the right or permission conferred by a legal entity such as the possibility granted by the government.

It is a personal right, either because of status or by delegation, to assert power, whether in legal, political, social or moral ways in the human world or in the spiritual realm. (Kraft 2000:67)

This is why the source of one's power (apostle, prophet, pastor, witchdoctor, etc.) inevitably falls under the radar or put on a spotlight. In the biblical context, this authority is divinely given, therefore denoting the absolute possibility of action that is proper to God alone as the source of all power and legality. It

is the power that focuses on the right to use power rather than on the power itself. Power (*exousia*) belongs to God and not to humanity, though God has the discretion to impart this power to those he deems fit to be the good stewards of it. Should that be a case, those entrusted with *exousia* should carefully use it for the purposes for which it was given. Spiritual authority should never be used to show off or to enhance egoistic human reputations. God risked when he gave us authority and freedom; and unfortunately, the human tendency is to use this freedom to misuse the authority given to us. Prevalent in Africa today are the preachers, coming in different designations, such as apostle, prophet, pastor, a man of God, general, major general, doctor, papa, professor. These use their authority to gain perks or prestige for themselves rather than displaying Christ's incarnational love of pastoral caring. These leaders plant and lead churches to enhance their social positions in a community or their denominational circles or networks. Those who claim the gift or the ability to heal produce spectacles, with themselves at the centre, where God is hardly noticed, even if they try to give God the credit.

Biblical Christianity promotes and participates in the authority modelled by Jesus and grounded in him in the power of the Holy Spirit. "It is the God-given right to receive and use God's power that flows from the indwelling Holy Spirit." (Kraft 2000:67).

The Spirit's power in the theological sense is associated with enablement, like in the Old Testament's Judges era when periodically the Spirit of God fell on leaders to enable them to bring national oppression to the end. It is the Spirit that turns people or leaders into charismatic leaders. "The Spirit equips people for God's intended work so as to establish God's reign over human lives." (Van den Brink & Van der Kooi 2017:494). And the Spirit's power is also associated with some liberating work. This power brings renewal, rebuilds lives that were broken and gives them new zest and hope for a better and promising future.

Real power is at stake whenever power exalts the person who claims one or more of the titles above, rather than the Lord who is the source and the giver of the authority. Any leader who claims the authority and uses it to hurt the

powerless misuses this power. In the recent past, South Africa has experienced the strange phenomena of hurting the powerless, such as a pastor walking or standing on men's backs, making people eat grass or drink petrol, spraying people with insecticides. Using one's spiritual position to control or dominate others by overriding their opinions, without any regard to their consequent state of living, emotions, or spiritual well-being is alien to biblical Christianity. This is the misuse of power if it was ever given. When people need healing, employment, fertility, marital soundness, etc. they are powerless and can naively succumb to any undignified commands from any person claiming authority. *Kerygmatic* activities that instil guilt through condemnations are the misuse of God's authority. Preaching the scriptures to condemn instead of convicting is the abuse of divinely given authority. This is a misrepresentation of God.

Indeed, misunderstanding and quest for power have bred spiritual abuse, which turns seekers into victims. African Christianity has, on a wider scale, been seasoned with spiritual manipulation and faulty spiritual authority. We read and hear much about spiritual abuse, which in a nutshell is the abuse of power, or seeking power for prestige, manipulation, or abusing other people.

Spiritual abuse is the mistreatment of a person who is in need of help, support or greater spiritual empowerment, with the result of weakening, undermining or decreasing that person's spiritual empowerment. (Johnson & VanVonderen 1991:20)

Let me close this chapter by quoting Pastor Ramabulana, who detoured from the Pentecostal faith of his upbringing by joining the spiritual occultism in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. He later came back to his senses, regained his roots and followed the sensible way:

Most people who anchor their faith on prophecies, healing and miracles are in great danger, because the sole purpose of salvation is not only in healing, to be prophesied on or about miracles, but to repent and reach heaven one day. (2018:84)

Chapter 5

Colonial God versus decolonial God

The Bible and Christianity are still wrapped in Western ideologies and hermeneutics. Some Africans still view the Bible as a tool of oppression. Theology and Christianity need to untangle itself from the Western interpretations to become relevant to an African context. Decolonisation of theology means that Africa must become independent concerning the theological acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. It is open knowledge that colonialism has not just insinuated itself into the theological content but the very structures of the curriculum. Theology is called upon to decolonise Christianity through Africanisation, which is the need to seek commonalities; affirm African culture, traditions and value systems; and foster an understanding of African consciousness. Contextualisation, whereby indigenous knowledge should be developed to ensure that theology and its transmission relate to the African context, is to be pursued. South African theology and Christianity should disconnect from missionaries' practical or theoretical assumptions of origin, priority, or essence. This is decentring, which calls for discontinuing the mistakes of the past and of using them as an excuse for not moving on towards the centre of the biblical and theological truth. Theology and Christianity in South Africa face a mammoth task of deterritorialising the biblical truth and to stop situating the Bible as a European or a Western canon. When this process is engaged, the indigenisation and inculturation processes will start to make Christianity meaningful to Africans. The Bible is to speak into the contexts of injustice and African miseries for it to become a witnessing partner with African contexts

5.1 Real Issues at stake

Christianity in South Africa is at stake. It is still too wrapped in the Western theological ideologies. The Bible is read with some doubt. Some people regard the Bible as a tool of oppression. Religion seems to be affirming itself as the opium of the masses, due to some strange practices as observed among some Neo-Pentecostal groups. The fundamentalists add salt to the wound by their radical stance in the socio-political landscape. The lack of a prophetic role of the church during the apartheid era has become an anathema of regret, especially within the South African White Christianity. Human dignity is in trouble due to escalating poverty, the toothlessness of religion in social decay, and especially with corruption in the higher echelons of the regime.

New nationalists masquerading as democrats since 1994 threw religion out of education mechanisms and pushed it into obscurity. The South African culture of teaching and learning has taken a nosedive as morals declined. Educators' lives are in danger as learners are given extreme freedom under the guise of human rights. There are sporadic cases throughout the country of learners stabbing or shooting teachers to death. Is my generation irrelevant for today's educational or spiritual needs of South African teenage world? Is our education including theological education a misfit for democratic South Africa?

As I sit here writing this book, I am constantly reminded that my theological mind is shaped by Western theology or what some people call Eurocentric theology. I studied in two Bible colleges that were reformed and fundamentalist or call it conservative. In these two institutions, especially the first one (Johannesburg Bible Institute), the multiracial student component was lectured by 98% White academics, the majority being Americans. I had to mentally imbibe the dispensational theology of Sperry Lewis Schafer, Thiessen, Charles Ryrie, Dwight Pentecost, and others. At the second institution (Columbia Bible College) where my studies were based on distant learning with limited classroom directive teaching interaction, I was drilled with the evangelical reformed theology of Robertson McQuilkin, James Hart, Norman Holt, amongst others. Then I entered the University of South Africa with a higher criticism scholarship but was

mostly influenced by Adrio König. During my postgraduate systematic theology studies, I had to open my mind to Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, Pannenberg, Bultmann, etc. I was not exposed to even a single African theologian. I scantily read or heard of John Mbiti, and Byang Kato was only mentioned in passing.

The 2015/2016 academic season experienced the students' protests known as #FeesMustFall. One of the demands was the expedition of decolonisation of higher education. Academics, including theologians in the Faculties of Theology, were left with a question: 'What do *they* mean by *decolonisation*?' Do they mean 'Going back to the Stone Age? Teaching only about South Africa and Africa? Isolation from the rest of the world?' After numerous dialogues in the halls of academia, it can broadly be stated that decolonisation involves fundamental rethinking and reframing of the curriculum and bringing South Africa and Africa to the centre of teaching, learning and research.

Decolonisation of theology means that Africa must become independent concerning the theological acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits. It is open knowledge that colonialism hasn't just insinuated itself into the theological content but the very structures of the curriculum. The subsections that follow investigate various terms that have surfaced to refer to decolonisation.

5.1.1 Africanisation

Scholars and social scientists offer diverse definitions of Africanisation, such as the need to seek commonalities; affirm African culture, traditions and value systems; and to foster an understanding of African consciousness (Horsthemke 2004b). Makgoba (1998:199) for example, emphasises culture and identity, noting that Africanisation is a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community. Other scholars emphasise collectivism, an *ubuntu* (Higgs 2003), and others focus on the humanistic ideals of justice and human rights (Parker 2003). Louw (2010:43) views Africanisation as a way of transcending individual identities, seeking commonality, as well as a way of recognising and embracing our 'otherness'.

This will allow for people to connect with the broader African experience and help establish curricula that will bring people together (Louw 2010:43). Wiredu (2005:7) conceives Africanisation as being attentive to communalism, social justice and deliberation as well as a blending of Western and African methodologies (Naidoo 2015:3).

Basically, according to my interpretation, Africanisation is the process of replacing the European or White approaches, methods, or philosophies with Black or African philosophies. It is to subject attitudes or mentalities under the African influence to adapt to African needs. Africanisation is basically to de-Europeanise systems, remove anything European and replace it with something African. The concept is highly contested – whether it is a possibility or just a pie in the sky.

This is historically evident when various African countries initiated name changes after gaining independence from their colonial powers. This normally comes as the result of consolidations and secessions, territories gaining sovereignty, and regime changes. A good example is that of Mobutu Sese Seko of Democratic Republic of Congo's kleptocracy whereby he renamed the country the Republic of Zaire in 1971. A year later, he renamed himself 'Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga', in short, 'Mobutu Sese Seko'. In some countries like South Africa, immediately following their independence, 'Africanisation' was the name given to racial policies, affirmative action intended to increase the number of Africans in all spheres and structures of society (civil service, business, economic hub) which had historically been dominated by Whites.

5.1.2 Contextualisation

Theologising should be sparked off by the life experience of the persons and communities involved; their total life with its many facets, aspects and dimensions (Mundua 2013:70). Contextualisation calls for theologising that demands encouraging and giving room for the constant look at, and careful study of, the situation within which the theologising communities are immersed (Bujo 1984:23). Colonialism resulted in a serious marginalisation of African ways

of being, knowing and doing, with the consequence that the minds of African people were colonised, even after the end of apartheid. Theologising should be aimed at preparing and empowering theologians to facilitate theological application by involving communities instead of top-down decision making and implementation. Therefore, indigenous knowledge should be developed to ensure that theology and its transmission relate to the African context, “which implies that we become informed by grassroots bottom-up research findings”. (Van Der Westhuisen, Greuel & Beukes 2017:3). Inculturation and contextualising relate to each other and show how communities inform theological conclusions on the one hand and become a result of practised theology on the other hand. Contextualisation gives greater attention to self-theologising. It seeks to take the positive elements of indigenisation and avoid negative elements such as colonial connotations. Contextualisation is related to other terms that grapple with similar issues: adaptation, incarnation, possession and accommodation (De Vries 2016:2).

Bible translation invites the interpreter to immerse into scenic complexities, not just to passively contemplate the truth, or what passes for such (Vattimo & Girard 2010:73), but regarding translation as a process of maturation. According to De Vries (2016:5), God’s revelation must be allowed to transform the interpreter and the interpreter’s context.

Contextualisation includes not only the translation of the Scripture into symbols selected from the local context but also the confrontation and transformation of culture, rejecting or recycling corrupted symbols (Resane 2018:6).

The American missiologist, Hesselgrave (1985, 1991) and Hesselgrave & Rommen (1989) promoted the idea that contextualisation implies that relevant application of the meaning of texts in a specific context, requires from a minister of the Word to apply incarnational theology. Contextualisation means that the Word must dwell among all families of humankind today as truly as Jesus lived among his kin. The gospel is Good News when it provides answers for a particular people living in a particular place at a particular time. This means the worldview and culture of people in a specific context provides a framework

for theologising. The theologian has to know and understand the worldview and culture of his audience to connect with them so that they can eventually be confronted with the claims of the gospel on their lives. Cultural differences in individuals should be identified and utilised with discernment to advance the gospel. The message should be mastered so that it can be communicated in culturally relevant ways without compromising its meaning (Koning & Buys 2016:2).

5.1.2 Decentring

Conservatively speaking, decentring means to put out of the centre, or to cause to lose or shift from an established centre or focus. Philosophically, it is to disconnect from practical or theoretical assumptions of origin, priority, or essence. Contemporary theological applications should desist from using the missionaries' mistakes of the past to devalue the essence of truth in theology and Christianity. Christians are not to use the theological mistakes of the past to reject the truth.

5.1.3 Deterritorialisation

Deterritorialisation is the eradication of social, political, or cultural practices from their native places and populations. Continuing to see Christianity as a Western religion is to deny one an opportunity to enter the *kairos* moment where an encounter with God can be a revolutionary point of life change and social transformation. Theology and Christianity in South Africa face a mammoth task of deterritorialising the biblical truth. This calls for the boldness of not situating the Bible as a European or Western book, but as a universal canon for life revolution. It does not mean replacing biblical hermeneutics with other (African) hermeneutics, but re-assessing hermeneutical principles that are Eurocentric instead of global-centric

5.1.4 Indigenisation

Of the few African theologians busying themselves with indigenisation, Kwesi A. Dickson seems to be the most famous. His seminal work, *Theology in Africa* (1984) popularised him for the subject of indigenisation. He emphasises the importance of the mother tongue in doing theology and appeals for theological expression in African idioms and cultural patterns. He promotes a dialogue between the Bible and African life and thought (Edusa-Eyison 2006:110). Indigenisation is making something that is constant (like the Christian church) into something that is 'indigenous'. This result is usually understood to mean a "three-self" church – one that is self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating (Anderson 2017:29).

5.1.5 Inculturation

The African theological concept of inculturation is attributed to Barthelemy Adoukonou through his famous publication known as *The Black Furrow (Le Sillon Noir)* of 1991/1992. The fundamental meaning of inculturation is "entering into a culture" (Kiaziku 2009:64). It is to incarnate the Gospel message in the African cultures on a theological level. Inculturation emerges from experiences outside the academy. It is a process of acculturation, namely, learning from other people's cultures (Luzbetak 1988:65). Pobee (1992:34-44) expresses inculturation as a dynamic process involving translation, assimilation, and transformation to confront new norms and forms of life. Historically, African socio-cultural concerns were not reflected in missionary and Western academic forms of theological application. Inculturation arose as a response, "paying attention to the African socio-cultural context and the questions that arise therefrom" (Ukpong 1995:4). Ukpong further elaborates that inculturation is hermeneutics that "designates an approach to biblical interpretation which seeks to make the African ... context the subject of interpretation" (Ukpong 1995:5). According to Nyamiti, inculturation is an effort to incarnate the Gospel message in the African cultures on the theological level (Nyamiti 1989:17). Because engagement between the biblical text and African context is fundamental to African biblical

scholarship, it is important to view the cultural landscape that is Africa (Meenan 2014:269). Gerald West has pointed out:

Biblical interpretation is always about changing the African context. This is what links ordinary African biblical interpretation and African biblical scholarship, a common commitment to 'read' the Bible for personal and societal transformation. (West 2008:2)

In contrast to the missionaries' attitudes, Kiaziku (2009:11) points out how they failed to appropriate the Gospel due to their conviction that by coming to Africa, they were going to engage the activities on a *tabula rasa in qua nihil erat scriptum*, a blank sheet, if not downright paganism, where there was nothing that could be called a religious function of the soul. This means that their interpretive processes were not informed by the worldview and experience within the cultural contexts. But one can learn and observe that in essence, inculturation is intertwined with contextualisation, something that mainstream theology and Christianity of the colonial era disregarded, at the peril of biblical Christianity.

Human freedom is at stake. Walking down the streets after sunset in the cities is dangerous. An adult cannot call a child to order when seeing children misbehaving in public. The God of the colonialists seems to be failing to be relevant to the needs of the masses who happen to be the victims of poverty, rape, unemployment, robbery, carjacking, and other such crimes. A big question theologians ask is: Should God or religion be decolonised to be relevant?

Colonial God is wrapped up in the colonial Bible. This calls for African theological scholars to unwrap this God and read the Bible from an African perspective so that it can give answers to African miseries. Decolonised theology is a scholarly inquiry that interrogates epistemological, methodological and theoretical approaches to theology in Africa, where Africans are subjects rather than objects. It is an open reality that theology remains colonised, misrepresented, homogenised and simplified in terms of essence. African Christianity is still dominated by the Westerners who continue to position themselves as genuine and authoritative voices in the fields of theology. These voices marginalise African intellectuals with their knowledge production. African theologians

(authors) are still not fully acknowledged as genuine resources in theological institutions, dialogues, and colloquia.

The decolonisation of theology is a contested concept. It will take critical, thorough scrutiny to truly decolonise theological knowledge. There are many ways to approach the thorny issue of decolonising knowledge. One is confronted with a proliferation of ideas when trying to understand the meaning of phrases like ‘decolonising knowledge’ or ‘a decolonised curriculum’. It looks like there is a process of understanding decolonisation of theology and that process is not yet complete.

One should note that the process of decolonisation is a rough, incomplete, and steep process. For many scholars, decolonisation is a myth since coloniality remains strong in various spheres in Africa (Kamwendo 2017:148). One of the reasons for the slow realisation of decolonisation is that its voice is rated low in the masses though it remains an academic project handled by academics through the colonial linguistic instrument (Ntombela 2017:172) – an exercise that will receive a cold shoulder with the masses as they are not part of the processes of the project.

The typical Eurocentric theological academia is always uncomfortable with decolonisation (P’Bitek 2011:xvi). The academics’ concerns are if theological curricula and ideas and knowledge are decolonised, that means they have been shaped in part by considerations that are political, economic, social, cultural rather than by metanarratives and biblical hermeneutics.

Admitting a need to decolonise theology means admitting that it was formerly colonised to some degree. This in turn means admitting that what one previously touted as objective and untainted by the worldly affairs was mired in them. Academics, including theologians, are much happier asserting that knowledge is power than they are conceding that power is knowledge.

From this perspective, the decolonisation of theological knowledge is primarily an intellectual rather than a political project. It attempts to filter and purify theological academic activities to make an apologetic stance and ethical purity

for better life of faith in God. This filtering or purifying processes stands in contrast to a line of thought that sees inculturation and contextualisation of theology as anathema of adulterating faith.

Decolonisation of theology is not seen as an attempt to resurrect the dispassionate search for knowledge, but as a rejection of the idea of objectivity, encapsulated or cocooned in colonial thinking. It is an attempt to limit the intellectual efforts of imposing Western culture on other cultures. It is an endeavour to discover the truth and apply it within a local setting by allowing that truth to gain local experience that will address the local needs.

Western theology, through its missional channels, promoted the idea that to be human is to be civilised, Africans without Christ behave inhumanly, therefore, are the uncivilised or barbarians. A barbarian is a stranger or foreigner, a person who speaks in a strange tongue. According to the European mindset, a barbarian is someone whose speech is unintelligible or who makes incomprehensible sounds like an animal. He is thought to be more of an animal than a human being, yet without being either the one or the other. He is something in between a human and an animal. He is bestial or beastlike. The word 'barbarian' was used to refer to the native or savage, the wild and untamed man, the cruel man who lacks grace.

The Western colonialists constructed an image of themselves as the only free civilised people living on earth. In their eyes, they were fighting 'slaves', which to them also meant a group of people subject to the rule of a monarch or a democratic state. This state of affairs is ironic since the West identifies capitalism, liberalism and democracy as markers of civilisation and progress against African nationalism and self-identity.

Normally, the acts of resistance perpetrated by Africans are described as 'savage' or 'barbaric' by Western leaders through their biased media, when one always hears a vehement condemnation of a whole African culture as 'barbaric'. Colonialism and apartheid are unthinkable outside of the dichotomy between the 'civilised' and 'barbarian'. Racism, which was invented at the dawn of capitalism to justify

the continuation of slavery and indirect rule, contributed enormously towards religious misapprehension and spiritual altercation for Africans.

Colonialism pushed the ideology that humanness means being civilised by obtaining liberal education, the evidence thereof being a Christian and White. This would be followed by dressing and eating like a White person, speaking a White person's language, and building your house from a circular shape to rectangular or square shape. It also meant to be middle class, heterosexual and male and exert patriarchalism and individualism. Consequently, anyone who is identifiable as female, Black, working-class, or non-Christian is automatically judged to be less rational, wilder, untamed, or barbaric.

The Eurocentric theology has historically, through colonial processes, amassed power over Africans by enforcing its views on them. To a certain degree, this theology adopted policies that involve both silencing and, in some cases, killing the dissenters labelled as heretics deserving to die. A good example is when apartheid was equated with Christianity, and dissension equated with communism or terrorism. The opponents or critics of apartheid were labelled communists and suffered under state repression. Colonialism was equated with Christianity, and the opponents were seen by colonialists as barbarians, savages, or heathens. These opponents were either massacred, banished or exiled. The ideology of the colonial masters became the ruling principles. Power was equated with truth.

Theological praxis in South Africa's Christianity should unleash and uncover certain skills to master and know the context in which it finds itself. No African society has ever made significant and meaningful advances in theology through the use of borrowed robes, in this case, hermeneutics. A good biblical example is that of David when he had to face Goliath. He put on Saul's military attire and tried to walk around. Because he was not used to them, he took them off and took on the giant in what he was familiar with (1 Sam 17:39-40). There is no doubt that Africa has much to learn from Western theologies. But the continent stands a better chance of making major progress by not relying solely on imported hermeneutics.

The solution of making theology relevant to Africa lies in the smart integration of Africa-centred hermeneutics that is rooted in indigenous linguistic forms and material cultures. This will enhance the unlocking of local creative capabilities and potentials for innovation. African local knowledge systems should become the growth engine that promotes a new dynamic evolution instead of simply imitating Western models of theologising and religious progress.

5.2 Quiet diplomacy at the wrong time

Some years ago, our neighbouring country of Zimbabwe started a journey of an economic slump. The African Union asked then president of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki to mediate to rescue Zimbabwe from the ailing economy. Mbeki answered the media questions by the full assertion that from the South African vintage point, he applies quiet diplomacy to deal with Zimbabwean issue. The term 'quiet diplomacy' became familiar and reverberated through the media houses in all sorts. This is a form of diplomacy aimed to prevent violent conflict or the recurrence thereof. On a face value, for ordinary people, quiet diplomacy may mean passiveness when intervention is desperately needed. This is the point of view idealised here in this section of this book. Remaining silent during a crisis is as serious as participating in that crisis. The quotation of Edmund Burke (1729-1797) is widely and noticeable in a public domain that the only thing necessary for evil to exist is for good people to remain silent or do nothing. Quiet diplomacy cannot find any co-existence with the prophetic role of the church. It is unfortunate that historically, the church in her universal scope has been tainted with silence during the critical times, though her prophetic voice echoed in some instances. Her silence has deafened her prophetic voice.

The most deplorable tendency was the silence of the church when apartheid was entrenched into the South African socio-political landscape. Salt was added to the wound when a particular section of the church, the Nederlandse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), in English, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) took side with

political regime and used the Bible to justify apartheid or segregationist policies. In the meantime, the English churches and the evangelical movement maintained their silence diplomatically, especially from 1948 to 1994, the era known as that of apartheid. The silence was a tool for docility and maintaining peace at a time when the crisis was looming at an alarming rate.

Elphick (1997:383-395) suggests that the apartheid system, as well as resistance to it, was both a political and theological matter. By the twentieth century, several Christian churches in South Africa supported apartheid and racial divisions. Of course, a few opposed it *vocally*, incarnately, and prophetically. One of the largest Christian denomination, the DRC, used Christian theology to argue theological support for the apartheid regime. The DRC, which was (and is) closely associated with Afrikaners, remained the 'official religion' of the apartheid-supporting National Party (Byrnes 1996).

The first official prime minister of the apartheid state in 1948, was Daniel Francois Malan who happened to be the pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church. He cemented apartheid ideas through additional laws and active enforcement (Vosloo, cited in Bongmba 2015:400-403). Towards the end of the twentieth century, many White church leaders supported and were committed to apartheid, but a few did not. Resane (2017) highlights some Afrikaner church leaders who broke out of a laager. The examples cited include the likes of Beyers Naude, who joined a Blacks-only parish after leaving his Whites-only church in the late 1970s.

The DRC enhanced its support for apartheid by establishing a separate Coloured church in 1881, long before apartheid became an official ideology of the then racially divided state. It was in 1910 when the DRC formulated and adopted a policy of segregation whereby Black Africans who were part of its denomination had to worship in churches meant for Blacks. Africans. From the nineteenth century, the history of this church has been very bound with the politics of the Afrikaner community of South Africa. The church regrettably supported the system of apartheid, which institutionalised separation and stratification of the people of South Africa according to race. The social segregation of Black,

Coloured and White people was reflected in the establishment of churches of these three groups.

During the liberation struggle, the prophetic voice of the church was loud and clear. The oppressive regime was not worried about inter-political opposition. Its main worry was the voice of the church through the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and other faith formations. These communities of faith had a unified voice addressing injustice and apartheid unreservedly. Under the inspirational and charismatic leadership of the likes of Beyers Naudé, Peter Storey, Desmond Tutu and Frank Chikane the voice of the church in South Africa was vocal and audible. Today, the deafening silence is conspicuous (Resane 2017b:2). These church leaders together with many others were prophetic that there is a possibility of a racially integrated society that models the New Testament Church as modelled by Christ himself. These efforts came at great personal cost. Sadly, many of those who spoke against apartheid abuses were placed under banning orders, restricted and confined to certain districts in the country, detained without trials, jailed and murdered in police cells, and restricted by being subjected to house arrest.

Neville Richardson (2005:231-232) highlights the influence and significance of the apartheid ideology in its systematic oppression and violence against human dignity as follows:

[T]he church under apartheid was polarised between 'the church of the oppressor' and 'the church of the oppressed'. Either you were for apartheid or you were against it; there was no neutral ground. Given the heavy-handed domination of the minority white government, those who imagined themselves to be neutral were, unwittingly perhaps, on the side of apartheid. This complicity was especially true of those Christians who piously 'avoided politics' yet enjoyed the social and economic benefits of the apartheid system ... While young white men were conscripted into the South African Defence Force, many young black people fled the country to join the outlawed liberation movements that had their headquarters and training camps abroad. What could the church do in this revolutionary climate? And what should Christian theology say now?

Despite these threats, the church developed many prophetic statements, such as the Confession of Belhar, the Cottesloe Declaration, the Kairos Document,

the Evangelical Witness in South Africa, and the National Initiative of Reconciliation. All these supported the task of social and political liberation in South Africa.

There is no dispute that some churches opposed, criticised and condemned apartheid, in some quarters labelling it as apartheid, violence against humanity, evil ideology etc. This is also pointed out by one prominent and prophetic church leader, John De Gruchy:

Since 1948, the synods, conferences, and assemblies of the churches have protested against every piece of legislation they have considered unjust ... The churches have spoken against race classification; the forced removal of population groups due to the Group Areas Act; the Immorality Act and Mixed Marriages Act, designed to preserve racial purity; the various education acts which have created separate kinds of education along ethnic lines; job reservations. (De Gruchy 1986:88)

De Gruchy (1986:58) continues to refer to Christian communities that “some regard racial separation as scriptural, some as blatantly unscriptural, and others as pragmatically necessary but not ideal”. This is enhanced by Masuku, who maintains: “The churches were divided among those who embraced apartheid, those who rejected it and those who assumed a neutral position or ‘quiet diplomacy.’” (Masuku 2014:152).

Masuku (2014) categorises faith communities that responded to apartheid into five, namely; those that embraced apartheid (e.g. the DRC), those that rejected apartheid (e.g. the Anglicans and the Methodists), those that adopted a neutral stance on apartheid (e.g. the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the ‘daughter’ churches of the DRC), ecumenical bodies (e.g. the Cottesloe Consultation), and main minority religions (e.g. African Traditional Religions and Islam). In comparing the degree of the church’s prophetic voice during the apartheid and post-apartheid periods, the difference became apparent.

During the apartheid era, the church was vocal against apartheid, today she is silent. Church leaders are conspicuous by their absence when communities protest against human abuse, injustice, corruption, lack of service deliveries, etc. The church is invisible when the country is engulfed with xenophobic attacks,

moral flaws in high echelons of the government and police brutality, amongst other abuses.

One of the fundamental reasons for the silence of the church today is the close relationship that exists between individual religious leaders and the post-1994 democratic government. Religious leaders who used to exercise their prophetic ministry during the apartheid government are today in the employ of the democratic government, occupying senior positions. This trend silenced them, and they became recipients of petitions from victims of oppression during protest marches. They stand against the victims of oppression, taking the side of the state. This is also picked up by Resane, who writes:

The new constitution of 1996 acknowledged the religious plurality of the country's populace. Many clergy such as Dutch Reformed Alan Boesak, Catholic Simangaliso Mkhathshwa, Presbyterian Makhenkesi Stofile, Methodist Mvume Dandala, Baptist Peter Marais, Pentecostal Frank Chikane; and many theologians such as Dr Motsoko Pheko, the Anglican Dr Siphon Mzimela, Stanley Mogoba; and others joined the civil service. These Christian leaders, some of them being systematic theologians, joined the government to its highest echelons. (Resane 2016:3)

Resane (2017b:7) points out that the church, as the community of faith, is a prophet in a decadent culture. A prophet's role is always not popular, especially with the socio-political status quo. Christ does not expect His Church to be meaningless in society or to be peripheral, but to be central and play a crucial role in human social interactions (Hendriks 2010:275). The church's missional task is both proclamational and incarnational. This is to be concerned for the welfare of the people within and outside the church (Walls & Ross 2008:35, 46-47). Indeed, there is much that the Christian Church must do in Africa today (Pheko 1982:98).

Quiet diplomacy is not in nature with the missional task of the church. The church is prophetic vocally and incarnately. Its presence in the world is being the light, the salt and the yeast to make a difference by all means possible. The New Testament testifies that no one can encounter Christ and maintain silence. The people who encountered Christ in their desperate situation were left baffled but always declared their experiences of meeting the one who changed their lives:

- The two blind men whose eyes were touched to receive their sight ignored the stern warning not to tell anyone of what happened to them by going out and spreading the news about him all over the region. (Mt 9:27-31)
- Survivors of sink boat declared: 'Truly you are the Son of God.' (Mt 14:33)
- The Markan narrative repeats that the demoniacs, the lepers, the blind, the lame, etc. could not hold their peace after deliverance. They spread the news of their encounter with Christ.
- The Samaritan woman declared: 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?' (Jn 4:29)
- Those attending the festival, after hearing him talk about the Holy Spirit were awestruck: 'Surely this man is the Prophet ... He is the Christ.' (Jn 7:40-41)
- Temple guards who were sent to arrest Jesus returned to their senders and declared: 'No one ever spoke the way this man does.' (Jn 7:46)
- The man who was born blind responded to his accusers: 'Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see.' (Jn 9:25)

The church as the company of the redeemed, people touched by Christ, cannot afford to take the route of quiet diplomacy. As ecclesia, she is here to announce Christ's kingdom through *kerygmatic* activities. Christ encounter opens the way for missional tasks. The sin of the church in South Africa historically was to opt for silence at the time when she was needed the most to become the salt and the light of the world. She opted to enter the wilderness of inhuman dogma of marring the *imago Dei* carried by humanity on this earth, especially in South Africa. *Missio Dei* suffered a setback and the Christian faith was painted negatively by the outsiders. Resane (2017) decries the silence of the English churches during the apartheid, they sat on the fence and became docile at the critical time when the politics of the land embraced the evil system that taints the biblical faith in such a way that faith became anathema in the eyes of the citizens. The English churches in the majority, sat silently and watched South Africa decaying around them. Their silence loud and they thought that this silence would protect them somehow. They communicated their sinfulness through silence, forgetting that for future generations, they will be cursed while

their counterparts will be remembered for their loud justification of the unjust system.

The church's message in post-apartheid South Africa should be a joyful invitation to communion with Jesus and His followers. The relevant gospel should not be a means of scaring people to God with the fear of hell but incarnating the person and the love of Christ. The church is in the world and therefore must take a step forward like Moses to go over and see why, if there is a fire in the bush, the bush is not burning up. The church should not remain silent in times such as these.

We do not proclaim from the distance, from the security of some haven of self-righteousness, but that we come very close to the people we are inviting, in relate to them in solidarity because we are as much in need of the good news as they are. (Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman 1994:37)

The church is mainly characterised as a fellowship. This fellowship is reflected with metaphors such as 'community', 'communion', 'fellowship', 'togetherness', '*koinonia*', 'the one-another', 'partnership', 'connectedness', 'participation', 'relationship', 'cooperation' etc. The church is called upon to enter into partnership or union with others in the bonds of a business partnership, or social or fraternal organisation, or just propinquity. It should be a partnership in the support of the Gospel and the charitable work of the Church (2 Cor 8:4).

5.3 When justice rolls on

Despite the end of apartheid, racial divides still exist within the church. South African history bears the testimony that the church is one of the most pervasive and significant institutions in society. For four centuries, the South African church has made significant contributions to the best and the worst of South Africa's history. As a result, the church is faced with several complex contextual challenges, which will require a great deal of courage and faithfulness if the Christian faith is to continue to make a positive impact on society.

The church cannot be celebrated without attention to the nature and the challenges of the community. The church in South Africa cannot separate or divorce itself from the socio-cultural issues because the true love of Christ

never precludes social justice questions. Indeed, it is through the question of social justice that communion is mediated. The mission of the church is always preaching, serving, and fellowship. The reason for the failure of the church to exert her prophetic power is that for a long time was that she was much more interested in *kerygma* than in the *diakonia*. Soteriology takes precedence. Salvation and church life are intertwined, and it is in and through the church that acts of social justice are appropriated.

The church is expected to be the mouthpiece of Christ, and the agent of peace. This is a missiological incarnation par excellence. The church is in an eschatological journey as a missional channel in the hurting world. Through proclamation, it brings liberation to the oppressed and the marginalised societies where Christ does not rule supreme. Her proclamation of the gospel is not the conveyance of human intellect or eloquence.

Proclamational activities in missiological endeavours must be balanced with incarnational (presence) endeavours. Proclamation must be balanced with presence or incarnation. The mission of the church is the declaration of the greatness of God's redemptive work in the world (Haul & Cesar 2000:150), therefore cannot shout from the distance. She needs to be there to exert her influence. Care should be taken as to how we convey Christ and his message.

We are trying to build bridges on truth alone, while the world is crying out for proof. *Proof!* Our design is wrong. We need bridges that balance public proclamation with congregational incarnation. (Lewis & Wilkins 2001:40)

I regard social justice the loving acts of service that are accompanied by proclamational activities. In the words of Kritzinger and his colleagues: "Word and deed are absolutely intertwined as dimensions of the one 'good news activity'" (Kritzinger et al. 1994:143). It was at Amsterdam 2000 when Ross Rhoads explained to the workshop audience: "To couple the work of God with the words of God is a winner. The Gospel needs to be twofold: word and work." (Rhoads, cited in Winter & Hawthorne 2001:413).

Social justice is about salvation and service – a call to be engaged in proclamation and social action. Salvation and service are both the incarnational or the

manifestation of the love of Christ in action. Macchia cautions that *kerygma* and social implications operate in a synergistic congruence:

Though the church cannot neglect its kerygmatic function in pointing explicitly to Jesus as the hope of the world, neither can it neglect the social implications of its loyalty to Christ and the witness of the Spirit. (Macchia 2006:219)

The church as the company of the redeemed and a platform on which Christ is proclaimed still plays a pivotal role in transforming society. The love of Christ is not just a verbal exercise, but an incarnational expression. South African Christianity that can make some impact is the one that embraces and promotes the fact that the real church in society is the love of Christ in action.

Social justice is not an option in the true gospel of Jesus Christ. It is interwoven in the gospel just as one cannot separate milk from tea in a cup. The sectarian theology of Christian conservatives sees gospel and social justice as oil and water – the two substances that cannot mingle or absorb into each other. The message that is not accompanied or backed-up with praxis is incomplete and cannot win the world for Christ. This means that African religious outlook is integrated. Religion cannot be divorced or dissected from life. Oduyoye (2004:78) captures the fact that “Africans operate with an integrated world-view that assigns a major place to religious factors and beliefs”.

Chapter 6

We do not want your White religion

Is God for the poor or the rich? Does God make White people rich and Black people poor? Is there any justice to reject the Bible on the basis that empowers Whites only? What does the Bible say about the poor? Some Africans associate poverty with spirituality. As far as they are concerned, the poor will always inherit the kingdom of God. This notion is enhanced by colonial Christianity that subliminally aimed to subject African Christians to exploitation and enslavement

Since poverty is usually in the African worldview associated with Black people, rather than White people, Africans tend to interpret it not just as a curse, but also as a cushion of comfort. Racism taught us that since we are not created equal, we cannot have equal benefits. Many African Christians had accepted poverty as part of who they are – something with a divine source not to be altered or tampered with.

African Christianity is historically marked for its role of disempowering Africans. It has kept Africans in a position of dependency, and it has justified the 'beggar mentality'. The colonial preaching makes an application that the true riches for a Christian (in this case, African Christian) consist of faith and love that express themselves in self-denial and following Jesus.

Poverty, though significant among the African majority, has become a blanket for all racial groups. In the colonial and apartheid past, the colour of the skin offered privileges and preferences. In reality, poverty does not have colour. It scars all racial groups regardless of the continent or the province of one's origin.

6.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that poverty is a reality in all racial structures in South Africa. During apartheid, poverty was associated with Blacks (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) though at a varying degree. Society was structured in such a way that the White race was at the top of the pyramid of economy, with Africans at the bottom and Coloureds and Indians somewhere in between. Today's South Africa experiences poverty in all racial groups, including the Whites. Many of us grew up in an era where poverty and White was an oxymoron. My friends and colleagues from other African countries get a shock of their lives seeing Whites begging at the street intersections, or on the pavements. This poverty perception is interpreted from the Black point of view. Even the poor White of the era was perceived by Blacks as rich. The then government through various legislations, gave the Whites opportunities of employment, even the cheap labour, above Blacks. The poor White is a rising social phenomenon. White poverty, especially among the Afrikaners, is exacerbated by racial supremacy that was based on social hierarchy, which is now replaced with cultural homogeneity, elaborated through tradition, while structural inequalities are covered with racist denials. This creates some enormous identity crisis for Whites who are not economically advanced.

The poor Whites are homeless or stay in dilapidated houses. You find them in the city centres and along the suburban streets. One needs only to go to the city centres of Pretoria or Bloemfontein to have a glimpse of the poor Whites. While the poor Whites seem to be confined to the cities and towns, the poor Blacks are in the cities, towns, townships, villages, squatter camps, along the freeways, under the bridges, and in farms. All the geographical settlement patterns carry the visibility of the poor Blacks. Churches, NGOs and corporates are trying to do something to contribute towards the elimination of poverty, but all efforts seem to be a drop in the ocean.

South Africa is a welfare state. It is estimated that fifteen million citizens live on social grants. This still does not eliminate poverty. It has become a norm to categorise social grants as a sociological analysis to determine the cultural

lifestyle of a community. Whenever the social scientists make any empirical research, they find out that social grant determines cultural styles or living styles of that community. It has become apparent that social grants are in many cases being abused in alcohol and all kinds of substances, instead of being used to put bread on the table and to reach the physical needs of the vulnerable members of society.

6.2 Where does God stand? With the poor or with the rich?

Since poverty is in the African worldview associated with Black people, rather than White people, Africans tend to interpret it not just as a curse, but also as a cushion of comfort. Racism taught us that since we are not created equal, we cannot have equal benefits. Many African Christians had accepted poverty as part of who they are – something with a divine source not to be altered or tampered with. Many years ago, I attended a Christian international conference where the delegates were provided with air tickets and had to pay only US\$100 as a registration. About a hundred African delegates waited in front of the hotel, claiming that they cannot afford the money since they come from a very poor part of the world. Plans were made, including international calls, to make an urgent financial appeal to intervene. In the end, the matter was settled out of somebody's generosity. On numerous occasions, when I check in to board a flight at Johannesburg, going to some African country, somebody will come to me to plead if I can own part of his or her luggage as he is overweight and does not have the cash to pay for extra kilograms. The excuse has always been, 'we come from the poor country, so cannot afford not to buy enough of what we need here'. In that situation, an experienced traveller should unapologetically shelf kindness as this may have some negatively serious consequences.

Africans, especially Christians use poverty to access resources to the First World and their stories always sell. I have heard many of my American friends talking about African poverty, even though some have never put their foot on African soil. I remember some years ago, two American Christian workers coming to Africa (Nairobi to be exact), brought two suitcases full of non-perishable food

to sustain themselves. To their horror, they found food galore and African generosity flash-flooding like tap water with a high-pressure pump. They asked me what to do as they could not return to America with all the food. My colleagues and I distributed the food to staff and colleagues who were serving in territories where these items are scarce.

Is God for the poor or the rich? This question is asked in many Christian gatherings. As mentioned earlier, some Africans associate poverty with spirituality. As far as they are concerned, the poor will always inherit the kingdom of God. This notion is enhanced by colonial Christianity that subliminally aimed to subject African Christians to exploitation and enslavement. Moreover, the notion was perpetuated by conservative evangelicalism, which embraced Jesus' statement that a rich person can't enter God's kingdom. The question of God identifying with the poor has always been a subject of liberation theologies, such as African theology and Black theology. For these mostly Third World theologians, God identifies with the poor, and the authentic Christianity is the one that is in solidarity with the poor. It is a theology that is constantly in conversation with the context where theological *praxis* is a necessity. Jenson (1999:ix), though not a liberationist himself, declared that "Every theological effort is involved in the church's conversation with some surrounding religious culture."

Religion is historically marked for its role of disempowering Africans. It has kept Africans in a position of dependency, and it has justified the 'beggar mentality'. The dependency syndrome is a malady that has gripped Africans so tightly that many find this justified in or by the Setswana popular proverb that says *Setlhare sa Motswana ke Lekgowa* (The African medicine is a White man). This is the belief that only White people can solve African problems. Colonialism planted this seed to an extent that even post-independent leaders continue to run to the West *met die hoed in die hand* (with a hat in the hand begging for assistance). Many African church leaders had subjected themselves to their White counterparts for the same reasons. As I have said before, these African pastors use their poverty to touch the hearts of the Whites for the sake of monetary benefits. As a result, they must dance to the tune else they forfeit all the benefits. Poverty enslaves

people to such an extent that the poor can even become the sell-outs to their people for the sake of economic benefits. The doctrine of equality that says at the cross the ground is level sounds like an impossibility to practice.

The fact is that God is neither for the poor nor for the rich. He is for humans, regardless of their economic status. All people are created in the image of God and they carry that image no matter where they are. The real postcolonial theology addresses the issue and condemns the notion of mastery over others. The Creator God equips people differently when coming to wealth, so that out of what they receive, they may practice generosity, which is the conveyance of the character of Christ.

6.3 The conservative evangelical view on riches and poverty

Jesus Christ shocked the world when he indicated that a rich person can't enter the kingdom of God. This is one of the many statements he made regarding the rich and the poor, giving a perspective repeated in the apostolic writings of the New Testament.

The prevalent Jewish view during the New Testament times was that wealth was God's special favour and that poverty was as a result of faithlessness and God's displeasure. This conviction is attested by the Pharisees' derision of Jesus as they associated him with poverty (Lk 16:14). The Jewish notion was rejected by Jesus Christ, as is found in some Lukan texts such as 6:20; 16:13; 18:24-25. The Bible, in general, identified greed and the pursuit of wealth with idolatry. In the eyes of the ordinary citizens of Israel, idolatry (worship of many gods as opposed to one God) produced demonstrable evidence of wealth. The polytheistic worshippers were significantly endowed with wealth (material) and health (physical), including fertility and victories during wars. This stole the hearts of many towards worshipping many gods as their neighbours did.

Later, Jesus perceived riches as an obstacle to salvation and discipleship. For Jesus, riches give a false sense of security and are deceptive as they demand the total loyalty of one's heart. The rich live as if they do not need God, as their

spiritual lives are choked to embrace temptation and harmful desires. The conservative Christians from the West preach unapologetically that the rich take an advantage of the poor (Jas 2:5-6), therefore, no Christian ought to desire to get rich. The key biblical text used to justify the latter part of this statement is found in 1 Timothy.

Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. (1 Tim 6:9-11)

Eschatological perceptions, namely, seeing life with eternity's vantage restricts one to amass wealth selfishly. The Western Christian masters discourage African Christians from being rich by telling them that the selfish, greedy people do not find their goal and fulfilment centred in God but rather in themselves and their possessions. Unlike Lot's wife, they should not place their affections on an earthly city rather than a heavenly one. So, striving after wealth has in it the seed of total alienation from God.

The colonial preaching makes an application that the true riches for a Christian (in this case, African Christian) consist of faith and love that express themselves in self-denial and following Jesus. The truly rich are those who have obtained freedom from the things of the world through confidence in God as the Father who will provide for them and will never forsake them. When this kind of preaching is turned towards the rich Western Christians, the tune changes around to promote the notion that proper attitude towards possessions or wealth is nothing more than faithfulness. Western Christians are encouraged not to hold tightly to possessions as personal wealth or security. They are taught that they must relinquish their wealth and place their resources in the Lord's hands for use in his kingdom, that is, for the furtherance of Christ's cause on earth, and the salvation of the lost and the needs of others. It is further emphasised to the Western Christians that they should no longer see themselves as rich, but as stewards of that which God has entrusted to them, and they must be generous and share. So, the overarching gospel is that African Christians must opt for

poverty, while the Western Christians must opt for wealth that can be managed responsibly. The disparity is clear that African Christians cannot manage wealth responsibly while the Western Christians can. What evangelical Christians miss here is that theology is a practical discipline and must always examine the church with the question, “Does this teaching or other practice further or hinder the saying of the gospel?” (Jenson 1999:11).

6.4 African perceptions regarding poverty

An African worldview deems wealth and poverty as inevitables of life. In the Setswana language, we have proverbs such as *khumo le lehuma di lala mmogo* (wealth and poverty are bedfellows). The other proverb is *Ga re lekane re se meno* (we are not equal as teeth). These show that rich and poor are realities of living. A person is either rich or poor. But the rich must know that poverty may befall them at any time because *khumo matlhare e a tlhotlhorega* (wealth is like leaves that fall off); and the poor can expect to be rich anyhow. The rich are marked by gregarious lifestyle – loosely organised communities whereby a household or a compound is composed of biological children, adopted children, fostered children, and servants who can be the domestic workers or livestock herders. The household is determined by the wealth of the household head. This is how poverty is addressed, where the haves adopt the have-nots in order to uplift their dignity out of poverty. This seems to be a practice during biblical times when a household head would be a representative of the whole household. For instance, at the end of his life, Joshua told the nation: “But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” (Josh 24:15). The Philippian jailor in Acts 16:31 was told to “believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household”. The New Testament carries some testimonies of the conversions of the households, and always by the decisions of the patriarch of the family.

Africans generally do not regard poverty as a curse, but as a divinely ordained status – the will of the ancestors. But one’s social status quo should not be accepted as an ultimatum of defining life. Most, if not all African religions, do not concern themselves with the beginning and the end of the world. Okot

P'Bitek of Ghana points out that African religions are more concerned with life and now, with health and prosperity, with success in life, happy and productive marriage. These religions deal with the cause of diseases, with failures and other obstacles towards self-realisation and fulfilment (P'Bitek 2011:30). This will cannot be revoked or reversed. A poor person is expected not to condone his or her poverty, but to avail herself to render service to the rich so that she can be a beneficiary to the master's wealth through service. The New Testament principle that the one who does not work should not eat, seems to be applied here. The 'people shall share' principle minimises the abuse of the rich on the poor. Wealth is there to be shared in return of services rendered. In some cases, poverty was addressed through the *letsema* system (coming together with others for others).

Batswana people address the issue of poverty through a *letsema* outreach programme. It is the voluntary action to help improve the lives of other people, especially the poor. There is even a proverb that says *letsema le thata ka mong* (cooperative action is stronger when the one receiving help takes a lead). *Letsema* is when the Batswana, probably the other African villages need to come together to empower themselves toward a common goal or objective. It is a traditional practice of working together to reach a common purpose. The community comes together to build a community project, such as the school, clinic, or another person's house or cattle's kraal. They cooperate also when cultivating or harvesting the fields of other members of the community. The proverb mentioned above shows that *letsema* does not encourage dependency syndrome. A beneficiary must take a lead as a way of encouraging those who had come to help him. This is accurately captured by Steve Biko:

Farming and agriculture, though on individual family basis, had many characteristics of joint efforts. Each person could, by a simple request and the holding of a special ceremony, invite neighbours to come and work on his plots. This service was returned in kind and no remuneration was ever given. (Biko, cited in Coetzee & Roux 2000:28)

This is caring for human affairs without discriminating against the destitute. It is the cooperation in which there is an act or instance of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit for the underprivileged. It is the

joint action to lift those economically limited to maintain subsistent survival. It is an activity shared for mutual benefit. The well-to-do enjoy participating in helping the poor through *letsema* outreach. It is the cooperation, the action of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit, so that the poor may also have some livelihood. This is the theological factor that *letsema* is not a subjective feeling at all, but an objective fact, expressing what we share in together. Projects such as *letsema* act as the glue that keeps the community together. They drive away the fear from the poor and make them realise that they are also part of humanity regardless of their social status. *Letsema* cements people into a unit and creates a hopeful and better future.

African gregariousness is characterised by the idea of interdependence, whereby each person gains benefit from the other. The rich benefits services and the poor benefits livelihood. It is an interdependent or mutually beneficial relationship between two persons, groups or affiliations. The concepts of independence, autonomy, self-sufficiency, or self-reliance find no place in the African community. *Letsema* stresses a relationship between two or more people whereby each person is dependent upon and receives reinforcement. The poor cannot survive on her own. She derives a livelihood from others.

This speaks more of humanness. A human being does not live for himself. He lives with and for others. In Setswana they always say: *Motho ga a ka ke a iphetsa* (No human being can find fulfilment in him/herself alone). You derive the meaning of life from others. You benefit values of life from them just as much as they do from you.

Letsema reinforces the African philosophy of *ubuntu* – I am because we are, or a person is a person by people. The poor are not to be seen as marginalised members of society since they are the persons surrounded by others. These others are there for mutual support. The underlying notion here is that what is mine is yours and what is yours is mine. It does not mean going 50/50 but sharing what I have out of love so that you also can live.

6.5 Jesus and the poor

One of the tasks that Jesus saw as his Spirit-led mission was “to spread the good news to the poor” (Lk4:18, cf. Isa 61:1). The gospel of Christ can be defined as the gospel of the poor. The poor (*ptōchos*) are the socio-economically disadvantaged masses who need help. They are mainly dependent on God’s mercy and faithfulness to redeem them from suffering, hunger and hatred perpetuated by a fellow human being through societal structural injustices. Earthly possessions that can improve their quality of life are far etched. The poor yearn for deliverance from suffering, oppression, injustice and poverty. Their relief, at least in part, must come from the benevolent offerings given by those among God’s people who have been blessed with material possessions. God sees them in poverty and declares that they “are rich” (Rev 2:9). They cannot in any way be spiritually or morally inferior. Jesus does not divide the poor and the rich, either based on race or ethnic origin. For him, the poor, we shall always have. The gospel that is not directed to the poor, but only to the rich is not enough to address the human misery. The misery does not discriminate by racial classification.

6.6 Can poverty be associated with ‘Whiteness’ or ‘Blackness’?

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, poverty encompasses people regardless of their racial or historical backgrounds. Even in the most affluent nations of the world, there are still some segments of the poor. Only the density of poverty can be detected as some nations are generally poorer than the others. Poverty is significantly in the public squares in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In South Africa, poverty, though significant among the African majority, has become a blanket for all racial groups. In the colonial and apartheid past, the colour of the skin offered privileges and preferences. In reality, poverty does not have colour. It affects all racial groups regardless of the continent or the province of their origins.

6.7 Why some Africans reject the God of the Bible?

The South African Black theology coined a famous proverb:

“When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we [Blacks] had the land. The white man said to us, ‘Let us pray’. After the prayer, the white man had the land, and we had the Bible.” (West, cited in Bongmba 2015:141). As mentioned earlier, the Bible and its message are scrutinised critically by some Africans. They see it as a biased book, teaching and speaking about the God who is biased and who treads over African dignity. The message has been parcelled with the messenger. The messenger’s fallibilities taint the message, not to mention the central character of the message, God.

The Bible and its God is seen as the invader into African humanness and causes instabilities by declaring African religions as pagan and idolatrous. Africans found the Bible to be an imposer and rageous destabiliser. Its dictates empowered the colonisers to formulate discriminatory laws, and ushered in injustice systems such as slavery, imperialism, racial supremacism and apartheid. When all these processes were taking shape, the God of the Bible folded his hands and watched from the distance, nodding his head in approval. Many Africans reject this God and his book. They feel helpless and desensitised. Out of desperation and misery, they abandoned their religion to embrace the new invader, who seems to be deaf to their cries in the depriving and oppressive social injustice.

In South Africa during the past four centuries since the dawn of Christian civilisation, Africans have suffered enormously under biblically justified legislations. The legislations have pushed them into the corners of obscurity as nonentities. They find it difficult to see the White people who introduced church attendance on Sundays playing tennis or picnicking during the church service times. The African Christians find it hypocritical to be treated as slaves by their White masters who often call them for prayer or invite them to their church services on Sundays. They struggle with the practice of preparing lunches on Sundays while their fellow Christians (White) go to church. Many of them critique the White evangelical conviction that whenever community demonstrations rise to protest injustice, Jesus is invoked as a solution. As far as

these Evangelicals are concerned, social justice is Jesus' problem. At the heart of this conviction is the fact that evil perpetuates, and the devil is at the centre of speaking against injustice. Passiveness is confused with pacifism. The man or a woman of peace directs concerns to God secretly, not publicly.

Africans struggle with the uninvolved God. For them, God should be part and parcel of their struggles as a champion who fights with them to emerge as victors. The God who is Immanuel must literally dwell amongst his people as both the protector (Jehovah Nissi) and the provider (Jehovah Jireh). For African Christians, the Word (Logos) who is alive and dwells (tabernacles, tents) among his people is both immanent and transcendent – like a tent, he is both above and among his people. The crisis of conscience arises when God distances himself from his creation, especially humanity and its affairs. If this God fails, he receives rejection and is deemed as passive and uninvolved.

African sufferings and miseries are the cause of the distance, a gulf between God and his people. These miseries are the root of reverting to ethnic religions that are couched in traditional religions involving ancestral veneration. What adds salt to the wound is that the missionary gospel or Western Christianity has offered itself on the tray unjust practices that do not solve these miseries but enhance rejection of this God.

6.8 Is it a fair judgement?

One of the big questions confronting constructive theology is the whole notion of fair judgement about this God. Is it fair to reject the Creator God because of the fallibilities of the messengers? Is it fair to reject the biblical message because the messengers distort it? Is it justifiable to reject Christianity because of the vehicle that was used to bring it to us? Yes, the messenger distorted the message, the ambassador misrepresented the one who sent him, the message was carried by fallen beings who fell into traps of misdirection, and heresy if you like. Christianity became a White man's religion since it is seen as working for them, empowering them against Africans. South African Christianity suffered scrutiny that hit back on the face of all South Africans regardless of the colour

of their skins. The Christian image was marred with a seared conscience. Some Black people succumbed to oppressive religion and were deceived in believing that their abased social position is a divine design and, therefore, they should accept it and just be content to go to heaven.

Other Black people applied biblical hermeneutics that led to biblical interpretation that all humans are equal in the eyes of God, regardless of their racial classification. They embraced the conviction that people can live together in peace and harmony and intermingle harmoniously as a human brotherhood. On the other hand, the fundamentalist Calvinists embrace the notion of segmenting human species as Unitarianism is not in the Creator's plan. They promoted parallel development at the expense of disenfranchising Blacks for their egoistic ideals. As can be expected, a few Whites in South Africa put their heads on the block and vociferously opposed the discriminatory legislation using the Bible as a justifying metanarrative.

Countless people all over the world remain true and faithful to the biblical message of love, justice, righteousness and reconciliation. These voices are proof that the biblical narrative should not be rejected for its distortion by those who brought it to Africa. We accept that South African Christianity is still proliferated, but theology has come to its senses by pointing out the loopholes in the previous systems. Currently, theology in South Africa has embarked on the journey of reconciliation, confessions of the sins of the past, agreeing that apartheid was heretic, and that the transcendent God is eschatologically involved in normalising the anomalies in racial theology of the past.

The message cannot be rejected because of the fallibilities of the messenger. It is beyond doubt that convictions of sin and conversion to Christianity are not just coercion but a conviction that regardless of the misuse of theology for human dignity degradation in the past, God remains a gap-filler in the human search for the meaning of life. Many South Africans still need and see God as the option for a purposeful life. The church in South Africa is growing, not by coercion but by conviction. The evangelical movement in its varieties is gaining membership at an alarming rate. The exodus from mainline Christianity, which

is associated with colonialism and apartheid, is remarkable. The Charismatics, the Neo-Charismatics and the progressive reformed Christian leaders are gaining momentum as they call people out of liberalism into vivacious and vibrant faith. The secret to this growth is based on the new taste of the Christian faith that is communicated by indigenous people, with no underlying suspicions of the oppressors' agenda. The lively biblical message gives hope to the disillusioned masses who sidelined the God of the colonialists found in mainline churches. The once rejected message of the Bible is now embraced and cherished as the pillar of hope for people disappointed by the post-apartheid expectations that had turned fruitless. The Bible is becoming an open book that is received as a Word of life and hope in the destabilised and erratic atmosphere full of chaos and lack of direction. Turning to God and his biblical message has become the reliable echo sounding in the ears of the politically and economically marginalised masses. Politically liberated citizens still find themselves in an economically disadvantaged sector of society.

The realisation that the message is pure and genuine is expressed by a Setswana proverb that says *mašhi ke phepa ke le nosi, selabe se tla le motsaa kgamelo* (Purity of milk is contaminated by a transmitter). The gospel in its essence is pure; heresy comes along with a transmitter. This transmitter is the preacher, or in a broader sense, the church since these transmitters emanate out of the church. In the modern South African Christianity, the transmitter comes in the names or titles such as apostle, prophet, major, man or woman of God. This notion is found in the apostolic dictum of 1 Peter 2:2, "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." The pure spiritual milk is the unadulterated gospel that is not contaminated with heresy. It is good to look at the brief exposition of this text, to make faith credible rather than objectionable to African Christians. This is a theology of the Word that South Africans must embrace.

From 1 Peter 2:2, one learns that the doctrine is pure. There are three lessons here that need our attention. First, indeed, the doctrine is pure. The Greek word means, literally, not deceitful. It is the same word as in 1 Peter 2:1. It means

unadulterated, not watered down. Dishonest merchants on that day would add water to their milk to make more profit. This was 'deceitful' milk. Peter tells us to long for the pure, not-deceitful milk.

Secondly, the doctrine is rational. The literal translation of verse 2 is that we should long for 'the pure, spiritual milk.' The word 'spiritual' also means 'rational' (Greek = *logikos*, from *logos*). The only other time it occurs in the Bible is in Romans 12:1, where Paul says that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God is our 'spiritual (or rational) service of worship'. He means that it is a spiritual thing to do, since we don't do it literally (as a burnt offering), but rather spiritually by yielding ourselves to the will of God. And, it is the reasonable thing to do considering God's great mercies to us. Doctrine ought to fill human minds with the knowledge of God and move human hearts with his majesty and love.

Thirdly, the doctrine is nourishing. Peter is referring to a mother's milk, as the analogy of new-born babes makes clear. He is not contrasting the milk of God's Word with meat, as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 3:2. Theologians, and Christians in general, are always to be feeding on this nourishing milk. It is simple enough for the youngest infant in the faith, but solid enough for the most mature saints. God has designed a mother's milk as the perfect food for newborn babies. It will immunise the baby from many illnesses and nourish the baby for growth. Pure doctrine will protect Christians from the many spiritual diseases that abound and nourish them to grow in the Lord. A mother's milk will make her baby grow for months without any other food. Doctrine nourishes Christians towards soteriological experiences as is expressed in the statement: "so that they grow toward salvation" (1 Pet 2:2). The apostle Peter means salvation in its ultimate sense, which includes everything that God provides for humans who are his children. No human can ever reach a place in this life where she can stop growing.

Doctrine in its essence is pure, rational, and nourishing. It is pure milk that articulates and promotes a growing Christian towards soteriological experience whereby Christ is fully appropriated in human existence. The exhortation here

is that as theologians in Africa. There should be a motivation to continually yearn for more doctrinal knowledge. This craving for doctrinal knowledge makes one restless, cries, and intense seeking for the justification of practices in spiritual domains. Heresies can be confronted by putting off deadly practices that hinder the word's effect in one's daily walk with God (1 Pet 2:1).

In the context, there are relational sins (Pet 2:1) that hinder the motivation for the yearning of doctrinal knowledge. The first verse uses "put off" which means to cast aside like you take off dirty clothes. These heretical practices are the baggage imbibed and carried from the past before conversion to Christianity. They surround and bombard theologians as practical theologians within the sinful cosmological clashes. They are standard operating procedures for many African theologians, especially when they get into a tough situation. But Peter says that they are opposed to spiritual growth and must be discarded like dirty clothes.

6.9 Arguing for biblical justice – inclusivity

South African Christianity must argue for biblical justice. This justice condemns discrimination based on race, tribe, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status of any sort. Biblical justice is embracing, therefore non-discriminating. It is a justice that displays solidarity with the socially alienated people such as the poor, the oppressed, the discriminated, the marginalised, and the victims of socially ill legislatures. Biblical justice calls for ethical and kind treatment of the marginalised in society. These are mentioned in the Bible and they are the poor, the widows, the orphans and the aliens (foreigners). South African attitudes towards the marginalised, especially the foreigners, had put it into the world map as one of the most xenophobic or even Afrophobic countries. Justice works beyond one's comfort zones and it destroys the walls of hostility and a false sense of security.

Embracing and studying biblical and social justice has become an issue in the hands of theologians recently. What makes researching social and biblical justice complex, in part, is that most theologians believe they already live and lead in

theologically and socially just ways, notwithstanding the numerous equity issues in communities associated with race, disability, gender, and poverty.

Racial and class-based discrimination of church members with real or perceived racial categorisation contribute to already inequitable Christian experiences for Africans living in poverty. Some theologians and pastors often hold beliefs that low socio-economic communities are to blame for the impoverish situations they find themselves in.

One of the buzzwords in socio-cultural narratives is 'inclusion'. This is the central spoke of biblical justice. In many instances, definitions of inclusion are political because they impact how resources are distributed and are linked to values of equity, social justice, politics, and pragmatism. Inclusion is not just an educational philosophy that calls for acceptance of all people in all spaces of privileges, such as centres of learning and healthcare centres, but the unconditional and transcendental view of the natural or human condition with agape –conditioning of mind necessitated by the *imago Dei* humanity is marked with. Inclusion demands that theology addresses the politics of exclusion and representation.

Inclusive Christian faith propels a critique of contemporary church culture and thus encourages theological practitioners to reinvent what can be and should be to realise more humane, just and equitable Christian communities. Inequities in treatment and confessional opportunity are brought to the forefront, thereby fostering attention to human rights, respect for differences and value of diversity. Biblical justice acknowledges that inclusivity extends beyond having all Christians in the same denomination to provide equitable educational, spiritual, emotional, and social opportunities for all church members. For churches to be inclusive, the allocation of resources must permit the development of biblical faith. Church culture must embrace values and principles of inclusion and equity that enable communities to come together and eliminate structures and belief systems that marginalise people based on discriminatory attitudes or preferences.

Biblical justice is social justice that seeks to understand the inequities that persist in the church community and take action as a result. The practice of social justice

begins with an ability to recognise inequity amongst other issues associated with church polity. Theologians and church leaders seeking to establish more socially just local churches must address social needs and the disproportionate representation of Africans in church polities, such as councils, synods and executive conferences.

Ideally, inclusivity provides everyone with a fair chance to influence decisions, practices, and policies. It does not associate leadership with dominant or central individuals. In church culture and leadership, inclusivity relies on many individuals who contribute in their own often humble ways. It promotes a definitive end: inclusion and commonality.

Theologians, especially in South Africa should continue to investigate the experiences of Black church leaders with social justice orientations and examine how the broader church can contribute towards understanding problems and challenges associated with creating a more socially just churches.

Theological studies should further explore the impact of government legislation because, without more robust understandings of these policies and systems, the relevance of social justice for church leadership will be limited. Similar investigations into social justice should be conducted in areas that relate to other marginalised groups such as shack dwellers, farm labourers, the unemployed, and those in the sex industry. Justice must roll on from the imperialist church to the church on the ground.

Chapter 7

The postcolonial era and the independence movement

The colonial church was the vehicle of promoting imperialist ideals. It produced some educated elite who sought for national independence from the colonial laws marked by oppression, prejudice, and bigotry. The post-independence era opened the door for a resurgence of ethnic religions, and the church that stood with the new national ideals of self-identity and self-propagation. African Christian theology started to relocate the Christian faith within African Traditional Religions. Ecclesial ideals of the communion of saints were compromised. The apartheid Dutch Reformed Church emerged to occupy the centre stage of racial segregation.

The other branches of the church during the apartheid era stood in solidarity to fight for its ecclesial essence, identity, and prophetic role. With the assistance of liberation theologies, resistance through ecumenical formations such as the South African Council of Churches became vocal even under some repressive state powers. Many dialogue initiatives took place to address the human plight actioned by the state.

The democratic era enacted in 1994 created some dissolution of the church's role in the socio-political landscape. Some prominent theologians and church leaders who were vocal against social injustice meted by the state were swallowed into the new democratic civil service. That was the end of their prophetic voice. Their presence in the civil service did not dampen the raging storms of corruption and the passing on of some government legislation that overlooked the sanctity of life, marriage, and so on. In reality, the prophet and the king became diners together around the same table, just as much as the apartheid government and the Dutch Reformed Church became bedfellows.

The role of liberation theologies was revisited, and these disciplines tried to keep theological sanity in a balance. The growth and the role of African Independent Churches, together with the Pentecostal and Neo-Charismatic Movement became a force to reckon with.

7.1 Introduction

Colonial Christianity has been a central discussion at the beginning of this book. After World War II, decolonisation of Africa started to take root as international politics took some new shape. The emerging educated elite out of the missionary education system was captured by conviction in racial equality and liberation ideals. The political theme was the liberation of sub-Saharan Africa from European dominance. African countries embarked on the road to independence, with the Gold Coast (Ghana) leading the way in 1957. The Independence Movement arose and continued to gain momentum. This was not just a politically independent aspiration. Africans started to examine themselves as to their identity, especially in religious and cultural circles. There was also a resurgence of ethnic religions. African Christian theology started to relocate the Christian faith within African Traditional Religions (ATRs). Inevitably, commotion exploded. The Christian metanarratives with all canonical authority were subjected under the radar and spotlight. A few decades later, there was even a moratorium called on Western missions. Missionaries were advised to go home.

The new postcolonial nationalism coloured the outlook and policy for the new church in the new political dispensation. A national form of Christianity occupied a much bigger place in their thinking than any policy for the colonial missionary church. When the new church leaders entered the discussion, they spoke of the need for shifting the emphasis in missionary policy from paternalism to partnership.

The discussions led to the emergence of the most vital problem of all in the relation missionary church and the national church. Since the dawn of national independence, arguments had been to devolve responsibility upon native

Churches, to give them self-control and independence. These demands are only stepping-stones to the demand for freedom from our ecclesiastical systems. The national church leaders are not interested in the Western denominational differences; they ask for a united church in their independent country. They do not want to conform to the foreign and irrelevant ecclesiasticism.

These leaders have made it abundantly clear that while they would go patiently, they would not wait forever in the hope that the colonial missionary church would give a lead to them on independence. Unfortunately, as decades passed, the unmistakable signs emerged, and that patience was running out. Secession and the merging of different churches became inevitable. This, in some quarters here in South Africa, led to the formation of the African Initiated Churches (AIC), especially the Ethiopian types. The founders hoped that their voices would be heard by colonial churches, but their endeavours were blocked. They have since decided to make their way. These leaders suffered from White domination and had felt the barrier of race throughout their lives. They tolerated the two standards for Whites and Blacks of the colour bar legislations practised and applied by their White church leaders in their churches.

Ethnic religions or ATRs are gaining converts from Christianity because of the race question. Islamic propaganda lures people with Christian inclinations because of its claims of a brotherhood that is more genuine than Christianity. 'Join Islam', they say, 'and protect yourselves against the West with its racist attitudes'. The Islam missionaries speak without a single trace of bitterness. As former Christians, their new-found (Islam) faith had removed all bitterness, but the lesson of it was that they can live above the unfairness and injustice of race differences. In the meantime, millions of South Africans feel as strongly and cannot rise above their sense of wrong. These feel the emptiness in their lives and realise somehow that Christianity can meet their need of searching. These are the masses who cry for an authentic gospel that is unadulterated with the past injustices.

In the meantime, in South Africa politics were taking a new shape. The new breed of Afrikaners born through and out of concentration camps and British

brutality came to the fore to redefine Afrikanerdom. British colonialism with its imperialistic ideology was slowly replaced by apartheid ideology. The Verwoerdian era consolidated this system and made South Africa the scum of the face of the earth. The separatist policies affected the church, which had to be separated, governed and led through racial classifications. The question arose as to the authenticity and legitimacy of theology among the non-White South Africans. The doctrines that seemed to suffer scrutiny were Christology and ecclesiology.

The South African Church does not respond to world service because the level of spiritual power is so low. There is some lack of spiritual certitude in the universal message of Christ. Out of a *laager*, the church must now take the central stage to declare: 'Our message is Jesus Christ'. If this is a deeper inner conviction, the church is faced not only with a common task but a common loyalty to our Lord as Master and King.

Much of the fruit is lost and the vitality of the church is lowered through racial divisions. Co-operation in missional tasks demands a discovery of the spirit of Jesus. We should believe that unity of the Spirit is an attainable ideal, lest we deny that Christ's prayer that we all may be one can offer any answer. Unity is of the mind and will of Christ. The post-apartheid era is supposed to be a day of God. May the South African church see the signs of the times and gird itself to the great task before it.

7.2 Communion in theory, but division in reality

The apartheid theology of racism ran into loggerheads with the doctrine of the church. The church as the redeemed people coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, its composition on the Day of Pentecost, suffered a crisis of conscience. The high priestly prayer of Christ in John 17 that "they may be one" was questioned. Preaching on the pulpit was correct, but practice on the ground was incorrect. Theologically the church is one but sociologically it was divided. The famous statement that South Africans are more divided on Sunday than during the week was enhanced by this warped biblical justification

of divided church. Culture and language were used as an excuse for the division. South African church was confessing communion but living dividedly.

7.3 Why the prophetic role of the church diminished in post-apartheid South Africa?

South Africa transitioned from apartheid to democracy. This has muzzled the prophetic voice of the Church as God was pushed to the periphery and/or to obscurity. Since 1994 when South Africa became a secular state, the worship escalated into being syncretic, and morals became decadent. The question is: 'Why the silence of the current South African church in the face of escalating corruption?' Human abuse and state resources suffer immensely in the hands of those in power. Palaces of justice had turned into the torture chambers for human dignity. The fact remains that corruption is seen as a crucial issue in the South-African society. It is an issue that is urgently in need of critical and remedial action (De Wet 2015:1). Only recently has the church community in South Africa come to realise that it has been silent since 1994. This realisation was necessitated by the prevalent corruption in high places. Historically, the church and politics during apartheid worked in synergy to address the plight of the victims of prejudice, oppression and racism. But after the dawn of democracy, the church's prophetic role diminished to a certain degree, regardless of the democratically elected presidents' affirmations of the critical role of the church in transforming the society. One question that bombards those outside political structures is that of high-profile Christians in government structures failing to influence the political power when passing the unjust laws. From their positions of power, they utter and promote statements and laws that expedite the negative impacts on humanity, such as the perpetual marginalisation from human rights and access to resources.

Corruption in South Africa is expressed through connivance, which is the tacit approval of wrongdoing. It refers to the secret approval of corruption in high places. The extent of corruption has situated South Africa at the crossroads as its moral compass is being eroded by unscrupulous people. Since the arrival of

freedom and democracy, the voice of the church is not audible enough to fulfil the missional task of ushering and leading people to God. Corruption in its diverse forms, especially nepotism and redeployment of cadres, enhances some form of oppression of the poor at an alarming level. In and through this system, beneficiaries are social elites and political demagogues. People succeed and are employed because they are politically connected. Ethics in political governance had become opaque. The populace finds it incomprehensible regarding politics and the church's role in public policies. The opacity in moral values has magnified beyond explanation. It is the kind of corruption that is defined by De Wet (2013:2) that in its socio-political manifestation, corruption can be defined as the diversion of public resources to non-public purposes (Basdeo 2010:388). The system makes the poor to be poorer and the rich to be richer.

Sadly, corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone whose life, livelihood or happiness depends on a fair, honest and equitable system of governance. The failure gives birth to the era of national crisis.

Since 1994, the church has lost its significance. Christian leadership is blunted under current political dispensation. Just as in the Old Testament era, the prophetic visions are rare (1 Sam 3:1). During the time, the supremacy of priesthood was taken over by the popularity of people such as Samuel the judge, the priest and the prophet. American theologian, Leon James Wood tells us:

During the liberation struggle, the prophetic voice of the South African church was loud and clear. The oppressive regime was not worried about inter-political opposition. Its main worry was the voice of the church through the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and other ecumenical formations. The communities of faith had a unified voice addressing injustice and apartheid unreservedly. Under the inspirational and charismatic leadership of the likes of Beyers Naudé, Peter Storey, Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, etc. the voice of the church in South Africa was vocal and audible. Today, the deafening silence is conspicuous. The euphoria of arrival has exerted itself ecclesiastically and socio-politically. What is prevailing is sad. (Wood 1970:230)

More predominantly, however, are patterns of marginalisation in the state of the SACC's public presence as manifested in an initial sense of 'arrivalness' and

a more lasting situation of having to deal with a diminished influence within the African National Congress (ANC) (De Wet 2015:7).

The only hope is found in the words of John de Gruchy, who comments:

[T]here is a concerted effort at the moment to revive the SACC. It has undoubtedly gone through a serious slump and decline, lacking leadership and losing credibility. But the truth is that, if there were no SACC, we would have to invent one because we need such a structure. (cited in Van Tonder 2014:2).

The new era rekindled the false hope that the nation has entered the Promised Land after years of slavery (colonialism) and wilderness wanderings (apartheid). The secular state under the ANC emerged. The new constitution of 1996 acknowledges the religious plurality of the country's populace. Some prominent theologians and the clergy became politicians. Dion Forster (2012:78) concurs: "In South Africa, since the end of Apartheid rule, we have seen many former 'prophets' being silenced by being offered high-paying and powerful positions in the State."

Regardless of these theologians' presence in politics of the land, morality is continually pushed to the obscurity, with purposeful disregard of social conscience. Laws encroaching on Christian values are passed through the clear majority vote in parliament. Good examples here include compromising the sanctity of life (Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1996); fidelity and sanctity of legal marriage (Domestic Partnership Bill, 2008), and the so-called gay marriages (Civil Union Act, 2006). Ethics were and are still been floundered, hence the irreversible endemic corruption levels in high places.

Nelson Mandela's administration recognised and publicly acknowledged the role of the church during the liberation struggle and in transforming society. At that time, the church through its ecumenical organs sat at the zenith of the new era. It implemented and practised the armchair theology and started to go along with the flow. The mentality of 'we have arrived' developed subtly and subliminally. They forgot their critical role in addressing the injustices of apartheid before 1994. Regardless of this stolidity, Mandela appreciated Churches so much that his biographer, Anthony Sampson (1999:314) stated that Mandela could find

more encouragement elsewhere, particularly from the Churches, which had been so cautious in opposing apartheid at the time when he had gone to jail. In this treatise, Sampson (1999:315) outlines the Catholic priest, Father Simangaliso Mkhathshwa's 1968 statement that "the winds of change were blowing inside the Churches". This Catholic priest broke the White domination by producing the 'Black Priests' Manifesto', attacking racism within their church and vowing to become vocal in denouncing apartheid. Mandela gave churches the pavilion of honour in transforming South Africa. The response of the church was, unfortunately, slumping into a false utopia of Solomon's time when everyone "lived in safety, each man under his vine and fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25).

The Mbeki presidency saw the enhancement of the Inter-Faith Movement leaders. By 2001, Mbeki and the Churches were walking far apart from each other. However, on 7 April 2001, a historic event happened when the president convened a meeting with church leaders. Hooper-Box and Gordin gave the press release: "The president decided to get the relationship between the government and the country's religious leaders back on track – and met 34 clerics of all faiths at the Union Buildings last week." (Hooper-Box & Gordin 2001).

The gap between the church and the state was felt when corruption escalated amid the silence of the Churches. The prophetic voice was not heard in the corridors of political power centres. Sense had to come from above. Sadly, the same news release above continues that: 'The meeting, initiated by the president, took place under the umbrella of the national religious leaders' forum, set up in 1997 by Nelson Mandela and religious leaders.'

As noted by writer and cleric Frank Chikane, the ruling party was starting to feel the rattle of its foundations:

Between 2003 and 2010, the ANC entered the stormiest waters it had encountered since returning from exile and, like any ship battling for such a long time, it runs the risk of being wrecked. (Chikane 2012:179)

The other attempt by the Mbeki administration was on 30 April 2003, when a meeting was held with 33 religious leaders.

The two delegations reached a broad understanding on the need for the involvement of religious leaders in issues such as nation-building, reconciliation, poverty eradication, social and moral delivery and better communication with the rest of the country. (Battersby 2015)

Mbeki continued to highlight the role of the church even after his tenure as the President of the Republic. He was a guest speaker at the Anglican Conference in Johannesburg, where he reiterated the crucial role of the Churches. For instance, Peter Kenny of *Ecumenical News*, 6 October 2013, reports:

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki has criticised the country's Churches for not playing a greater role since the end of apartheid and has hit out at Churches all around Africa for not speaking louder on issues facing the continent. He criticised South African Churches for 'demobilising' after the end of apartheid and called on them to become more active in responding to the challenges faced by society. (Kenny 2015)

This sentiment is not uncommon, as the ecumenical voice had disappeared. The South African leader, who is respected worldwide, realised that the Churches had become silent. At this Anglican Conference, Mbeki reiterated that the church was one of the principal fighters for liberation but has now become demobilised. It has distanced itself from responding as it used to respond to national challenges and has disappeared somewhere over the horizon. The church's voice is no longer as strong as it used to be. That voice is more needed now than ever. He concluded his speech by highlighting "The leadership of the Church is sorely missed."

Under ex-president Thabo Mbeki, the administration encountered a great deal of criticism for its address of various issues. These are spelt out in Chikane's book; *The Things that Could Not be Said* (2013). One of the burning issues mentioned and elaborated in this book is corruption and its ramifications. Indeed, in our current era, corruption has taken deeper roots. The status quo shoots itself on the foot all the time. The more they try to fix, the worse it becomes. Ethics and values are godless and do not even locate *ubuntu* at the centre of civil administration. The question that any theologian can ask is 'Where is conscience?' However, it should be noted that godless values come to play when conscience is seared with a hot iron. One of the Reformed ethicists, Jürgen-Burkhard Klauke says:

The man of conscience fights a lonely struggle against the overwhelming pressure of dilemmas requiring a decision. But the extent of the conflicts within which he has to choose – with no one to advise and support him but conscience – tears him apart. (Klauke 2012:113)

This might explain the rationale behind Christian prophetic apathy in the political landscape.

Former president, Zuma's administration was the most scathed of them all. The church in South Africa had lost its saltiness. Whatever religious statement the president uttered, became a national debate championed by Churches. The rationale behind this is that the President's ethical norms were in collision and not consonant with religious didactics. The SACC, Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC), and The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) become vocal only when the *vox populi* addressed and scathed the president's religious *gratis dictum* (mere assertions). It looks like the prophetic role of the church in South Africa has adopted the position of *cave quid dicis, quando et qui* (beware what you say, when, and to whom). Some theologians may adopt the justification that the free state channels its religion to privacy, since now we are *chiesa libera in libero stato*. We are a free church in a free state. This is escapism mentality.

Zuma constantly appealed to religious leaders to participate in the social cohesion and poverty eradication initiatives. Common with Zuma and some of his cabinet ministers was the promotion, elevation, and commendation of AIC Churches, especially those of charismatic inclinations. Constantly one sees, reads, or hear of the visits of these ministers to some cultic centres where they are being prayed for, and affirmed in public. One hardly hears from these ecclesiastical formations, any prophetic voice rebuking the wayward conduct of politicians or religious leaders. A typical example was of the Hawks boss, Berning Ntlemeza. Few days after the courts nullified his appointment; he turned to controversial Pastor Mboro's church. The *City Press*, 26 March 2017 reports:

When Mboro took over the mic, he began by praying for Ntlemeza: I'm saying to you, my general, you are unbreakable, you are indisputable, you are incorruptible, you are unmovable ... even if a court says it's over, God can resurrect you to a higher life. It is not over until God says it's over.

This anomaly takes these politicians to as far as Nigeria, to receive the man of God's rubber stamps of their political steps. Like in many of African territories, this always happens before or around the times of elections. The AIC had always suffered political abuse in the hands of politicians. This is probably due to their church leaders' theological ignorance or shallowness. Their indifference regarding political ramifications is exploited for political gains. Former President Zuma himself regularly visits these ecclesiastical formations where he always receives a hero's welcome.

In 2012, just before the ANC Conference in Mangaung, when ecumenical prophetic voice's fade was felt, some Christian leaders convened and drafted a letter to the government to express their corruption concerns. This formation is known as the South African Christian Leaders Initiative (SACLI). It brought together mainstream Christian leaders, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and the AIC leaders together. Their letter received some gravel reactions, especially from the ruling party, the ANC, through its general secretary, Gwede Mantashe. In response, Mantashe labelled this letter 'mischievous' and 'vitriolic'.

South Africa has become the country where natural laws and natural justice are no more considered when laws of the land are formulated. Christianity provides for an ethics of responsibility intertwined with ethics of duty. Once the natural law is compromised, values suffer inevitably. "Natural law theories base ethical norms on the facts of nature" (Wurzburger 1994:11). In other words, morality, values, behaviour and ethics work symbiotically and synchronically to articulate and form a just society governed by just laws. This is because natural law is both a scientifically based description of how things normally do behave and a set of precepts as to how they ought to behave (Grenz 1997:46). Morality can be seen in the order or nature of things. The present generation grows in a godless society, and the environment is infested with sexual promiscuity and violence. What our government fails to see or realise is that: "where promiscuity increases, families are destabilised and more and more children grow to adulthood in environments marked by emotional deprivations, stress, abuse, and violence" (Miller 1987:87).

The common enemy (colonialism and apartheid) had been defeated. All stakeholders, political and ecclesiastical, were singularly united against the apartheid regime. But now, comrades in arms are fighting each other, various forces position for power against one another. Instead of nation-building, there is internal strife and conflict; and the church is conspicuous by her silence. What can be said about the church in South Africa is succinctly put forward by Boon (1998:74): “The team which was strongly united, suddenly falls apart because its vision disappears.” Transformation in all spheres of life has commenced moving with a snail pace. The tradition of our liberation fighters had become stagnant. By tradition here it is meant what De Gruchy (2011:10) refers to as “handing on from one generation to another something that gives meaning to life and shapes the identity of persons and communities today”. Embracing corruption is enhancing human degradation. South African church and politics are not in synergy for the promotion of human welfare. It is true that “when worldviews collide, nations hang in the balance” (Parsley 2007:xv). The South African masses are watching with despair and restlessness as politicians ravenously enrich themselves at the expense of the destitute and marginalised poor. This is observed by Punt (2012:2) that South African citizens are deprived not only of their legitimate claim upon resources but must observe public officials squandering such resources on exorbitant yet fleeting materialist tokens of wealth and prosperity. This is a theodic crisis that calls for ethical reflection. Brueggemann helps us to understand this crisis:

The current political leaders in South Africa seem to have forgotten the evil systems of colonialism and apartheid that prevailed and ruled South Africa for almost four centuries. From their positions of power, they utter and promote statements and laws that expedite the negative impacts on humanity such as the perpetual marginalisation from human rights and access to resources etc. The worship, morals, values, and ethics are all marred by *realpolitik* in high places. Politicians use power to control citizens’ livelihood and access to basic resources. The system advantages the minority elite at the disadvantage of the majority poor. (Brueggemann 1990:130)

The constitutional justification for abuse of power and self-enrichment slowly stokes the fires of civil reactions and rebellions. Politicians and some clergy are symbiotic comrades. The era reflects the church as an obscure partner who

should only assert and affirm the current government (De Villiers 2013). Some Christian leaders and ordinary believers are prepared to put their necks on the block for the purity of the gospel witness. They opt for the real biblical *marture* – witnesses of Christ by their death. These are from all racial and cultural backgrounds. They come from diverse ecclesiastical formations and confessions; and are taking their stands like their predecessors, such as Beyers Naude, Nico Smith, Allan Boesak, Desmond Tutu, and many other unsung heroes who in God's sight are or were 'known yet regarded as unknown' (2 Cor 6:9).

On some political platforms, championing justice is equated with rebellion, absurdness, White monopoly, or *Swart gevaar*. South Africa is made up of groups instead of being an entity singing one anthem under one flag, respecting same national symbols. People in politics do not lack belief, they lack a living faith – a radical loyalty to God and his written Word. They are too comfortable with their *private* doctrine of God (VanGemeren 1990:303).

The past and the present generations in South Africa need not be pedagogised or reminded of the evil systems of colonialism and apartheid that prevailed and ruled South Africa for centuries. Ours was an abnormal territory where humanity suffered immensely through laws that dispossessed people of their land, disenfranchisement, tribal Balkanisation, racial prejudices, perpetual marginalisation from human rights and resources, etc. Entering the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, one comes across the inscription:

For white South Africans, the 1960s was a decade of boom and unprecedented prosperity. For black South Africans, the 1960s saw apartheid harden into its most dogmatic and racist form.

For the South African church today, the pulpit has lost its beauty. Opposition against the church's role is distressing. South Africans, together with their political leaders have generally stopped consulting the Lord both for personal or national welfare. The religious condition is deficient and morale low. People's spirits are crushed and in despair. Human ideologies such as egotism, individualism, secularism, and atheism have taken control of some of the nation's moral foundations. These were the conditions in which the church's prophetic role should become conspicuous.

The church, as the community of faith, is a prophet in a decadent culture. A prophet's role is always not popular, especially with the socio-political status quo. Christ does not expect his Church to be meaningless in society or to be peripheral, but to be central and play a crucial role in human social interactions (Hendriks 2010:275; Sarpong 1990:9). The church's missional task is both proclamational and incarnational. This is to be concerned for the welfare of the people within and outside the church (Walls & Ross 2008:35, 46–47).

In its proclamational (evangelism) mandate the church is assigned a prophetic role of advocacy. It is expected to continue to echo her prophetic role and be the voice of the voiceless. The church must denounce and combat all that degrades and destroys people.

The prophetic voice of the church must be heard, and this voice must challenge all the people in society to become deeply involved in addressing this problem (Pieterse 2001:122). Prophetic preaching does not shrink from disclosing and challenging the corrupt elements that keep the current state of this world from bearing witness to its destiny (De Wet 2013:1-2).

Churches are therefore required to address the issue of corruption in the political landscape of South Africa. The WCC points out that Christian faith compels Christ's followers to seek justice, to witness to the presence of God, and to be part of the lives and struggles of people made weak and vulnerable by the structures and cultures of society (De Wet 2013:84-88). This is also captured by Forster, who writes:

Christians have a God-given responsibility to engage any power, whether an individual or an institution, that acts contrary to the principles of the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of Christ. Every believer is to be a prophet, listening for the will of God in society and living to see that will enacted. (Forster 2012:78)

The church must incorporate a missional advocacy role in their mission agenda because justice is an attribute of God. He rules with justice and righteousness (Ps 96:10-13). He is a lover of justice, has established equity; executes justice and righteousness (Ps 99:4). The Lord works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed (Ps 103:6-8). It is therefore not theologically correct to assume that

“Political rationality and faith could coexist peacefully alongside each other as long as religion was limited to the private sphere.” (Führding 2013:129). This is a tension that is looming currently between South African politics and religion. The church fights for its prophetic role of realignment towards righteousness and justice, while the government attaches a special emphasis “on the need for religious communities to contribute to a fundamental element of democracy: building the moral fibre of the nation” (Kusmierz & Cochrane 2013:65).

As a voice of God, the church is a prophet expected to be related to the community. It is a task to be for the common good (1 Cor 12:7). This task is desirable, not because it is more spiritual, but because it builds up the community (1 Cor 14:3, 4, 12). “But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.” The three keywords here; *oikodome*, *paraklesis*, *paramuthia* (1 Cor 14:3): build up (strengthening), encourage, or exhort reveal the purpose of prophecy. The apostolic appeal to the Corinthians is the desire for the strengthening or building up of the local church through their prophetic gift (1 Cor 14:12, 26).

Central to the prophetic activity in the Spirit is the creation or building up of a new community. Wehrli (1992:46) drives the point home that “Prophecy is understood as a mark of the Spirit and a sign of the new age in the church.” Prophecy is more specific in function. It does not build in general, but it builds up the local community, specifically by encouragement and consolation (1 Cor 14:3). It is the sign to the members that God is with and among them. For the outsiders, prophecy is a conviction, a call to new accountability, discerning the secrets of one’s heart, and repentant worship, declaring, “God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:25). The fact remains that the Church prophetically, is a moral community, “the Church not only, has but is, a social ethic, a *koinonia* ethic” (Smit 2007:263).

The current political landscape spends exorbitant sums of money trying to clean up their mess. In his article ‘Just do the Right Thing’ in the *City Press*, 26 March 2017, Mondli Makhanya is correct when he observes:

At the height of the Nkandla scandal, ANC leaders and public representatives were almost evangelical in the defence of their leader and his wayward ways.

There is an attempt at all costs to cover the tracks. Our politicians try to burrow themselves in the sand for corruption that has significantly tainted their image. (Makhanya 2017)

In the same *City Press* article, Makhanya continues:

The current period has seen ministers and arms of state arrogantly spend public money on cases they know they have no chance of winning, and which are in defence of obviously unlawful actions. (Makhanya 2017)

The proposal set forth is for the church to be prophetic and call politicians to return to God, return to the Constitution of the land, and finally, return to the transparent dialogue.

The message to be taken to the politicians is that God is not merely a quality of nature or humanity; he is not simply the highest human being. He is not limited to our ability to understand him. His holiness and goodness go far beyond, infinitely beyond ours, and this is true of his knowledge and power as well (Erickson 1999:76). This calls for the return to the basic tenets of theological outlook. The realignment of the prophetic voice and the revitalisation of the transformative presence in society need to be anchored in a profound and far-reaching theological reorientation (De Wet 2015:10).

As a society, cultural incorrectness emanates from the views or perceptions about God. The belief in the transcendent and immanent God aligns the decisions to be taken when deliberating on moral or ethical issues. When worldviews collide, nations hang in a balance.

Our nation is at the stage where returning to God should be inevitable. Politicians should accept the that “God is not an elective or a hypothesis, but a definitional and determinative partner who establishes norms and with whom we must deal.” (Brueggemann 1984:97). No alternatives, no substitutes. For this to happen, there should be a great emphasis on the need for the deterministic approach to civil matters. This calls for discernment. This refers to the kind of discernment that involves making choices and determining the right approach “at the many seemingly unimportant crossroads of everyday practice” (Derkse 2008:459).

Politicians should be conscientious of theological transcendence; which is “an interdisciplinary conversation between theology and sciences” (Veldsman 2011:131). While politicians immerse themselves into socio-economic macrocosms of legislative rhetoric, they should examine the motives and critically reflect on the impact and outcomes envisaged by these legislations. This means they should attune themselves to theologians’ transcendental advice. In other words, theologians appeal to both natural and social sciences to come to satisfactory conclusions that work positively towards human dignity and natural justice. On the other hand, the church’s prophetic role should start by exploring to undertake a revision of our transcendent rhetoric, and to articulate the theological implications of these findings ... to discern theologically how God’s relation to the universe is to be applied to political manoeuvres of governance (Veldsman 2011:137-138). The fundamental rationale behind this is that people are religious, and religion provides them with meaning for life. There cannot be a dichotomy between religion and civil affairs. Throughout history, religion has provided people with security, by assuring them that, despite everything, they have a place in the world. Religion provides people with ‘roots’ (Krüger, Lubbe & Steyn 2009:7). Civil governance should lay laws that are not in conflict with people’s religious worldviews.

The second proposal is that the church should assert itself prophetically by revisiting its knowledge and articulation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This calls for communication of God-desired values of the Constitution that we confess to the political leaders without any fear of repression or rejection. The example of Jesus is to be followed; as Nyathi (2004:120) points out: “Jesus was the perfect communicator. He challenged his (Jewish) culture where it was wrong and unjust.” Boldness in proclaiming the ethical demands of God’s justice is a non-negotiable *klēsis* – calling that cannot be reversed. The church’s relevance is enhanced by being prophetic in the history of humanity, offering hope to the present generation. That role is of vital importance since the majority of the population is bleeding inside due to negative systemic socio-economic experiences that had become part of their daily lives. All these are addressed in the Constitution and if the church is not aware of them it cannot

address them. The political voice is not audible enough to assure the citizens of their survival, safety, security, and livelihood, which are all enshrined in the Constitution. This offers the church an opportunity to appeal to the Constitution for proclamational incarnation in hopeless situations. This is enhanced by the fact that themes of our Constitution include “social justice, unity in diversity; a human rights culture; improved quality of life for all; and human dignity, equality and freedom” (Le Bruyn (2012:61). The voice of the church should surface and give hope to the hopeless and peace to the weary. As the church, *aluta continua* for people’s constitutional liberation. This a struggle for social justice, the justice that is expounded by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) (1987:245) to be the “struggle for a system of law, for a moral system of law, a struggle against lawlessness and injustice”.

The third proposal is echoed by De Wet (2015:9) who cautions believers of the importance of dialogue: “Rather than merely directing the critical voice in a monological, threatening or prescriptive way, the possibility of critical dialogue should be considered.” Prophetic ministry cannot be practical without transparent dialogue. Dialogue is a special kind of discourse that enables people with different perspectives and worldviews to work together to dispel mistrust and create a climate of good faith (Resane 2016:62). Dialogue is practised through and within the atmosphere of discernment. Discernment calls communities (church and politics) to the table. Discernment is always a result of interaction between the two parties or different individuals. It is indeed true that “discernment is also undertaken when groups and societies have to reflect on the divine will in times of transition and change” (De Villiers 2013:136).

Kerygma is the church’s *modus operandi* and *raison d’etre* (method and purpose) of prophetic assertion in the secular society and age. In *sancta simplicitas*, the church is called upon to break its silence by *reculer pour mieux sauter* – in simplicity, the church is to drawback to take a better leap. It should withdraw to examine its theological mandate to advance its prophetic role. This is done through kerygmatic initiatives such as dialogue, discernment, and rebuke where necessary. After all, “Critical debate about propositions and doctrine can indeed

be liberating and transformative” (De Villiers 2016:41). The fact is that South Africa is at the stage where the public spaces have been supposedly emptied of God. The return to the basics of God as the premise of all acts of justice is far-fetched. *Kerygma* must step in, to redirect the thinking of the stereotypes and resistive theologians who abhor changes and theological re-thinking and alignment. Jenson (1999:28) correctly alludes to the reality that proclamatory and devotional life of the Scripture in the church invigorates and guides believers in their thinking.

The church’s mission of healing the world is hampered by political chasms created by unethical and unjust legislation. When justice is thrown out of civic affairs, corruption escalates and topics such as philanthropy, humanitarian solidarity, fighting for justice, reconciliation, heroism, and a fixation with trying to capture ethical life in codes all come under review (Lincoln 2011:70).

The church is to maintain its sanity and integrity of remaining faithful to its prophetic calling.

Ratzinger appeals to learn from the early church:

Although the Christians were being persecuted, they did not have a negative view of the state in principle, but rather they still recognised in it the state qua state and did what was in their power to build it up as a state; they did not try to destroy it. (Ratzinger 2008:145)

In concluding this section, let us be aware that African countries, in general, are plagued by a plethora of economic-socio-political issues. Corruption is one such major challenge and there is then an urgent need for spiritual and social transformation in society. The church has a huge role to play as it is called to strive for human salvation as it engages in dialogue with society and its ills. Dialogue calls for proactive initiatives in the face of corruption. Through dialogue, a prophetic role can be fulfilled. When cultural decadence escalates, the church’s presence must surface and be felt. This is when proclamation and incarnation form a synergy for prophetic revelatory exertion. God’s Word and church involvement are important tools for bringing about an affirmative life-changing transformation of people in society. In congruence with Parsley (2007), victory will not come if we remain sheltered behind the four walls of the sanctuary. We

must be equipped to confront false worldviews in every sphere of human activity and make a convincing argument for the truth of our biblical view.

7.4 The South African church fighting from within

The postcolonial era brought in some theological restlessness, especially in endeavours to appropriate the colonial missionary God of the Bible to African realities and experiences. The legitimacy of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid was easily demonstrated from several biblical texts. The apartheid government appealed to Romans 13 as a tool to subjugate the Blacks. The text was used to numb the conscience to say that obedience to the government, regardless of that government's moral flaw, is a Christian duty. The right of governments to punish sin was inferred from Romans 13, and differential treatment of enemies in war was found in Deuteronomy 20 (Brett 2009:13). The indigenous peoples were compared with idolatrous Canaanites who suffered under Joshua's conquest of the promised land.

The heretic nature and human brutality of apartheid was an international concern. Christians and non-Christians abroad and at home, determined to take up a cause of condemning and destroying apartheid by all means possible. In some areas, disagreements led to divisions regarding the methods to be used – violent or non-violent? The big question was which method should be used to bring the downfall of the regime? Some took the options of taking up arms, while others opted for non-violent means such as dialogue, education empowerment, economic sanctions, cultural boycotts, and passive resistance. The former approach was not an easy one as South African military defence became more powerful to an extent that the then cabinet minister for defence, P.W. Botha boasted of power of his military capability outclassing of all Africa combined. The borders were tightly guarded to hunt and massacre the so-called guerrilla fighters who will try to cross into South Africa to liberate the country with the barrel of a gun. The latter approach worked well and extensively so. Ecumenical bodies, corporates, and welfare formations infiltrated South Africa by offering study bursaries. Economic sanctions were extensive, especially

under the championship of Archbishop Tutu. When P.W. Botha cautioned the archbishop against it, Tutu replied that it is a non-violent means Botha himself was promoting. Many, if not all South African sports were banned and the country was barred from international events such as Federation of African Football, Olympics, and Commonwealth games. In the eighties, the Mass Democratic Movement under the auspices of the United Democratic Front (UDF) took lead in passive and peaceful resistance to repressive regime by nationwide consumer boycotts, peaceful marches, etc. Out of these attempts, many intellectual elites emerged. In those days there were two options for young minds: Go into exile and take up arms, or remain home, study and develop yourself as a future leader. Preparations for the coming days was an underlying driving force.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) intervened into the South African situation as the Christian faith was marred or tinted by state repression. The twenty-first of March 1960 is one of the dates that put the then South Africa into the forefront of the human rights debate. About 69 people were shot dead by the state forces due to their peaceful demonstration against the inhuman pass laws that controlled or limited the movement of Black people in their own country. The unfortunate incident is known as the Sharpsville massacre. Between 7 and 14 December in the same year, the WCC convened in Cottesloe, Johannesburg to address the church's role in the unjust ideological system of racism that by then was accompanied by brutal acts of the state on innocent people. The consultation, which included SACC urged:

- greater inclusion of black people in political office; and
- rejection of unjust discrimination in various forms.

The consultation resolved:

- to respect freedom of religion, migrant labour system; and
- that black residents of areas designated as for whites only by apartheid legislation be granted suffrage.

The final Cottesloe Declaration angered the then prime minister, H.F. Verwoerd, and the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The DRC regarded the Declaration as

liberal despite DRC theologians being part of the consultation and signatories to the Declaration. What is of interest is that the Declaration defined the church doctrine in its missional responsibility. It stressed the fact that the Church of Jesus Christ, by its nature and calling, is deeply concerned with the welfare of all people, both as individuals and as members of social groups. It is called to minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears, and to insist that all be done with justice. In its social witness, the church must take cognisance of all attitudes, forces, policies and laws which affect the life of a people; but the church must proclaim that the final criterion of all social and political action is the principles of Scripture regarding the realisation of all men of a life worthy of their God-given vocation.

The church and her calling (ecclesiology and missiology) are wonderfully expounded in Part II of the Declaration taken from Hastings (1979:143-148):

1. We recognise that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are a part of our total population, and we regard them as indigenous. Members of all these groups have an equal right to make their contribution towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges.
2. The present tension in South Africa is the result of a long historical development and all groups bear responsibility for it. This must also be seen in relation to events in other parts of the world. The South African scene is radically affected by the decline of the power of the West and by the desire for self-determination among the peoples of the African continent.
3. The church has a duty to bear witness to the hope which is in Christianity both to White South Africans in their uncertainty and to non-White South Africans in their frustration.
4. In a period of rapid social change the church has special responsibility for fearless witness within society.
5. The church as the Body of Christ is a unity and within this unity, the natural diversity among men is not annulled but sanctified.
6. Non-one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or race.

The spiritual unity among all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern.

7. We regard with deep concern the revival in many areas of African society of heathen tribal customs incompatible with Christian beliefs and practice. We believe this reaction is partly the result of a deep sense of frustration and a loss of faith in Western civilisation.
8. The whole church must participate in the tremendous missionary task which has to be done in South Africa, and which demands a common strategy.
9. Our discussions have revealed that there is not sufficient consultation and communication between the various racial groups which make up our population. There is a special need that a more effective consultation between the Government and leaders accepted by the non-White people of South Africa should be devised. The segregation of racial groups carried through without effective consultation and involving discrimination leads to hardship for members of the groups affected.
10. There are no Scriptural grounds for the prohibition of mixed marriages. The well-being of the community and pastoral responsibility requires, however, that due consideration should be given to certain factors which may make such marriages inadvisable.
11. We call attention once again to the disintegrating effects of migrant labour on African life. No stable society is possible unless the cardinal importance of family life is recognised, and, from the Christian standpoint, the integrity of the family must be safeguarded.
12. It is now widely recognised that the wages received by the vast majority of the non-White people oblige them to exist well below the generally accepted minimum standard for healthy living. Concerted action is required to remedy this grave situation.
13. The present system of job reservation must give way to a more equitable system of labour which safeguards the interest of all concerned.
14. Opportunities must be provided for the inhabitants of the Bantu areas to live in conformity with human dignity.
15. It is our conviction that the right to own land wherever he is domiciled, and to participate in the government of his country, is part of the dignity of the adult man, and for this reason, a policy which permanently denies to non-White people the right of collaboration in the government of the country of which they are citizens cannot be justified.
16. (a) It is our conviction that there can be no objection in principle to the direct representation of Coloured people in Parliament.

- (b) We express the hope that consideration will be given to the application of this principle in the foreseeable future.
17. In so far as nationalism grows out of a desire for self-realisation, Christians should understand and respect it. The danger of nationalism is, however, that it may seek to fulfil its aim at the expense of the interests of others and that it can make the nation an absolute value which takes the place of God. The role of the church must therefore be to help to direct national movements towards just and worthy ends.

The DRC disconnected itself from the world ecumenical body, the WCC and threw its weight behind the South African government's unleashing of theologically twisted laws that promoted racism and elevated state repression.

The turbulent history of the church is closely intertwined with that of the country. While its 1857 synod resolved it is "desirable and scriptural (that) wherever possible our members from among heathen be received and incorporated in our existing congregations", subsequent resolutions led to the establishment of so-called daughter churches, notably the DRC in Africa (also known as the Bantu Church) in 1859, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (for Coloured, or racially mixed, persons) in 1881, and the Indian Reformed Church in Africa in 1947. The NGK until 1986 supported the government's policy of apartheid (separate development for the races) and had commissioned several studies to develop theological justification for it. Their findings were rejected by Reformed churches in Europe and the United States. The NGK withdrew from the WCC in 1961 and severed relations with the Netherlands Reformed Church in the Netherlands in 1978. In 1986, however, the DRC denounced its former attempts at the biblical justification of apartheid, and in 1989 it condemned apartheid as a sin. In 1994 discussions concerning a merger began with the Reformed Church in Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, and the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika). While progress was also made in 2006, unification did not take place, and the dialogue on unification continues.

All along, the DRC was a member of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), formerly known as World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) which was constituted in Nairobi, Kenya in 1970. In 2010, the World

Presbyterian Alliance united with the Reformed Ecumenical Council and its membership was twelve million in twenty-six countries. It was then renamed the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The majority of WCRC member churches are located in developing countries, and the group seeks to promote Christian unity, theology, and social justice.

In 1982, Allan Boesak, who was the president of the WCRC (1982-1991) persuaded members of the WARC to declare apartheid a heresy and to suspend the membership of the White South African churches. The NGK was excluded from membership in the WARC at Ottawa in August 1982. At the same time, the WARC pronounced apartheid to be a heresy in violation of the Scriptures.

The panoramic view of historical overview looks like this: As members of the WCC, the two synods of the DRC broke their ties with this institution in 1961, following the criticism of the Cottesloe Consultation of 1960 on apartheid. The WARC, which became part of the WCRC in 2010, declared a *status confessionis* against the theological and moral justification of apartheid and suspended the membership of the Dutch Reformed Church at Ottawa in 1982. As a result of the changes effected in South Africa and the DRC, the latter was readmitted as a full member of the Alliance in 1998. In 2007 the DRC applied for membership of the World Council. It was granted in 2015.

As mentioned earlier in this book, between 1985 and 1993, there arose some numerous initiatives whereby the church in South Africa was trying to make sense of its confession as the body of Christ. One can remember Kairos Document, Evangelical Witness of South Africa, National Initiative of Reconciliation, and the Rustenburg Conferences 1 and 2.

7.4.1 The Kairos Document

One of the prophetic voices that reverberated South African socio-religious landscape in the eighties came out of a Kairos meeting that produced the famous Kairos Document (KD) in 1985. This is a Christian, biblical and theological narrative on the political crisis South Africa faced in the eighties.

Concerned Christians attempted to reflect on the socio-political massacres of the time. It was an attempt to develop, out of this perplexing situation, an alternative biblical and theological model that will, in turn, lead to forms of activity that will make a real difference to the future of South Africa. Numerous theologians, the majority Catholic, expressed their concerns regarding the volatile situation that called for reflection on the church's role in the brutal situation where human dignity was evaded through state mechanisms. Theologians saw the need to dialogue and come with some amicable resolutions for the appalling situation. In its last chapter, the document proposed actions to be taken as a way of implementing the outcomes. First is that God sides with the poor, where it is mentioned that:

there is only one way forward to Church unity and that is for those Christians who find themselves on the side of the oppressor or sitting on the fence, to cross over to the other side to be united in faith and action with those who are oppressed (KD 1985:17).

Secondly, Christians are to engage in participation with the struggle for liberation and a just society (KD 1985:18). Thirdly, transforming church activities - activities must be re-shaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the KAIROS that God is offering us today (KD 1985:18). Fourthly, the church should organise special campaigns, programmes, and projects and because of the special needs of the struggle for liberation in South Africa today. But there is a very important caution here. The church must avoid becoming a "Third Force", a force between the oppressor and the oppressed (KD 1985:18). The fifth proposal is civil disobedience. Once it is established that the present regime has no moral legitimacy and is a tyrannical regime, certain things follow for the church and its activities. In the first place, the church cannot collaborate with tyranny. It cannot or should not do anything that appears to give legitimacy to a morally illegitimate regime. Secondly, that church should not only pray for a change of government, it should also mobilise its members in every parish to begin to think and work and plan for a change of government in South Africa. Sixthly and finally, the church is encouraged to provide moral guidance. The people look to the church, especially amid our present crisis, for moral guidance.

To provide this the church must first make its stand clear and never tire of explaining and dialoguing about it. It must then help people to understand their rights and their duties (1985:19).

It is for this reason that Kairos theology is regarded as a prophetic theology for a time of struggle. The struggle is not limited to the apartheid era but continues into the post-apartheid era. It is one of the key theologies of the liberation struggle. Kairos theology encompasses timely Christian duties such as responsibility, reflection, contextualising, and application. It calls theologians and all practitioners to stand up from the laurels and stoop down to touch the crises in the human context.

7.4.2 Evangelical Witness in South Africa

Following the Kairos meeting, in September 1985, a group of 'Concerned Evangelicals' met in Orlando, Soweto, to dialogue about the crisis in South Africa. They saw themselves as responding to the crisis in the country suffering under the State of Emergency. In light of the engendered conflict, they sought to review their mission and ministry. Out of this dialogue emerged a document known as Evangelical Witness in South Africa (EWISA). Its purpose was to express evangelicals' frustration with their ecclesiastical formations and organisations, and their failure to respond in a prophetic way to the crisis in the country.

The evangelicals critiqued their theology and praxis to turn their faith into a more effective evangelical witness in the politically turbulent South Africa. This critique developed over nine months from September 1985 to June 1986. It involved a series of seminars, workshops and discussion groups. It started in Soweto and then spread to the broader Pretoria-Witwatersrand area. Discussions were robust and various individuals were asked to summarise these outcomes. These topics became the titles for the document's seven chapters. In April 1986, a draft of the document was sent to various evangelicals around the country. The final form was then discussed in June 1986 and made available for

publication. The document had 132 signatories, mainly African and Coloured evangelical ministers and laypeople from numerous churches.

In a nutshell, the EWISA documents highlighted the problems of theological pitfalls in evangelicalism. This specifically referred to withdrawal from world realities, arrogant pietism, and worldview of dualism. The second critique was on the theology of the status quo, which uses Romans 13 to justify obedience to even unjust civil authority. Structural conformity was the third area of concerns by which African evangelicals are paternalistically controlled by the Western philosophies of colonisation, apartheid, and supremacist ideals; whereby Whites structure these churches according to the separate development of the government policies. The fourth area of concern was the separatist attitudes of evangelicals from ecumenical cooperation, due to emphasis on soul conversions above social injustice. The fifth area of concern was that of evangelistic groups and mission theology practised by many evangelical groups in South Africa. These are supported and funded by Whites who are concerned to win souls against communism. The sixth critique was based on radicalism and evangelicalism. Attempts were made to integrate a radical political stance with evangelical theology. The document rejects the dualism of separating 'spiritual' and 'social' realities as unscriptural, appealing to its tradition to formulate its own political and theological position. Finally, the document highlights a major concern regarding the right-wing Christian groups in South Africa that in some subliminal way are supportive of the repressive and oppressive regime.

The importance of EWISA towards the new democratic dispensation is that, regardless of criticism labelled against it, it is a dialogue that shook evangelicals out of slumber, and conscientised them that the country was on fire and needed some evangelical response. This was a call for incarnational theology, which is broadly the immersion of one's self into the local culture and 'becoming Jesus' to that culture. Incarnational ministry seeks to dispense with ministry from a distance and embrace ministry up close and personal – the love of God and the gospel of Christ are 'incarnated' or embodied by the person practising theology in a context. Just as the Son of God took on human flesh and came into the world,

one should adopt the culture to which he or she is ministering and 'become Jesus' within it. The idea that Christians should represent the incarnated gospel is called incarnational theology. A central tenant of the incarnational ministry concept is 'live the good news rather than preach the good news'. Evangelicals wanted to become practical theologians, not just conceptual ones.

7.4.3 National Initiative for Reconciliation

The National Initiative for Reconciliation (NIR) was a group representing the majority of the almost 400 Christian leaders and 47 denominations from across South Africa. These leaders were from different races, churches, academia and political persuasions around their common Christian commitment. They met on the 10–12 September 1985. Theirs was not just the statement or some resolutions that always led into further divisions, but a commitment to action. This commitment was summarised as:

1. To seek every opportunity, corporately, congregationally and individually to proclaim and witness to the good news of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, persuading all that in Him alone is to be found forgiveness and that newness of life that is eternal.
2. To continue in prayer and fasting for renewal in the Holy Spirit and reawakening of the Church of Jesus Christ and peace and justice in our land.
3. To create concrete opportunities for meaningful worship, fellowship and discussion with people of differing social and cultural groups.
4. To help remove ignorance of events in South Africa and prepare people for living in a changed and non-racial land.
5. To share the South African reality of suffering by extending and accepting invitations to experience the life of fellow Christians in the townships.
6. To plan and mount regional gatherings of Christian leadership to continue this process of reconciliation and to initiate concrete changes in South African society. (Cassidy 1986:3)

Theologians and biblists believe that in Christian theology, is an element of salvation that refers to the results of atonement. Reconciliation is the end of the estrangement, caused by original sin, between God and humanity

... God is the author, Christ is the agent and the followers of Christ are the ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5). The Greek term for reconciliation *katallogē* means to 'exchange enmity, wrath and war with friendship, love and peace'.

Reconciliation theology or the theology of reconciliation raises crucial theological questions about how reconciliation can be brought into regions of political conflict. The term differs from the conventional theological understanding of reconciliation, but likewise emphasises themes of justice, truth, forgiveness and repentance. As a theological concept, it is when God reconciles himself with humanity through the atonement of Christ and, likewise, the followers of Christ are called to become peacemakers and reconcile with one another.

However, the Christian concept of reconciliation has recently been applied to political conflict zones of the world by South African theologian, John W. de Gruchy, and calls it 'reconciliation theology'. He demonstrates four interrelated ways of reconciliation:

- Reconciliation between God and humanity, and what it brings to mean in terms of social relations.
- Interpersonal ways of reconciliation between individuals.
- The meaning of reconciliation between alienated communities and groups at a local level.
- Political usage of reconciliation such as the process of national reconciliation. (De Gruchy 2000:45)

The NIR initiators and participants were of a strong conviction that Christians regardless of creed, colour, or confession should come together to work as co-heirs to fight the common enemy that strives to divide and rule. Their dialogue was on evangelism and racial reconciliation. They called for a spirit of compassion and forgiveness. They set up a national day of repentance and forgiveness (9 October 1985) and sent some delegation to the state president to appeal for removal of South African Defence Force from the townships, repeal of State of Emergency, and the dismantling of some apartheid structures that undermined human dignity.

7.4.4 South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders

The South African Conference of Evangelical Leaders (SACEL) was sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa and was held from 28 October–2 November 1985. The robust dialogue on socio-political issues affecting the evangelical witness in South Africa, unfortunately, led to some split that left evangelicals in three main streams: the right-wingers (United Christian Action) who supported the government's attempts to end apartheid, the Concerned Evangelicals (mostly Blacks) who felt the government's brutality is too much to be condoned, and the moderate and multiracial Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa. The conference produced a charter for mobilising evangelical unity. The charter noted the failure of evangelicals to speak out against oppression and work for justice in South Africa.

It resolved 'through proclamation and legitimate channels to resist moral evils' in society and called for integration in churches and concern and prayer relating to 'specific situations of need and for dismantling discriminatory legislation'. (Walker 1988:9)

The conference also sent a delegation to the state president to discuss these resolutions.

7.4.5 Rustenburg Conference

Then-president F.W. de Klerk proposed a National Conference of Church Leaders, however, there were mixed feelings regarding accepting and participating in the event. Different formations took different standpoints, but in the end, the conference became a dialogue that contributed towards the transformation of South African society. The co-chairs of the conference were the late Dr Louw Alberts (renowned metallurgist and physicist, committed NGK Christian and the president of Youth for Christ SA for 33 years), and Rev Frank Chikane of Apostolic Faith Mission (By then a general secretary of SACC). The 230 delegates came from 97 denominations, 40 church associations and ecumenical agencies.

All the delegates at Rustenburg, though differing on some issues, agreed on 'the unequivocal rejection of apartheid as a sin'. The final declaration

advised that 'repentance and practical restitution' were necessary for God's forgiveness and for justice as a step toward reconciliation. Apartheid was condemned 'in its intention' – a point with which the NGK had special difficulty – in its implementation, and in 'its consequences as an evil policy' (Walshe in Elphick & Davenport 1997:397).

The conference was not just a rhetoric dialogue but was also emotionally encumbered and dominated by confessions, sorrows, regrets, and repentance. Both the perpetrators and the victims acknowledged their roles in the perpetuation of the unjust system. Forgiveness was sought and humbleness embraced. The apex of dialogical deliberations was the call for the constituent assembly to determine the new constitution that would enshrine the value of human life created in the image of God, with a bill of rights subject to the judiciary alone, a common voters roll, and a multiparty democracy within a unitary state (Walshe 1997:397). Despite some rejections of these resolutions, the Rustenburg Declaration sensitised F.W. de Klerk's government of the heartbeat of the nation, especially the Christian community.

7.5 South African church fighting through external forces

The national liberation struggle in South Africa and elsewhere was intertwined with ecclesiastical involvement. The church played some pivotal role in trying to shake itself of the oppressive shackles that were chaining the nation – the context in which ecclesia exists. The oppressed nation, carrying the scars of victimisation overflowed into the church. The aggressive state mechanisms affect the church significantly. Oppressors were two-faced. As church members they were saints masquerading as angels of life, but their political involvement was a façade that clashed with biblical and ecclesial ideals and teachings. Church struggle for freedom and liberation ideals is an indisputable historical fact, though as we have seen, in some cases the church and the state were Siamese twins to spew injustice and promote by approving the unjust laws. In some cases, the church opted for quiet diplomacy. Through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the churches were given an opportunity and the platform to apologise to the humanity for sins

of omission and commission. Churches that did not use this platform did send the message that they approved of the injustices of the past.

7.5.1 Liberation struggles

People struggles in South Africa evolved into various shapes and directions. From racism to gender abuse, the in-between issues had been numerous. Many South Africans struggled against colonialism, apartheid, religious persecution, tribal and ethnic tensions, physical and emotional abuses, gender abuses, professional jealousies, etc. Liberation struggles are vast and cover all racial groups. The Afrikaners struggled against the British to an extent of undertaking a great journey (*trek*) away from the British dominance in the Cape during the mid-1830s (*Die Groot Trek*), The participant of this 'trek' are known as *Die Voortrekkers*. The Afrikaners suffered much brutality under the British during the so-called Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) when Afrikaner communities were kept in concentration camps or internments. The Cape indigenous people, the Khoisan, struggled against subjugation by the White settlers of the Cape. The indigenous people in the frontiers struggled against the intruding Voortrekkers and through battles were stripped of their most precious possession, the land. The Difaqane (internal tribal wars) decimated some tribes, while at the same time those defeated and captured as prisoners of war were amalgamated into other tribes. They lost their ethnic origin and identity by adopting some new identity of the conquering tribe. Some good examples that are some current Batswana tribes that still identify themselves with the Zulu or the Ndebele tribes, like Balete, Bahwaduba, Bapo, and Batlhalerwa.

These struggles spiralled into ideologies that ended up either destroying or replacing people's religions. The political struggles overflowed into the church, so political struggles became intertwined with religious struggles. The struggles of current South Africa, though racism is still strong, include patriarchalism, sexism (homophobia), Afrophobia, affirmative action, economic imbalance, and capital migration. With these come all sorts of negative incidences, such

as xenophobia, gender-based violence, citizens insecurity (murder, robbery, theft, carjacking, etc.). The wars in churches are in most cases based on one or few of these incidences. As a result, African Christian communities take ethnic or tribal shapes. Although changes are taking place, when one thinks of the Zion Christian Church, one thinks of the tribes in the north of South Africa (Bapedi, VhaVenda, VaTsonga). This might be due to these tribes proximity to the church's cultic centre, Morija City. When one thinks of the Nazareth Baptist (Shembe), one thinks of more Zulu adherents than any other tribe. The Apostolic church groups are strong among the Batswana and Basotho groups, probably due to the history accredited to the founders such as Christina Nku. The theology of these churches had been researched and titled differently, but the bottom line is that their theology is mostly syncretic and combines the Christian faith with African Traditional Religions. Their biblical leniency is towards the Old Testament, especially the Mosaic laws as dictated in the Pentateuch.

7.5.2 Liberation theologies

Theology is generally the search for divine intervention in any situation that promotes or perpetrates human misery. In any situation of life, theology is expected to speak. Anizor succinctly asserts that:

Theology, when done well, is always a retrieval project: it seeks to mine the Christian past for theological riches that will benefit the present and the future of the church. Retrieval does not equate with agreement but at the very least connotes dialogue. (Anizor 2018:95)

Out of the struggles of the masses, some retrieval must come to the fore. Appeal to theology becomes inevitable. From the beginning of the twentieth century when liberalism, colonialism, and empiricism were exiting the public domain, the struggles for liberation ensued. The century saw the emergence and expansion of liberation theologies. These did not emanate out of tabula rasa, but out of social ills that were imposing poverty, marginalisation, oppressive ideologies, discrimination, racism, etc., especially in the Third World countries.

Theology is historically known to be a White male's discipline. Previously, almost all major academic theologians were White, middle class and male. As the

twentieth century progressed towards the end, civil uprisings and public protests escalated. “While 1960s radical theologians were celebrating secularity and accommodating to modernity and while theologians of hope were pointing to the future, new voices of protest were demanding a hearing in theology” (Olson 2013:503). Race riots broke out in many cities of America, Europe and elsewhere. European universities underwent students protest. The 1960s and 1970s were times of social unrest. Young men burned draft cards in public. Young women burned bras to protest sexism in society. Martin Luther King Jr (1929–1968) and Malcolm X (1925–1965) gathered African-Americans and sympathetic Whites against segregation and racism. Apartheid brutality escalated and resistance to oppression led to deaths and exile of many South Africans.

Theology reflected and had to act. Liberation theologies were birthed out of human struggles and miseries. Che’ Guevara (1928–1967) became a guerrilla hero in Latin America and around the world. Betty Friedan (1921–2006) founded the National Organisation for Women/NOW to fight women discrimination. The situation in South Africa worsened into the seventies, and liberation theology took the form of Black theology. In the world over, the liberation theologies (Bear in mind the plural usage) took different brands such as African theology, Black theology, feminist theology, and lately we have eco-theology.

African theology

The term ‘African theology’ originated from a 1950s major discussion in Rome involving African and Haitian priests studying how to adopt indigenous traditional African religious beliefs, practices, rituals, history, and culture into the Christian message of Christ for the African people. It came into being in the mid-20th century. It began to protest against negative colonial and missionary interpretations of the religion and culture in Africa. Realising that theology is a contextual phenomenon, African Christians began to read the Bible using their cultural lens, which of course resulted in some interpretations that did not always agree with how Western theology interpreted things. From around the 1960s, African theology evolved from two streams. The one from within

Catholic Francophone Africa and derivative of the principal mid-century events of Africa's intellectual life. The other from within Protestant Anglophone Africa and functioning at the cutting edge of the century-old quest for effective indigenisation of African Christianity.

African theologians continued to confer into the 1970s with discussions rapidly expanding into the multiple venues and divergent emphases. By the 1980s, a succession of monographs had begun to appear. Among the more prominent contributors from this period have been the likes of Kato (Evangelical), Nyamiti (Catholic), Pobee (Anglican), Dickson (Methodist), Tienou (Evangelical), Ela (Catholic), Ukpong (Catholic), Eboussi Boulaga (Catholic), Oduyoye (Methodist), and Mugambi (Anglican).

Dr John Mbiti became famous as the father of African theology. This Kenyan scholar achieved a special status in the early movement with publication in successive years of *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), *Concepts of God in Africa* (1970) and *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background* (1971). In subsequent years, Mbiti continued to maintain a singularly distinguished, articulate, and prolific output. Through his writings and addresses, he passionately brings forth African theology and what it stands for. Mbiti defines African theology as a "theological reflection and expression by African Christians". The other well-known African Theologian, Nyamiti defines African theology as a discourse on God (*theo-logos*) and all that is related to Him – in accordance with the mentality and needs of the people in the black continent (Nyamiti 1977). In all exegetical undertakings of African theology, these theologians do not waver from the fact that African theology is a Bible-based theology. Mbiti always points out that the foundation document for African theology is the Bible. The bible is the basic source of African theology because it is a primary witness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. No theology can retain its Christian identity apart from scripture. Dr Mbiti continues to state that, "as long as African theology, both oral and written keeps close to the scriptures, it will remain relevant to the life of the church in Africa and will make lasting contributions to the theology of the Church universal". African theology is Christian theology

from the perspective of the African cultural context. Although there are very old Christian traditions on the continent, in the last centuries Christianity in Africa has been determined to a large extent by Western forms of Christianity, brought by colonisation and mission, until the mid-20th century.

Lately, the essential literature of African theology includes annotated bibliographies, conference papers, readers in principal sources, and surveys of the literature. The ensuing socio-political instabilities in the 1990s continued to kick African theologians out of their laurels. For instance, publications such as that of the Ghanaian scholar Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (1991), in which he compared the role of culture within second-century Christian thinking and within modern African Christian thinking, especially in the latter's quest for theological self-understanding, came to the fore. The British scholar Gordon Molyneux published his remarkable study, *African Christian Theology* (1993), which traces out in fascinating detail and critically assessing three very different manifestations of Christian 'theologising' in Africa. With such publications, the African theology movement has reached a vigorous maturity. The highly varied conversations are now best tracked through ongoing bibliographic surveys such as those found in the *Revue Africaine de Theologie* (Congo/Zaire) and the *International Review of Mission* (Switzerland), and through the abstracts and reviews offered in journals such as *Missionalia* (South Africa) and *Book Notes for Africa* (Zambia).

African theology stands on the shoulders of the early African independent churches that broke away from missionary churches in the late 19th century or early 20th century. It has found comfort within these churches because it is engaged to shape Christianity in an African way by adapting and using African concepts and ideas.

In the era when decolonisation occupies the biggest space of discussions agenda – African authenticity and self-reliance, African identity and selfhood, including a comprehensive critique of the West and its role in Africa – theologians in Africa are not left behind, just as it has been happening in almost all fields of learning since the latter part of the 20th century. The necessary themes of reconciliation, peace-making, environmental degradation, war, refugees, etc.,

even the rooted conflicts and discontinuities, have almost exactly matched the dynamics of the larger intellectual life of Africa. From a similar impulse, the earlier concern for indigenisation became transmuted into an insistent call for the independence of African churches from their sponsoring mission agencies, calling for a 'moratorium' on continuing missionary presence. The call for the autonomy of the African Church played a major driving force behind this indigenisation processes. African theology found its expression through the African Independent Churches, as these formations represent a more authentically African sensitivity. From the mid-1970s onward, African theology increasingly included a political theology of liberation as part of its agenda. It is for this reason that in South Africa, the liberation theology took the shape of Black theology as the expression of African theology.

There has been some debate among theologians about the relation of African theology to Black theology. During the 1970s, Black theology developed in South Africa, where the main concern was liberation from apartheid, while African theology developed in other parts of the continent. The debate on this continues in the next session on Black theology.

However, one has to note that African theology expresses itself differently, as it may be traced within the African traditional theology. It is seen as understanding and expression of the Christian faith following African needs and mentality (Nyamiti). This is when it becomes very syncretic by accommodating some African cultural practices, rituals, and rites – using the Bible to justify or validate them. This happened during the Independence Movement (the 1950s–1960s). African theology transformed the biblical faith of Christ and Christian truth from a Eurocentric expression into an African context. This creates a big challenge for theologians to grapple with the three main areas of African theology: First, the written theology, which provides theological reflections centred on traditional African religious beliefs, practices, values and morals. Second, the oral theology, which reflects on the oral traditions handed down through generations of African people in many African languages found in songs, sermons, teachings, prayers, proverbs, myths, and conversations. And

finally, the symbolic theology, which expresses the rich African culture through African arts, sculptures, dramas, dances, rituals, music and symbols. African traditional religion is another source of African theology. Whenever one reads any work by any African theologian, one sees if that theologian is arguing his or her point from one of these three advantage points.

The number of African theologians is growing as the field of African scholarship widens. However, famous African theologians include the likes of Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, and Kwesi Dickson who have given analysis and interpretation of the African traditional religion and point to its relation to the Christian faith. Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako have argued for the importance of 'vernacularization' of the Bible and theology. Kwame Bediako, Benezet Bujo and John Pobee have developed an African Christology in terms of the ancestors.

Unlike Black theology in South Africa, for the most part, African theology has not attended to forces of oppression within Africa but has rather addressed the Western political and economic exploitation of Africa. While African church leadership, especially in eastern and southern Africa and not least within Roman Catholic circles, has often found it necessary to speak against the injustice and repression practised by various African governments since independence, little of this has been reflected in the theological discussion.

Black theology

Black theology became prominent in the United States of America and South Africa from the early sixties and was prominent in the seventies. In South Africa, it specifically targeted the apartheid regime justified theologically by the DRC. Structural injustice that elevated White supremacy over others left many Black people in a dire state of inhumanness, and this was the rationale for the emergence of Black theology. The thorn in the flesh was the theological justification of the system, more than anything else. "The heart of black theology is a liberating gospel in contrast to legalised discrimination under apartheid." (Hopkins 1989:93). Motlhabi's book known as *African theology/Black Theology*

in South Africa: Looking Back, Moving On (2008) is an informative masterpiece on Black theology in South Africa.

The Father of African theology and its scholar John Mbiti (who passed on three days before writing this section) perceived Black theology as a purely North American phenomenon concerned with American social problems without recognising the possibility of its migration to new contexts such as South Africa. South African Black theology is not a homogenous theological movement (Van Aarde 2016:2). As a soulmate with Black consciousness that was popularised by Bantubonke Steve Biko in South Africa, the accent was squarely on African culture, which is made up of many diverse elements and a diversity of cultural expressions. Biko turned to African culture for retrieval of Black identity (Du Toit 2008:35). For scholars like Moore (1973:5), Black theology is understood as a 'situational theology', since South African Blacks are not a homogenous group but coexist in a multiplicity of situations. The reality of Black peoples' situations and experiences of suffering constituted the essence of an African identity. Black theology in South Africa's roots is that each ethnic group had to be able to attain its style of existence without the fear and threat of loss of culture in relation to the other.

Black theology is part and parcel of liberation theology. Like other liberation theologies, Black theology is a dialogue partner with contextual socio-political concerns of the time. It is a theology based on the Black experience, culture, and church tradition (Roberts 1987:104). Literature informs us that Black theology arose out of an upsurge of Black consciousness and Black power in the late 1960s (Roberts 1987:105). The socio-political landscape was not favourable to the Black majority citizens in the sixties, as that decade was the solidification of the apartheid regime and the climax of unjust laws governing the lives of the majority citizens of South Africa. Black people in South Africa, like in the United States of America, had embraced the Christian faith, but that faith was not attachable to the socio-political context where they found themselves. The open sore for Black theologians was the White church's continuous justification and support of racism. In some instances, the church vetoed the government

policies that were dehumanising Black believers. God's righteousness and justice were sacrificed on the altar of self-reservation and Afrikaner ethnic self-purification.

The contribution of Black theology in South Africa was towards the demise of the structural sin of apartheid, inclusive of the development of a national reconciliation that led to the building of a new South Africa. Black theology continues to play a role in the rethinking of African theology. One of the famous Black theologians, Manas Buthelezi (1974) wrote an article entitled 'An African Theology or a Black Theology?' in which he explained the different departures of African theology and Black theology. This is still one of the departure points in debates regarding the relationship between African and Black theology. However, one needs to note that Black theology in South Africa developed uniquely and faced different struggles than elsewhere. For instance, South America and the struggle for liberation, North America and the emancipation of American Blacks. As mentioned earlier, Mbiti (1969) argues that no distinction should be made between Black theology and African theology. His analysis is that Black theology *is* African theology and African theology *is* Black theology (Motlhabi 2008:178). Although Black theology is an African theology, African theology is not necessarily *per se* a Black theology. This affirms the assertion that South African Black theology is a unique Black theology distinct from American Black theology. This is further strengthened by Pobee (1979:38-39) who maintains that: "The preoccupation of American black theology with liberation theology from racial oppression limited its relevance outside the Republic of South Africa." The great importance that draws the line is that Black theology in South Africa is a grassroots theology that does not simply act on behalf of the poor and the marginalised but draws the poor and the marginalised into the struggle on the grounds of human dignity and Black identity. The fact remains that Black theology can survive despite the loss of 'race' as a viable biological concept if it recovers Black solidarity.

Let me emphasise again that Black theology in South Africa was part of an ongoing movement of liberation and not simply a migration of Latin American

liberation theology. A new agenda was set for Black theology against the background of an African context. In terms of the broader context, it was part of liberation theology, but in its specific context, it was a uniquely South African theology. Boesak used the language borrowed from the liberation theology of 'the oppressed' and 'oppressor', but he avoided the stigma of victimisation associated with these terms by asserting that the oppressed are not absolved and innocent. This is a perception of victimisation that engenders powerlessness, weakness and helplessness (Boesak 1978:3)

Boesak further developed the thought of Biko that "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" and made the statement that "the greatest ally of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Boesak 1978:6). Van Aarde (2016:2) points out that Boesak did not travel down the road of mainstream liberation theology in which the Black people of South Africa are regarded as having been oppressed and are helpless and innocent victims. Whereas Biko turned to African culture for retrieval of Black identity, Boesak turned to the gospel for Black identity. For Boesak, the dignity of human being was founded upon this human being made in the image of God.

Black theology in South Africa has marked its significance through its unique hermeneutics. As Maluleke (2000:31) alludes, it is one of its most enduring legacies. This legacy is a contextual reading of the scriptures. A return to the most traditional meaning of hermeneutics in which the most basic reading and interpretation of a message is that the human beings' search for identity and significance is needed. Black theology appealed hermeneutically to the Exodus as an identity-forming narrative and not primarily as a liberation narrative. The Israelite sojourners in Egypt had been stripped of their identity, therefore disconnected from their Jewish legacy, identity, and roots. Van Aarde (2016:6) alludes that the Exodus is a central biblical narrative in the history of Israel. Israel's national identity was bound up with Yahweh, the God of the Hebrews. Yahweh introduces himself to Moses as "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob" (Ex 3:6) and identifies himself with them as an oppressed people. "In the exodus, not only does God reveal himself

amid Israel's slavery, his revelation (as the 'I am') also discloses a new history of future for Israel." (Katongole 2011:111). Israel's discovery of who God was, the 'I am', taught them who they were and made them discover their identity as the people of God. It is therefore correct to conclude that the liberation of Israel was secondary; their rediscovery of their identity was primary (Van Aarde 2016:6). The redemption of Israel was an identity-forming act by God. The God of Israel is the God who hears the cries of his oppressed people. He reveals himself as the God of Israel for the sake of the nations.

Black theology deems the Exodus as a definitive narrative that serves as a source for overcoming oppression, discrimination, marginalisation and political victimisation. The God of liberation from Egyptian oppression is the God who calls people out of bondage. The Exodus in South African Black theology is not appropriated by the Blacks against the Whites as though God was on the side of the Blacks. In the South African context, God is on the side of the righteous, that is, those who are motivated by the love of God and neighbour. Bosch suggested that we should focus more on the idea of love than justice because that will prevent our prophetic mission from becoming purely political (Bosch 1992:402-403). Love precedes all theology: "Christian love as correctly lived excludes no one and loves everyone" (Aguilar 2009:116), whether the oppressed or the oppressor. This is what baffled the White theologians who reminisced on the false perception of equating Black theology with communism or Marxism. This was especially as Black theology promoted biblical love, justice, dignity, and identity, as opposed to materialist theology promoted by White supremacist capitalism that made the rich richer at the expense of the poor. On top of that, the materialist theology that prospered through and in unjust social structures.

Black theology in South Africa has a unique identity separate from American Black theology and liberation theology. It has and still is a theology of empowerment to fight against racism and apartheid. Its anthropological focus was highlighted by Biko whose accent was on the human being rather than on power (Du Toit 2008:35). Black theology is the voice of the voiceless and powerless, not exclusively of the poor and marginalised. Powerlessness is the

inability to control what happens, the inability to plan for the future, and the imperative of focusing on the present (Van Aarde 2016:8). This is why its voice continues to echo and reverberates against the Black wealthy and politically connected who gained access to economic resources at the expense of the poor after 1994. These new Black elite have crossed the line to join those who held power and privilege through corruption that leaves the masses in miserable poverty and depersonalisation.

It is now accepted in the public domain that in a democratic South Africa, the once oppressed Blacks have themselves become the new oppressors. The Black theology that gave new confidence and self-perception to Black South Africans that they had control over their destiny has been replaced by agendas of personal greed.

Black theology in South Africa has never had racism as its agenda. The roots of oppression lie deeper than racism so that while the end of apartheid is a welcome development along the way, it is not the end. It involves much more than the idea that the perception of inferiority has simply been replaced by access to economic and political resources. Rather, it is the ongoing stereotypes of the other as inferior that formulate a mythical or ideological construct which provides a rationale or justification for legal, social and political equality. This in turn gives the false impression that all problems of inequality will simply disappear with the attainment of economic and political equality. The unjust discrimination and oppression will simply continue, and new oppressors will replace the old because the deeper-seated human dignity and identity has not been sufficiently addressed (Van Aarde 2016:9)

It was the common struggle against a system which robbed people of their human dignity, identity and rights that unified them. When values of human dignity, identity and rights are upheld, the same fervour of a generation that grew up in a post-apartheid era, the South African nation will once again be unified, and in this Black theology can play a central role if it takes up the challenge.

Before highlighting the famous South African Black theologians, it will be of great benefit to note Dwight N Hopkins' (2005) categorisation of Black political theology and cultural theological trends. Black political theology incorporates features such as an emphasis on an argument against a theology of apartheid, seeking liberation through a non-racial theology, seeing racial fellowship that

determines the future of South Africa, promoting liberation theology that includes Black theology to all the oppressed masses, and finally, maintaining that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, regardless of the colour or creed. This category includes Black theologians such as:

- **Manas Buthelezi** (Lutheran), whose Black theology epitomised racial fellowship, whereby Blacks and White should enter into fellowship going beyond the colour demarcations.
- **Alan Boesak's** (Uniting Reformed Church of S.A.) Black theology focuses on the Word of God as an instrument to judge both the Black and the White theologies. The liberation of the poor comes through the proclamation of the gospel.
- **Simon S Maimela** (Lutheran) developed Black theology of anthropology. Sin is a collective concept and responsibility, therefore should be addressed collectively.
- **Frank Chikane** (Apostolic Faith Mission), a contextual theologian who criticises theologies from above.

Then there is are cultural theological trends with attributes such as an emphasis on the fight against White settlers colonialism, promotion of liberation through the utilisation of African indigenous theological sources, claiming of Blackness or Africanness as God's gift for Africans' rights to self-determination, stressing of the particularity of South African situation as a mandate for a Black theology of liberation and its necessary link to Black consciousness, and finally, struggles for the reclamation of the land from the White settler colonialists. The land is sacred for Black people. Black theologians in this category include:

- **Bonganjalo C Goba** (Congregationalist), the African Christian theologian of liberation who emphasised the centrality of African traditional religions. In other words, he connected Christianity to indigenous religious worldviews. In his opposition to missionary mentality, Goba argues from the three contexts: cultural, Christian, and current.
- **Itumeleng J Mosala** (Methodist), the proponent of historical materialist Black theology of liberation. There must be some dialectical interplay between the historical experience of the oppressed classes in the Bible and

the historical experience of the Black working class and the peasants of South Africa.

- **Takatso A Mofokeng** (Uniting Reformed Church of SA), whose Black theology is built around correcting Black people's negative conception of themselves. There is an intrinsic link between Black consciousness and Black theology, which is defined by Christology.
- **Desmond M. Tutu** (Anglican) promotes relational Black theology which follows a relational hermeneutic in its method (self-determination and reconciliation) towards liberation and its goal (Black liberation as a relational complement for White liberation) for a liberated South Africa

Before leaving this section, one needs to highlight the historical symbiotic relationship of Black theology and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). This global movement of Black thinkers dominated South African politics in the sixties and the seventies, and especially took to the zenith in the late seventies, as an awareness of one's identity as a Black person, especially as a basis for a political grouping or movement.

The meaning and the definition of Black consciousness is also observed in the South African Students' Organisation (SASO) Policy Manifesto. I glean from it to show how the movement was intrinsically logical and intellectually inclined.

4. (a) SASO upholds the concept of Black Consciousness and the drive towards black awareness as the most logical and significant means of ridding ourselves of the shackles that bind us to perpetual servitude.
- (b) SASO defines Black Consciousness as follows:
 - (i) Black Consciousness is the attitude of mind, a way of life.
 - (ii) The basic tenet of Black Consciousness is that the black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him a foreigner in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity.
 - (iii) The black man must build up his value systems, see himself as self-defined and not defined by others.
 - (iv) The concept of Black Consciousness implies the awareness of black people of the power they wield as a group, both economically and politically, and hence

group cohesion and solidarity are important facets of Black Consciousness.

- (v) Black Consciousness will always be enhanced by the totality of involvement of the oppressed people, hence the message of Black consciousness has to be spread to reach all sections of the Black community (Tiro 2019:218).

As the name indicates, 'Black Consciousness' is a philosophy that defines Black people as people who are legally or traditionally discriminated against, politically oppressed, economically exploited and socially degraded and who identify themselves as a unit in the struggle for their emancipation. It is the realisation by Blacks that they need to rally together in unity to address their oppression based on the colour of their skin. It is a call to operate as a group to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. The BCM seeks to demonstrate the lie that 'black' is an aberration from the normal which is 'white'. It is a manifestation of a new realisation that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the White man, Blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them 'black'. Black consciousness, therefore, takes cognisance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating Black people 'black'. It seeks to infuse the Black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life. In a nutshell, these Black thinkers aim to build Black consciousness and African consciousness, which they felt had been suppressed under colonialism. Truly, "Black Consciousness advocated taking pride in being black and rejecting subservience and paternalism" (Tiro 2019:3-4). Fundamentally, Black consciousness builds its tenets around *ex manus capere* (emancipation), restoration of Black culture, freedom from White liberalism and anti-Black racism, battle against neo-liberalism and capitalism, and of course, the renaming of South Africa as Azania (Ndaba, Owen, Panyane, Serumula & Smith 2017:16-21).

The elements of 'Black pride' and celebration of Black culture linked the BCM back to the writings of W.E.B. du Bois, as well as the ideas of pan-Africanism and the La Negritude movement. Here in South Africa, mention of Black

consciousness is always associated with several people, the most notable being Onkgopotse Abram Tiro and Steve Biko. Tiro was brutally assassinated by the South African apartheid regime through a parcel bomb in Botswana at the height of liberation struggle in 1974. Much has been written about Steve Biko, who died while in the custody of security police on the 12 September 1977.

Tiro is rightly identified as someone who intelligently integrated liberation theology by Black theologians, with Black consciousness. For him, revolutionary theory and religion were partners in forging Black liberation. His South African Students' Organisation unashamedly declared Christ as "the first freedom fighter" (Tiro 2019:130). It should be historically appreciated to highlight the SASO declaration and resolution at the organisation's annual General Student Council (GSC) at St Peters Seminary (Hammanskraal) in 1973: The resolution declared:

- 1) That Christ was a revolutionary who pledged his life for the liberation of his subject-race from Roman Imperialism and oppression;
- 2) That to this end, Christ joined the ESSENES [an Israeli revolutionary movement] and worked in close collaboration with the ZEALOT [an Israel guerrilla warfare unit against the Romans];
- 3) That Christianity is, therefore, a struggle for survival and [a] fight for liberation;
- 4) That this aspect of Christ's mission is atrociously perverted and distorted by white imperialists for their faith repressive [ends];
- 5) The conspiracy between missionaries and the 'imperialist government' as clearly indicated by [Dr John] Philip's statement and activities in South Africa;
- 6) That the black ministers seem to be at sea (at a loss) concerning the proper interpretation of this religion. That this perverted Christianity is taught at school for the perpetual enslavement of the Blacks;

THEREFORE, WISHES TO STATE CHRISTOLOGY IS:

- a) A religion for liberation as indicated by God's actions against the Egyptians who were oppressing Israelites;
- b) A philosophy of liberation as indicated by Christ himself in Isaiah 61:1-2 'He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and opening of the prison for those who are bound' and Luke 4:18,

'He has sent me to proclaim the release to the captives and to set at liberty those who are oppressed.'

AND FURTHER RESOLVE:

- c) To look to Christ as the first freedom fighter to die for the liberation of the oppressed to encourage Christians to follow Christ by involving themselves in liberation movements for the redemption of the oppressed man;
- d) That the Black Theology Agency must engage the assistance of Black historians and Black Theologians in the correct interpretation of the scriptures;
- e) That the Black Theology Agency should encourage all the Black people to involve themselves in and utilise Christianity and all the facts of this concept in attaining the goals and principles as laid out in the struggle of Black people. (Tiro 2019:130-131)

This declaration, which is the heart of students' heartbeat of the seventies, demonstrates that Black theology and Black consciousness were intertwined in labouring towards Black liberation in South Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, to see many Black theologians of that time being actively involved in Black consciousness. The two trends operated as a synergy towards the emancipation of the oppressed Blacks in South Africa.

Feminist theology and its theologians

It is not the scope of this book to trace the historical development of feminist theology, but this section gives a panoramic view of what it stands for and refers three of the foremost African womanist theologians: Oduyoye, Okure, and Masenya. The section also refers to a few who contributed towards the field of feminist theology. With the initiatives and the influence of Mercy Amba Oduyoye through the famous Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (Always referred to as 'Circle'), this branch of theology has been variously referred to as African women's theologies, Circle theology, communal theology, *bosadi* (womanhood) hermeneutics, cultural hermeneutics, womanist theologies, etc. Some leaders in this theological framework do not like to be called feminists, since this is incomplete of liberating ideals against the trilogy of race, class and gender.

Feminist theology is one of the most important developments in Christian thinking. As one of the liberation theologies, it has shifted the intellectual playing fields from a top-down, highly abstract way of thinking about God to an approach that emanates from the grassroots and poses questions about how one lives and experiences faith in context. It has, moreover, sought to embody faith, and given the real problem of patriarchy, sexism and violence against women, not surprisingly seeks to address the theological problem of suffering. Black feminist theology in South Africa and America particularly does not distance itself from liberatory political tendencies. They all work together for it is from the political oppression that it emerged

Furthermore, feminist theology came into existence as a way to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures, and theologies from a feminist perspective. When speaking of feminist theology, one refers to the study of how women relate to the divine and the world around them as equal creations also carrying the *imago Dei*. It is a big conversation involving women and men from across Christian denominations sharing their thoughts in everything from scholarly dissertations to blogs and popular books. The conversation always contains a wide diversity of viewpoints, despite some few common and unifying essentials most feminist theologians share. Most of all, feminist theology draws deeply on experience and makes the connection – often overlooked in traditional mainstream theology, even between theology and spirituality. It is generally accepted that feminism is a contemporary emancipatory theology and philosophy that is variously shaped within society (Potgieter 2015:1).

The male dominance in the field of theology for ages led to the pragmatic concern of who is doing theology. God can never be thought of in a vacuum; in other words, male theologians bring their experience of gender when they talk about God, and so do female theologians. Engaging with religion cannot exclude aesthetics, body appearance, and experiences such as exclusion, oppression and marginalisation. Christian feminists' emphasis on experience and context leads them to look at biblical texts, worship services and even personal devotion from the perspective of who is included and who is excluded. The intention here is

to shape the Christian tradition in ways that value both genders and to heal the historical and cultural harms that are done and are continuing to be done to women in the name of Christianity. Feminists are especially alert to traditions and beliefs that exclude or are harmful to women, but increasingly they are also paying attention to race, class, LGBTQ issues, and the environment, working towards a Christianity that is life-giving to all people.

Biblically, Jesus' relationship with women is recorded to have been respectful and harmonious, but Christianity as a religion has historically had a broad record of denying women equality and empowerment. Through rules banning women in church leadership, attitudes implying women's moral inferiority, and even the use of biblical passages to defend domestic violence, Christianity often treats women as lesser creations. Some injustices against women can be traced to the sexist cultural contexts in which Christians have lived, but Christianity itself has too often been used as justification to denigrate women.

Through years of reinterpretation in sexist societies, ideas that categorised men and women on opposite sides of divides like good and evil, rational and emotional, enlightened and carnal, became common binaries in Christian thought and treated as part of the religion itself.

However, several core Christian beliefs push back on dividing up the human race like this: humanity's creation in the image of God, and Jesus' incarnation as both human and divine. That image of God expresses itself in humankind regardless of gender. Women can claim the sacredness of being in God's image equally with men and use that equality to reclaim their value within the Christian tradition.

Apart from the creation narrative that human beings were created in the image of God, the Johannine text informs us: "The Word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14). Jesus became human to save humanity, and an important part of that was having a particular body and experience. To be exact, Jesus' human experience was that of an impoverished Jewish male living under Roman occupation from a rural village called Nazareth, in the province of

Galilee. However, what all of us fundamentally share with him is our experience of humanity. The other particularities of his life, including his gender, are not more sacred than other human conditions. Jesus' gender allowed him to preach and teach in his culture, but it was his humanity that allows him to be Saviour for all genders.

It is unfortunate that for centuries, Bible scholars have appealed to some passages of scripture to limit and harm women. A key task of feminist theology is reconciling belief in divinely ordained gender equality with biblical passages that seem to portray women as of less value than men.

Feminists apply various methods of reading and interpreting scriptures, such as reading problematic passages in light of the liberating message of the Bible as a whole and study limiting or violent passages within the cultural contexts in which they were written. Feminists study the texts in their historical context, which leads to a greater appreciation of the Bible's respect towards women. On the other hand, the mainstream theologians regard texts that remain too disturbing to accept as God's word, therefore too sacrosanct to reinterpret from any perspective. Of course, another option is to critique the canon, especially since women were not very involved in the process of selecting them. Theologians then evaluate ancient texts more directly on how they relate to women. Most feminist theologians do take the Bible as we know it as the central, normative text of Christianity and read it critically, paying close attention to what it says about women, and using imagination and historical research where it fails to mention women at all.

Other pursuits of feminist theology are very similar to the range of studies in theology as a whole; especially in the field of systematic theology where the focus is on applying the mind towards doctrines such as the Trinity as a unit, or individually as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, eschatology (the end times), Creation, the Church, etc. In each dogma, women's experience and relationship to God are brought to the forefront, and theologians work to highlight women's often marginalised voices. Feminist theology shares this work with a related but distinct area of study, namely, womanist theology.

Womanist theology is a type of liberation theology rooted in the faith, experience, scholarship and perspectives of African women, including Black women residing outside the African continent. It shares with feminism an interest in how women relate to God, the church and society but critiques feminists for being too narrow in their view of who women are and how they relate to the divine. Specifically, womanism is founded on the voices of Black women who have often been ignored by White feminists. Womanism is an independent discipline grounded in African theology and identity that also engages ideas from other types of liberation theologies such as Black theology. Feminism and womanism both inform each other as they explore the ways that women's contexts and lives shape how they engage with the divine.

Sometimes theology can seem like pretty heady stuff, but feminism also makes a practical difference in worship, prayer, relationships and church leadership. For example, in worship and prayer, many feminists are working to make sure that both genders are included in how to talk about God.

Linguistics and grammar leave and give more space for confusion. Some languages if not all, in South Africa do not have gender identity such as 'he' or 'she'. In many Christian quarters or contexts, most Christians would say that they don't believe God is male, but often refer to God as 'he' and use male images like 'king' or 'father' during worship. While these images can help to understand God's power and protection, male ways of imagining God can also limit human's relationship to and understanding of the divine. Naturally and subconsciously, women and men are thought of as possessing different character and personality traits. Imagining God exclusively as a male can lead to neglect of ways in which God is more stereotypically 'feminine', such as being nurturing, patient or gentle. Many women relate to God more closely if these feminine aspects are highlighted, and men may find their understanding of God is broadened as well. During the times of worship and prayer, some feminists use 'he' and 'she' interchangeably for God; others attempt to sidestep any gender at all and use titles such as 'Creator', 'Holy One' or simply 'God'. Similarly, when using images to describe God, many feminists balance male and female images: not just king

but also wisdom, not just a father but also a mother. These expanded ways of describing God can lead to a fuller wonder for who God is and how God is in relationship with humanity.

Many mainstream theologians are often intimidated by the feminist theologians, until such a time they come closer to listen to feminist voices. Feminists are bold enough to critically look at doctrinal beliefs and worship practices that have become enshrined in religious tradition, including ones many Christians hold dear. Feminist theologians criticise Christianity not because they want to destroy it but because they are deeply faithful. It's that faith that leads them to wrestle with how women can be understood as full participants in the church, the biblical texts and the whole salvation story. Their contributions are vital to bringing women's faith and experience into equal partnership in the ongoing Christian conversation.

A postcolonial systematic theologian needs to know African feminist theologians and the fundamental approaches to this discipline. Africa prides herself with a pioneering voice of feminist theology in the person of Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Methodist) who in many circles is known as the mother of African women's theology. As a systematic theologian, she argues that given African women's experiences of suffering, Jesus cannot be interpreted using Western patriarchal dogmas. Her work spans for about half-a-century as an academic researcher and lecturer in Nigeria, and also as a coordinator at the World Council of Churches. She is at the forefront of discussions regarding the sensitive subject of alternative masculinities. For Oduyoye, Jesus possesses mother-like qualities; Jesus suffers from the poor and oppressed. Jesus, like a mother, empathises by incarnating into the experiences of those who suffer to change their predicament through caring, loving and offering hope. In women's experiences:

Christ becomes truly friend and companion, liberating women from assumptions of patriarchal societies, and honouring, accepting, and sanctifying the single life as well as the married life, parenthood as well as the absence of progeny. The Christ of the women of Africa upholds not only motherhood but all who, like Jesus of Nazareth, perform 'mothering' roles of bringing out the best in all around them. This is the Christ, high priest, advocate, and just judge in whose kingdom we pray to be. (Oduyoye 1988:32)

She deconstructs the patriarchal descriptions that associate Jesus with power, territoriality and kingdom. She sees Western Christology as imposing imperial patriarchal models on Jesus which do not address the needs of African women.

Dube (2016) captures Oduyoye's Christology of the mother-like Jesus and writes of Oduyoye's (1988:32) attempt to describe alternative masculinities derived from African women's experiences. Deductively, the mother-like Jesus deconstructs patriarchy and calls for new images of manhood based on caring and loving. Patriarchy replicates itself through religious myths found within the African worldview and the Bible, building a canopy of conformity. Myths, according to Oduyoye (1988:32), alienate women from being an active agency. Unless women confront oppressive myths, they will continue to be oppressed. However, in dealing with oppressive myths, Oduyoye is comfortable with assigning new models of caring and loving to Jesus without questioning the gender of Jesus. Can Jesus be separated from his gender as a Jewish man, buoyed within an ancient patriarchal culture? Are the models of caring and loving connection to the historical Jesus? These questions go to the heart of how Oduyoye interprets the Bible. Oduyoye (1988:32), like Okure (2000:194), sees the Bible as a collection of experiences which, for the African woman, can be retold. Meaning is in resonance, that is, how the hearers (in this case the Daughters of Anowa or African women) make sense of the stories. Oduyoye suggests that unlike his Jewish contemporaries, Jesus was pro-women and the poor.

Another African womanist theologian, Teresa Okure (2000:194), agrees with Oduyoye (1988:32), in her *Biblical Hermeneutics of Life* she argues that the interpretation of the Bible should be towards the liberation of humanity from all forms of oppression. Okure broadened Oduyoye's mother-like metaphor to the notion of life. A mother is a source of life and there the task of theology is to promote life. Concerning our topic, therefore, alternative masculinities should promote life (Dube 2016:4). For Okure, the interpretation of the Bible is, simultaneously, a process of seeking to better the living conditions of people. Thus, reading the Bible is to search for its liberative strands to life. Like Oduyoye, Okure (2000:194) starts with the experiences of the people, arguing that, in the

beginning, it was life with God and later came the Bible. This is not to denigrate the Bible but rather to take a hermeneutical lens of life to read across the Bible (Dube 2016:4).

One of the well-known womanist theologians in South Africa is Madipoane Masenya. Oduyoye shares with Masenya (2015:78) the need to criticise the patriarchal imports associated with Jesus and the Bible. Masenya's common phrase is 'life-affirming', which aligns with Okure and Oduyoye. She contributes towards the subject of feminist theology the concept of *Bosadi* (womanhood) to argue that a hermeneutic of suspicion is needed when reading the Bible. True, the Bible is life-affirming, but it should not be taken at face value. Masenya is cautious in her approach to the Bible, bearing in mind how the Bible was misused in and by the apartheid regime to oppress the women. She deduces that theologians should draw the life-affirming narratives from the Bible but should be careful not to blindly accept everything from the Bible as God's word.

Many African women theologians express their concerns by the way the African culture finds hideout in a similar biblical patriarchal culture. For example, Musimbi Kanyoro (2002:17) and also Van Klinken (2013:30), takes a constructivist approach to gender and argues that the Bible comes from a patriarchal culture, therefore, exegetes should be aware of the cultural imports that oppress women. There is a need to be critical of the culture behind and reflected in the Bible. Caution is needed regarding our own culture. Equally, Isabel Phiri (2007:155) says a reading of the Bible that empowers women should begin by identifying the contextual challenges that oppress women – child marriage, exclusion from education and other forms. A similar surgical approach should be used in the Bible. Ezra Chitando (2004:151) and Lovemore Togarasei (2008:211) are other African scholars who have weighed in on the subject of culture and patriarchy.

7.6 Evangelicals and African theology

Let me first try to define 'evangelical' as used throughout this book. There are many perceptions and diverse definitions regarding this term. But in the context

of this book, whenever the term is used, it is always about the stream within the Protestant faith that holds to the orthodox doctrines of Christian faith. Webster gives this unbiased definition:

[A theology] which is evoked, governed and judged by the gospel. In this sense, evangelical is simply equivalent to Christian; all Christian theology, whatever its tradition, is properly speaking evangelical in that it is determined by and responsible to the good news of Jesus Christ. (Webster 2001:191)

It is, therefore, a Christian faith with a strong conviction that *Jesus Hominum Salvator* – Jesus is the Saviour of humanity. The primacy of its agenda is that evangelism is to be expedited with a strong sense of urgency, since salvation, which is the supernatural act of God the Holy Spirit is the mandate given by Christ to the Church for the whole world.

The evangelicals' dogma is summarised in the belief of the sinfulness of humanity, the atoning death of Christ, the unmerited grace of God, and the salvation of the true believer. Erickson refers to evangelicals as:

Those who believe that all humans need salvation and that this salvation involves regeneration by a supernatural work of God. Based upon his grace, this divine act is received solely by repentance and faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Further, evangelicals urgently and actively seek the conversion of all persons worldwide to this faith. They regard the canonical Scriptures as the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice. (Erickson 1993:13)

The same sentiment is expressed by the former president of the National Association of Evangelicals in USA, Ted Haggard. In an article in *Christianity Today*, November 2005, he maintains that an evangelical is:

a person who believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that the Bible is the Word of God, and that you must be born again ... Evangelicalism is a continuum of theologies all the way from Benny Hinn to R C Sproul. The R C Sproul crowd has a hard time with Benny Hinn, and the Benny Hinn crowd has a hard time with R C Sproul. But they're all evangelicals. (Haggard 2005:42)

However, it is to be recognised that evangelicals were not so much interested in polity and doctrine as in the practical expression of Christianity in a redeemed life of piety that gained its inspiration from Bible study and prayer (Cairns 1978:432).

Evangelical faith is not a recent innovation. It is not a new brand of Christianity in the process of invention. In the words of English preacher and author, John Stott, evangelical faith “is original, apostolic, New Testament Christianity” (Stott 1999:14). It is an attempt of going back to the beginning and the recovery of the authentic, original gospel. It is not a new teaching, but the establishment of old things that were taught by the apostles and the godly teachers of the early centuries of the church. The evangelical faith is not a deviation from Christian orthodoxy. Stott continues to shed light:

[Evangelical] came into widespread use only in the early eighteenth century, in relation to the so-called Evangelical Revival associated with John Wesley and George Whitefield. But in the seventeenth century it had been applied both to the Puritans in England and to the Pietists in Germany, and in the sixteenth century to the Reformers. They called themselves *evangelici*, short for *evangelici viri*, ‘evangelical men’, a designation which Luther adopted as *die Evangelischen*. (Stott 1995:15)

Stott’s (1999:15-18) evangelical defence continues to convey that proto-evangelicals include figures such as John Wycliffe – the ‘Morning Star of the Reformation’ who was called ‘doctor evangelicus’, and the great church father Augustine who promoted the ideas of back to the basics of the New Testament in reference to ‘*euangello*’ from which evangelical Christians derive their name. All these attributed ultimate authority to the Holy Scripture and salvation to Christ crucified alone and that the divine grace is the only remedy for human guilt. The epitome of this notion is captured by the British evangelical preacher, Clive Calver (1996:26) in support of France and McGrath that the distinguishing features of evangelicals have always included an insistence on four priorities:

- The supreme authority of Scripture.
- The uniqueness of redemption through Christ’s death.
- The need for personal conversion.
- The urgent necessity for evangelism.

The struggle for definition and identification of evangelical Christian continues. Dr Christina Maria Brenman (1996:22-33) in her doctoral

dissertation on the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, laboriously gives at least four scholarly definitions of evangelical faith – an exercise that reflects the polarisation of this field of study. She commences by outlining Dr Peter Beyerhaus' (1975:307-308) definition who divides evangelicals into six categories:

1. **New evangelicals**, (middle position) with people such as the internationally renowned evangelist, Billy Graham. This is a group that strives to liberate itself from the clutches of the modern science and political conservatism of fundamentalism. They are ecumenical in world evangelisation.
2. **Fundamentalists**, (the right-wing) who possess separatist attitudes. They have anti-ecumenical sentiments.
3. **Confessionals**, who are very church-oriented and emphasise the renewal of faith that is different from that of the Ecumenical Movement.
4. **Charismatic Movement**, which accentuates the pneumatological expressions within the existing churches.
5. **Radicals**, emanating from Latin America. Their focus is the socio-political engagement associated with the proclamation of salvation in Christ.
6. **Ecumenical evangelicals** found in mainline churches and voluntarily choose to take membership of World Council of Churches, though with some reservations to certain aspects of the Ecumenical Movement.

To these categories, Brenman (1996:25) adds Waldron Scott's two other categories:

1. **Black evangelicals**, including many African Independent Churches. This includes, until recently, the Concerned Evangelicals in South Africa. They split from the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa in 1985, accusing the mother body of not playing a critical role to address the apartheid ideology. It was only after the dawn of democracy that the two re-united and became The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA).
2. **Pentecostals**, the classical group that see themselves as evangelicals. Not all these churches are in the Charismatic Renewal Movement.

The term, 'evangelical' was and is popular among the Anglicans. The book that explores the controversial field of Anglican ecclesiology from an evangelical Anglican viewpoint; *The Olive Branch*, by Timothy Bradshaw admits:

It is becoming increasingly hard to pin down today precisely what the term 'evangelical' means. It can indicate a certain zeal for the Lord; a particular attitude to the Bible; a tradition of 'low church' ritual in the liturgy. In terms of 'church ministry and sacraments', however, the classical reformed heritage remains the presupposed foundation for evangelical Anglicans. (Bradshaw 1992:129)

In a nutshell, evangelicalism is not something fundamentally ecclesial but a renewal movement with a distinctive ethos; an ethos uniquely compatible with free church ecclesiology.

Various evangelicals contributed immensely to the subject of African theology. The path of contribution started with Byang Kato of Nigeria, the first African to head the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. In his *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (1975), Kato offers a critique of the incipient syncretism and universalism which he detected in the African theology movement at that time. Kato called vigorously for a contextual theology attuned to the cultural realities of Africa, at the same time, affirming the normative role of Scripture for authentic Christian theology in every context. He was convinced that traditional African belief contains authentic truth about God and prepares the African heart for the Gospel, but he staunchly denied a salvific function for Africa's traditional religion. Tokunboh Adeyemo of Nigeria subsequently contributed an important study on *Salvation in African Tradition* (1979, 1997); Richard Gehman's *Doing African Christian Theology* (1987) offers a stimulating reflection on the task; and the textbook *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective* (1992, 1995) by Wilbur O'Donovan is now in wide use. Tite Tienou of Burkina Faso would be a principal example of an African evangelical who has regularly participated within the larger theological discussion with a still-growing corpus of articles and papers. His doctoral dissertation of 1984, assessing methodologies in African theology, argued plausibly that any appropriately contextual theology for Africa must find its defining matrix in the local African Christian community; and his *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa* (1982)) is a popular text in many African evangelical theological schools.

Most other evangelical reflection on African theology is to be found in journal articles, with *the Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (Kenya) serving as the

principal forum. African evangelicalism has managed to deploy a range of effective continental initiatives in theological education; but, with notable exceptions. With sadness, the intention of Kato to foster a constructive critical evangelical participation within the larger discussion of African theology has not been sustained. Only in the theological colleges does one discover a continuing interactive familiarity. Yet the average educated African evangelical would probably resonate with many of the themes and preoccupations of African theology, even if he or she would expect to modify the answers given on these issues. On the whole, it would seem that theological expression within African evangelicalism has yet to achieve an effective interaction with the intellectual and theological needs within its community, and especially among its educated classes.

7.7 Is there dogma in African theology?

As mentioned in the first chapter of this book, Africans are religious people. They are not some religiously empty vessels to be filled with the Christian gospel, as it was deemed by the early missionaries to this continent. Olupona correctly highlights it that:

Religion in Africa remains the pulse of the private and public spheres, placing a strong emphasis on moral and social order in families, clans, lineages, and intraethnic interactions. As such, it pervades the daily affairs and conduct of African societies. (Olupona 2014:2)

The Eurocentric theology always critiques African theology from the perspective of the lack of metanarratives, and inconsonance with the biblical revelation. This is not a fair judgement as African theology through its proponents had always emphasised the Bible as their foundation and Christ as the centrifugal force around which African theology revolves. This has been demonstrated by all Pan-African conferences of the Third World Theologians that had convened in the continent. For instance, as far as back 1977 in Ghana, African theologians in their declaration stipulated that the saving Word of the Lord which provides the freedom to the captives has been their guiding stick. They further affirmed emphatically that the message of the Old and the New Testaments demonstrates

the boldness and power of their dialogue as African Christians (Bujo & Muya 2018:264). African theology rejoices in the fact that African vitality continues to remain intact, despite the onslaughts of colonialism, apartheid and depersonalisation at large. Trying to justify the dogmatic foundations and specificity of African theology, one needs to look at its stances and approaches. For instance, theologians all over the world clap their hands for the contribution of African theology in approaches such as contextualisation, inculturation, vernacularization, and self-realisation. This has contributed towards African vitality and identity as a result of the application of the biblical texts and teachings into the context where Africans found themselves disempowered.

Another observation is to look into the current trends in African theology. This theology is alive, vibrant, and dynamic. Instead of dogmatically condemning the African Traditional Religions, African theology esteemed these religions as *protoevangel* – the opportunity that opens the way into the Christian gospel. For the past four decades or more, African theology has proved a reputable record of remaining Bible-based while at the same time opened to African realities. This facilitates the ongoing dialogues with non-African and non-Christian theologies. African experiences of oppression, domination, discrimination, marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and paternalisation are not taken for granted by African theology but call for theological redress and response.

Eurocentric theology always calls into question the reliability of sources of African theology. But as mentioned earlier, the Bible and the Christian heritage remains the foundation and the source of this theology.

The Bible is the basic source of African theology because it is a primary witness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. No theology can retain its Christian identity apart from the Scripture. (Bujo & Muya 2018:268)

African theology's bibliology is clear that engaging the Bible in the social context brings the meaning of humanity. The Bible speaks lively of the miserable situation and enlivens hope in despair. African theology is not a stand-alone theology, but part of the worldwide theology that is shaped by historical Jesus, liturgies, confessions, experiences, scholarship, and traditions.

Engaging Black theologians such as Simon Maimela, one realises how theological anthropology has been warped to justify the evil system of apartheid. However, African theology is strong on human dignity that is intertwined with the destiny of the cosmos. Human responsibility is optimistic stewardship of the earth. Soteriological functions of Christ to humanity are not just for human egoistic benefits, but the liberation of the universe.

As mentioned earlier, while the mainstream theology undermines the African Traditional Religions, African theology regards it as the source of African experience of God. Researchers agree that to a certain degree, traditional religions can enrich Christian theology and spirituality. One needs to look into the Christian communion ecclesiology and learn the African communal lifestyle and see how to enhance communion ecclesiology from that perspective. Christian mystics can learn a lot from African spirituality to understand meditation, worship, and prayer. This knowledge can be gleaned from the way African Independent Churches way of worship, structuring of their communities, engaging African culture into worship, and of course, relevance to people's daily life. African theology can be enriched in understanding the Christian dogma by engaging realities of life such as experiences of cultural forms of life in arts, *ubuntu*, and communal lifestyle.

African theology is defined by African life and realities, including culture and resilience in and towards a new future that is unshackled of the colonial legacies of White dominance and supremacist ideologies. "Our task as theologians is to create a theology that arises out of and is accountable to African people." (Bujo & Muya 2018:270). This theology must remain contextual, liberational, and non-sexist by respecting and opening arms for the dignity and the role of women, not only in theological fields but in broader society.

7.8 Modified Christianity: African Initiated Churches

Missionaries, in consort with the colonialists, promoted imperialists and packaged the gospel with supremacist ideals. The missionary emerging and expanding church of the eighteenth and nineteenth century was under

the control of the White missionaries. There was a sign of lack of trust on the indigenous people, especially those who emerged as the educated and enlightened elite of the time. The birth and growth of African Initiated Churches were not as a result of conflicts based on dogma, liturgy, polity, or confessions. The reasons for these splits were usually either political (an effort to escape White control), historical (many of the parent churches, particularly those from a Protestant tradition, had themselves emerged from a process of schism and synthesis; and finally, cultural (the result of trying to accommodate Christian belief within an African world view). It was all about the feeling or thought of been undermined, disregarded, marginalised or mistrusted. Eurocentric imperialist tendencies pushed them to the corner where they had to define their lives, identity, religious and cultural practices according to African traditional values.

Literature had given various designations and titles to this South African Christianity. The term African 'Independent' Churches (AICs) refers to a wide range of issues and is used interchangeably with other terms like 'initiated' or 'instituted' and 'indigenous' churches. Interestingly, most, if not all of them, remain with the abbreviation, AIC.

The abbreviation AIC covers them all. The differences in names correspond to the aspect that a researcher wishes to emphasise. For instance, those who wish to point out that AICs exhibit African cultural forms, describe them as 'indigenous'. These terms have largely been imposed upon such groups and may not be the way they would describe themselves. The term '*African*' refers to the fact that these Christian groupings formed in Africa, but AICs differ from one another. Not all African cultural systems are the same. Regional variations occur among west, east, and southern Africans and the AICs will reflect these. AICs can now be found outside Africa. The following are prevalent in literature and dialogues about this phenomenon:

- **African Independent Churches:** Because of their self-reliance and refusal of foreign financial support or leadership. The term 'independent' offers the most acceptable, generalised title without any implied judgement, it means a "church which has been founded in Africa, by Africans and primarily for

Africans” (Daneel 1987). The term ‘independent’ refers to the ‘independence’ of AICs from racial and economic exclusion by the historical or mission churches during the colonial period which led to the breakaway or schism.

- **African Indigenous Churches:** Because of their emphasis on indigeneity in worship and the inclusion of some African cultural features in their doctrinal and ecclesial practices. The term ‘indigenisation’ of AICs is also a realistic identification of these movements because it indicates a need for the adaptation of the Gospel to African contexts, which is known as ‘inculturation’.
- **African Initiated Churches:** Because of their distinctive African origins. The AICs are predominantly Black, working-class and traditional in their approach, and challenges the dominant narrative/discourse on ‘practices’ in and of worship in broader terms.
- **African Instituted Churches:** Because these churches are in existence without any interference or cooperation with any European or American historical partnership.

These churches make human settlements, especially Black occupied geographical areas such as townships, villages, and informal settlements very colourful on Sundays due to their unique colourful uniforms. Sporadically, one will also see them on Thursdays, a day that in South Africa is known as Sheila’s Day. This is the day of prayer by Black women, and the employers (especially madams, who happened to be White) release their maids (domestic workers) from normal house chores for them to go to the prayer meeting.

In 1994, Duma Ndlovu documented a video, directed by Roberta Uno, titled *Sheila’s Day*. It gives us a clue about Sheila’s Day (Thursday). This video explores the troubled race relations between White employers and Black domestic employees, and the many layers within structures of power. Sheila is the name that the rich ladies use to call their household employees because they claim that they cannot remember the women’s names. Every Thursday is ‘Sheila’s Day’, when the domestic workers have a day off, and the women come to meet with each other. During these meetings, it is possible to learn these women’s desires and hopes, and their belief that women have the power to change the world. They empower themselves through music and songs that function as oral

history and political language, and their dance as a means of communication and political resistance, conveying a strong affirmation of being a woman and Black. They find strength through each other in their collective struggle for freedom. They bond with each other through songs, prayers, and dances. This cultural trait is also traced in the South African movie by Leon Schuster, known as *Mama Jack* (2005). In this movie, the ideas and the current events in the White areas are picked up at the maids' rendezvous.

It will be ideal to try to designate or define these churches as per literature and colloquial references. These definitions are gleaned from various authors and as mentioned from the normal conversations in a public domain:

African Independent or Indigenous Church means a purely black-owned denomination with no links or administrative controls with any non-African church. They have broken the umbilical cord with a Western missionary enterprise. (Makhubu 1988:5)

Churches characterised by three 'S': Self-supporting, Self-governing, and Self-propagating, to produce a truly African type of Christianity. (Mzimba 1928:89)

African Independent Church is independently started in Africa by Africans and not by missionaries from another continent. These churches emphasise their originality and leadership by Africans. (Resane 2017:89)

In Sundkler's earlier work, he described AICs as "the bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism". Three noted scholars, Sundkler (1948), Daneel (1961) and Anderson (2011), have discussed the AICs and their label as 'Separatist' because of the breakaway from historical churches. AICs are often described as the 'churches of the Spirit' with a general description and are also described as 'heretic' or 'cultural' with their focus on 'indigenisation' of the Gospel. AICs are also referred to as 'cultic' in other parts of Africa like Uganda because of the rituals performed in those contexts.

There are thousands of African-initiated churches (more than 10 000 in South Africa alone) and each one has its characteristics. Ecclesiologists, missiologists, sociologists and others have tried to group them according to common characteristics, though disagreements have arisen about which characteristics are most significant, and which taxonomy is most accurate. Though it is possible

to distinguish groups of denominations with common features, there is also much overlap, with some denominations sharing the characteristics of two or more groups.

Many AICs share traditions with Christians from other parts of the Christian world, and these can also be used in classifying them. So, there are AICs which share some beliefs or practices with Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, and Orthodox traditions. Some are Sabbatarian, some are Zionist, and so on.

In the following discussions, let it be noted that the Ethiopian Movement of AICs can be associated with Samuel Brander (USA), Nehemiah Tile and Mangena Mokone (RSA). The Messianic Movement of AICs can be associated with Isaiah Shembe and Barnabas Lekganyane, while the Apostolics of AICs can be associated with Christina Nku. The African Zionist Movement can be associated with Daniel Nkonyana.

7.8.1 Ethiopianism

The first branch to shoot off the missionary Christianity was Ethiopianism. Ethiopian churches generally retain the Christian doctrines of their mother church in an unreformed state. Ethiopian African-initiated churches, which are recently formed Protestant congregations, mostly in southern Africa, arose from the Ethiopian movement of the late nineteenth century, which taught that African Christian churches should be under the control of Black people. The founders are indeed the morning stars of African theology because their churches originated largely as a reaction against White-dominated mission churches (Daneel 1961). The Ethiopian Movement of churches are non-prophetic and lay no claim to any manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The text like Psalms 68:31, "Ethiopia hastens to stretch out her hands to God" featured prominently in the Ethiopian churches established during the colonial period and was the justification and the precursor for African Independent Churches. According to Sundkler (1961) and Daneel (1971), the Ethiopian ideology took root mainly in the south and east of Africa during 1890 and 1920.

The precursor to the birth of Ethiopianism is highlighted by Roy (2017:103-104). The causes include issues like Africans' land dispossession by colonialists and missionaries, the close association of missionaries and colonialists, paternalism that subjugated the African values and ethos, restrictions imposed on African ordinations and leadership development, African desires for Christianity that could encapsulate Christian values and cultural values, the proliferation of Western missionaries who could not cooperate, and finally, Africans aspirations for the formation of a new tribe that is not proximate to the current chiefs.

The movement rolled out like a scroll historically. For instance, in 1872 the Herman Congregation broke away from the Paris Mission. In 1884, Rev Nehemiah Tile became the first Black Christian to break away from the Methodist Church to establish an Independent Church called Thembu National Church (TNC) because he felt strongly that the White church and government were destroying his African culture and heritage (Ngada & Mofokeng 2000:4). Tile and his Black Methodist evangelists were angered by discrimination, discharge from the discussions regarding the ordination of Black ministers, and discussions regarding the appropriation of funds. He was refused ordination though he had completed three years of theological training at Healdtown, as well as the prescribed probation period. In scholarship, Tile is regarded as the father of the independent church movement (Roy 2017:105). The Native Independent Congregation broke away from the London Mission Society in 1885, and the Bapedi Lutheran Church broke away from the Berlin Mission in 1890 (Ngada & Mofokeng 2000:4). The Bapedi Lutheran Church came into being as a result of the ordination of Timotheus Sello and Martinus Sewushane, the first two Africans to become Lutheran pastors. They were ordained by the director of the Berlin Mission Society, Dr H.T. Wangemann in 1885. Sewushane was a presiding pastor at Lobethal. That is where he was "angered by what he regarded as the paternalism, authoritarianism, and excessive strictness of the missionaries" (Scriba & Lislerud 1997:188). He befriended missionary Johannes Winter, and together, in 1890 broke away from Berlin Mission to found the Bapedi Lutheran Church. Their endeavours were supported by the BaPedi Chief Cholokwe. Winter, who happened to be the son-in-law of Wangemann,

pursued the ideal of becoming an African for the Africans. Winter married a second wife, a MoPedi woman, and this angered the Germans to an extent of trying to put a lid on BaPedi Lutheran Church through government legislatures. Theological training and ministerial formation were used as a way of missionary control of the ordination of African pastors. This led to dissatisfaction among African converts who aspired to enter a ministerial calling and career.

Another contributor to Ethiopianism is Mangena Mokone who established Ethiopian Church in 1892. He was ordained as a Methodist minister in 1887. He was a very educated leader and translated a catechism into a Sepedi language. He became a teacher from 1892 at the famous Kilnerton Institution in Pretoria. This institution was established to train the sons of chiefs, and also as a theological college for Black ministers. He was unhappy with the way the Methodist Church was racially biased and discriminating against the Black ministers. His plea fell on the deaf ears, so he consequently severed his ties with the Methodist to form *Ibandla laseTiyopiya* (Ethiopian Church). He won over some intelligentsia such as James Dwane who was a graduate of Healdtown Missionary Institution and is remembered for the outstanding pastoral work he did. Dwane played a crucial role in translating a Xhosa hymnbook and was a theological educator par excellence! He went to England to successfully raise funds for the propagation of an African education project. The collusion with the missionary leaders arose when the administration of funds was centralised and administered by the White church leaders. He severed his ties with the Methodist Church and teamed up with Mokone to emerge as a prominent Ethiopian leader. His endeavours to merge the Ethiopian Church with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) was short-lived as he was unsatisfied by his Americans' aspirations for much control. In 1900, Dwane founded Order of Ethiopia, and together with his followers joined the Anglican Church – a marriage that continued with some turbulences and seasonal steady streams.

Generally, from 1872, the Ethiopian Movement grew as numerous secessions took place, all based on a rationale of leadership, administration, racism, and cultural collisions. One needs to dedicate a separate book on this movement as it has become large and ushered in the modern African theology scholars continue

to laboriously explore. As mentioned above, there was not much disagreement concerning polity, liturgy or dogma. The secessions were met with resistance by the mainline and mission churches

7.8.2 The Messianic Movement

The Messianic Movement is a protest movement against cultural imposition and Westernisation of Christianity, for example, decolonised liturgies. The term 'Messianic' is used mostly by scholars to define certain practices in the AICs especially the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and the Baptist Nazareth Church (Ibandla Lama NaZaretha, Shembe). The Messianic AICs are often led by charismatic leaders who have the gift of healing and prophecy and subscribe to a hereditary leadership tradition. The churches that have been called 'Messianic' focus on the power and sanctity of their leaders; often the leaders are thought by their followers to possess Jesus-like characteristics. Denominations described as Messianic include the Nazareth Baptist Church of Isaiah Shembe in KwaZulu-Natal; and the Zion Christian Church of Engenas Lekganyane with headquarters in Limpopo Province

According to Inus Daneel (1987:41), some scholars have classified the so-called 'Messianic churches' in the same category as the 'Spirit-Type churches'. Daneel argued that the justification for this is that they are both "largely prophetic movements, the only difference being that in the Messianic churches the leader is elevated to a messianic status" (Daneel 1987). Bengt Sundkler (1948) raised the question, "who stands at the gates of heaven, Jesus Christ or the Black Messiah?". In reply, Sundkler argued, "if it is the Black Messiah, the mediatorship of Christ is violated or superseded and the designation 'Black Messianism' is applicable". The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) of Barnabas Lekganyane and the Baptist Nazareth Church or *Ibandla lamaNazaretha* (Shembe) of Isaiah Shembe are among the fastest-growing AICs in southern Africa with a following estimated to be around ten million members in the SADC region.

Like many AICs, the Messianic groups do not have a distinct theology. Their emphasis on extra-biblical and personal revelation supersedes the Christian

metanarratives. The Bible is used by these groups, but in mechanical ways, with no systematic teachings or dogmatic formulations. “Their ecclesiology is blurry as they are diverse, and, therefore, difficult to analyse, categorise or classify.” (Resane 2017:179). This does not negate the earlier statement about their ecclesiology. Diversities within the Messianic groups limit an analyst to come up with theological dictum regarding these churches.

7.8.3 African Zionist Churches

African Zionism is a religious movement with close to twenty million members throughout southern Africa, making it the largest religious movement in the region. Zionist Churches are also a group of Christian denominations that derive from the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church, which was founded by John Alexander Dowie in Zion, Illinois, at the end of the nineteenth century. The Zionist Churches proliferated throughout southern Africa and became African Independent Churches. The churches are unrelated to the Jewish political movement of Zionism

The Black Zionists retained much of the original Zionist tradition. The Zionists split into several different denominations, although the reason for this was more the rapid growth of the movement than divisions. A split in the Zionist movement in the United States meant that after 1908 few missionaries came to southern Africa. The movement in southern Africa and its growth has been the result of Black leadership and initiative. As time passed some Zionist groups began to mix aspects of traditional African beliefs, such as the veneration of the dead, with Christian doctrine. It is syncretic and a combination of Christianity and African Traditional religions. Zionism blends traditional African beliefs with faith-healing and water baptism. Many Zionists stress faith-healing and revelation, and in many congregations, the leader is viewed as a prophet.

As mentioned above, there are several offshoots of the Christian Catholic Church in Zion. The earliest secession leader from this movement was Daniel Nkonyane who introduced certain elements in worship such as white robes, bare feet, holy sticks, and some form of Old Testament symbolism. Nkonyane insisted

on several key changes to doctrine. Perhaps most importantly, he stressed the need for his followers to propitiate their ancestors—a practice abhorred by the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and most Christian denominations. Nkonyane maintained that “Whoever forsakes his ancestors is also forsaken by his ancestors and he becomes an easy prey for the disease.” This branch is different from the next one discussed – the African Apostolic Movement. Many pieces of literature treat the two as the same. The closer look will show an observer some differences. Historically, they are the siblings, but practically, and liturgically different. AmaZioni /MaSione (Zionists) are different from Abapostoli/Bapostolo (Apostles). According to Sundkler, these are “‘charismatic’ groups emphasising Divine Healing and Prophecy” (Sundkler 1976:16). The observable features among them include:

- They are mostly from the Nguni groups such as amaZulu, amaXhosa, and amaSwati.
- They congregate in small groups in lounges, school classrooms, under the trees, and in any place that may sound convenient for them to meet.
- Gender balance in composition is real, though leadership is mostly patriarchal.
- Their common colours are green and white, though no historical connotation of these two colours. Men wear long coats with swashes and women put on long special dresses with white shoes
- Their music is slower than that of the African Apostolics; there are normally no drums or handclaps. Dances and rhythm, though circular, is slow with sounds like ‘Sh! Sh! Sh!’
- Baptism by immersion is prophetic. A candidate can be immersed once, three times, or seven times depending on the prophetic revelation that came through the prophecy during the church service. Immersion is not strictly symbolic of incorporation into the church/body membership. It can be repeated as a way of cleansing or healing. The preferred water rendezvous is a flowing stream as they believe the flowing water takes away one’s sins, bad luck or *sefifi* (dark shadow). Water remains a point of contact and a symbol of healing, deliverance, and cleansing.
- Most of these groups are the ‘Good Friday Pilgrims’. It is the time of their meeting when all branches or those in the same network come together to pray and baptise new members or for healing and cleansing.

- Unlike the Apostolics discussed later, the Bible is preached from, mostly from the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch and Prophetic literature.
- They are also the secret believers of *Sephiri* church, but not so much like the Apostolics.
- They also do ‘tongues utterances’ and lay hands on the sick.
- Extra-biblical revelations play a major role in their prophetic exercises, where diagnosis and prescription will follow. Normally the prescription will be a type of cloth with its colour, a robe around a waist or on ankles, wrists or across the shoulder(s).
- Importantly, they carry some holy wooden sticks of different sizes and shapes. all determined by prophetic revelations.
- Ancestral veneration and incantation is done, though sugar-coated with other rituals.

7.8.4 African Apostolic Movement

I have coined a new designation of what some scholars call the ‘Spirit-Type Movement’ and call it the African Apostolic Movement. Although some scholars classify them as Zionists, there is some distinction.

In South Africa, the African Apostolic Churches were started by Zionist missionaries from America, including John Alexander Dowie (1907–1947) (USA) and Peter Le Roux (SA). These groups set themselves apart from others by adopting the popular name of *BaApostolo / Abaposteli* (Apostles or Apostolic Church), who operate under the Spirit. Hence, as per Daneel, the “Spirit-Type churches” (1987:39). The African Apostolic churches are reflected in the early Pentecostal Movement, commonly associated with the likes of Christina Nku, Masango, and others. They claim to be the original representatives of Christianity rather than other ‘Zion’ type churches. Christina Nku’s church (St Johns Apostolic Faith Mission) broke away from a well-known Pentecostal Church known as the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and has no relations with this Pentecostal or any mission church today. Christina Nku attracted attention with her practice of healing by prayers and water. The primary focus of the African Apostolic churches is healing (prayer and water) rather than evangelism

(preaching the Word). According to Jonathan Draper (2016:35), like their counterparts in Swaziland, the Spirit-Type churches, the Ama Jericho Church emphasises the distinction between *Umoya Ongcwele* (Holy Spirit) *from Imimoya Emibi* (Evil Spirits) that manifest through witchcraft, bad luck and poverty. Ama-Jericho is known to pray for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to cast out evil spirits. They have a huge following because of the power of the Holy Spirit in the church. The majority of their converts are recruited into the church through the healings that come as a result of the Holy Spirit against evil spirits, hence the significance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the African Apostolic churches. The 'Spirit' is central to an understanding of the success of the African Apostolic churches in the religious field. This group can be characterised by the following observable phenomena:

- The Basotho/Sesotho dominance as opposed to Nguni dominance, such as isiZulu, isiXhosa, or siSwati'
- Leadership is predominantly a female apostle, maybe due to the pioneer, Christina Nku.
- They practise triune immersion, the tradition they inherited from the AFM after secession from the Pentecostal revival movement.
- Prophetic utterances are very common among the leaders, especially in the detection of ensuing evil spirits over one's life. These life mishaps are believed to come through witchcraft, and/or demonic activities.
- Their music is accompanied by clapping of hands, drums, fast circular dancing, and feet stomping; all used to invoke the Spirit's manifestation. Falling into trance can be expected.
- They always reflect, though not generally so much these days, the blue and white colours regalia. This is another feature that reflects their origins out of the AFM.
- They carry an iron sceptre (a ceremonial staff) as a symbol of apostolic authority and power to stave off the evil intended to someone. It is used in different practices, especially in prayer.
- Water is their main point of contact for healing. They believe that there is power in the water, especially if that water has been prayed for.

- One will also come across some practices of the Old Testament Levitical rituals such as sacrifices and robes.
- They are ascetic when coming to alcohol, pork, and smoking, although these days one can come across some devotees imbibing alcohol or smoking.
- They do not have prescriptive ethical norms to be followed by the devotees except the dietary asceticism and ritual cleansings. African Apostolic is very strict regarding the observance and the stipulations of the *Sephiri* Church. This is a very strong feature that is hidden from public knowledge.
- Connection to the Spirit apart from the Sephiri rituals can be obtained through prayers on the mountains, by a river, well or fountain believed to be owned by the *water meisie* (mami water), that is, the monstrous Spirit of water.

The colonial and apartheid eras did not consider the AICs as a significant movement in the struggle for economic and political emancipation. Until the early 1980s, the AICs were mistakenly seen as being too cultural to be part of the struggle for economic and political transformation. However, the AICs suffered subjugation under some now-defunct homeland leaders who used these churches to propagate their political agendas. Bophuthatswana and Ciskei were at the forefront of gathering these churches and sold their ideologies through them. This was taking an advantage of these church leaders' theological ignorance or shallowness. The beginning of the nineties, especially from 1994, saw the growing recognition of the importance of the AICs within South African Christianity and their role in economic and political transformation. It should also be noted that after 1994, political and civil authorities started to recognise that AICs membership made up a considerable component of the working class and this was crucial to both the economic and political aspect of the struggle. This is evidenced by politicians' regular visits to these churches cultic centres such as Morija of the Zion Christian Church, Zuurbekom of the International Pentecostal Church, Ekuphakameni of the Nazareth Baptist Church, and more. These regular political visits coincided with religious pilgrimages of the followers; and ironically when national elections were on a horizon. The AICs contributed immensely to the political emancipation of South Africa from minority colonial and apartheid rule to a democratic rule. They continue to

contribute to the decolonisation of theology, for example, inculturation and socio-economic development or modernisation. Indeed, AICs are a 'protest' movement aimed at the 'Africanisation' of Christianity.

AICs form a significant part of South African Christianity. There is a constant self-search of how these churches are affected by socio-political events in South African spatial domain. Musa W Dube (2000:15) cites the popular quote: "When a white man came to our country; he had the Bible and we had our land. The white man said to us, 'let us pray', after the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible". The critical issues raised by Dube contributed immensely to the rational origin of the AICs. Dube's issues are listed below:

1. **Land dispossession:** The AICs have no access to land taken by White settlers as from 1652 and later formalised by the Land Act of 1913 and the consequent legislation culminating into the official apartheid era, which commenced in 1948.
2. **Racial superiority:** The AICs have no relations with White missionary churches for support, especially the Messianic and Spirit types.
3. **Power struggle:** The power struggle also relates to the struggle faced by the AICs in the postcolonial era. The AICs had no political power to engage with the authorities on injustices because of polarisation.

According to Barbara Bompani, "the Post-Apartheid period can be considered as an era that emphasises socio-economic development". Bompani further argues that the "AICs appear to offer important answers that ought to be considered within the broader socio-economic development" in the SADC region (Bompani 2010:320)

7.9 Any theology in African Initiated Churches?

AICs have the 'spoken or oral theology' rather than the 'written theology', therefore have no dogma or system of liturgy or confession that is generally practised by worshippers. James Cochrane refers to the AICs 'theology' as 'Inchoate' or 'Incipient' meaning not fully developed as a 'theology' in terms of scholarship. The Messianic Movements of AICs protests against the orthodox

doctrines because of the dominant discourse or narrative of Westernised Christianity that asserts a particular culture and worship style.

The classical missiological study of AICs, most notably by Bengt Sundkler (1948, 1961), Harold W Turner (1967), and Inus Daneel (1971, 1974) have followed the twofold typology of Ethiopian/African and Zionist/spiritual/prophet-healing trajectory. The entrance of charismatic and Pentecostal AICs with the prosperity gospel/theology complicates the doctrinal issue of the AIC further. The traditional indigenous AICs have been described by Western scholars as a 'syncretistic' religious movement.

7.9.1 Soteriology and Christology

The doctrine of salvation is central to the Ethiopian Movements' understanding of Christ as the centre of Christianity. The Ethiopian Movements of AICs adopt these theological doctrines provided they are contextualised and are not a form of colonisation or Westernisation.

7.9.2 Pneumatology

The doctrine of pneumatology is fundamentally important for the Messianic Movements and the Spirit-type AICs. This is not the emphasis in the Ethiopian Movements of the AICs because of their proximity to the historical or mission churches. The Holy Spirit plays a critical role in the Messianic Movements of AICs and the Spirit-type AICs. The emphasis in the Messianic and Spirit-type Movements of AICs is on the healing of the sick, the casting out of demons, evil spirits, witchcraft and bad luck that brings poverty. The Holy Spirit serves to protect the righteous believers of AICs Movements from harm, assist during prophecy and prayer, and create good fortunes.

7.9.3 Ecclesiology

The prescriptive liturgy is still evident in the Ethiopian AICs as a result of the association with mission churches except for the Messianic and Spirit-type

churches or Indigenous churches. The doctrine of the church in the AICs serves as a reminder that the church is for the people and not just the leadership. The communal understanding of who the church is is critical; especially in the Ethiopian Movements because of racial hegemony and polarisation which led to schism. The concept of the church as the 'bride to Christ' has theological significance, the church is at the service of Christ and not vice versa. The church is understood as the membership rather than the leadership; it is the majority who are mostly poor and marginalised by economic and political systems that make up the church not the elite in the leadership. However, diversities within the AICs render their ecclesiology some blurry lines, making scholars find it difficult to substantiate or stipulate.

7.9.4 Eschatology

The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is central to Ethiopian Movements, because of the theological significance of the Trinity, and Christ as the way to God after death. Some of the Messianic Movements express their eschatological beliefs through their ancestral traditional belief systems rather than through Christ. Good examples here include the likes of Lekganyane's Zion Christian Church, Shembe's Nazareth Baptists, and Modise's International Pentecostal Church. One needs to note that the Cross of Christ is central to the understanding of the Second Coming in the Ethiopian Movements, and the eschatological hope of resurrection after death. Of course, this is not the case in the Messianic Movements.

7.9.5 Some practices and beliefs

Some scholars such as Ngada and Mofokeng (2000:1) argue vehemently that "Christian Missionaries compassed sea and land to make converts among the indigenous Black people of South Africa". They further argue that what missionaries brought was hardly "the Gospel of Jesus Christ", but "Western culture and Western Civilization" (Mofokeng 2000:1), what these scholars call 'White mask'. The 'White mask' was first experienced in the issue of 'dress code'.

Missionaries argued, that to be a Christian, a Black Christian had to “dress” like “whites” (Mofokeng 2000:1). Africans had to adopt Western ways of “eating, talking, addressing people” and most importantly Western ways of worshipping, not to mention adopting a colonial language – in the South African situation, English. The worse assertion, argues Ngada and Mofokeng, is that according to missionaries, if African did not put this Western respectability, “Africans were destined for eternal condemnation”.

This demonstrates that there is a need for African scholarship on AICs. Here in South Africa, we encounter, among the few, Simon Maimela, and others like Ngada and Mofokeng. Mosala and Mofokeng who argue that “African Christians felt that the church was not interested in their daily misfortunes and concrete problems” of Africans. Maimela argued that the “greatest attraction of AICs was an invitation to Africans to bring their anxieties about witches, sorcerers, evil spirits, bad luck, poverty, and illness”. Maimela further argued that “Syncretism” is misunderstood and refers to “Contextualisation or Inculturation” of the Gospel by AICs. He challenges the “Westernisation” of “Christianity” in different contexts in the world (Maimela 1985:71). The Ethiopian churches embrace the Bible, especially the New Testament, while the Messianic churches appreciate the Old Testament (for example, polygamy, *lobola* (Dowry), sacrifices, Jewish law on the Sabbath).

As mentioned earlier, symbols in many AICs include white robes as symbols of repentance and/or baptism for the believers. They carry staffs (*izikhali/thusi* or *dihlomo/mare*) for casting out of evil spirits and bad luck and for protection of believers. On many occasions, worshippers walk barefoot as a sign of respect for Holy places of God. Also, ascetic practices, such as abstaining from certain food (e.g. pork and wild game), alcohol and smoking are believed to affect the spirituality of believers. In some cases, Western medicine is avoided or discouraged as it is believed it reinforces colonial power. Traditional herbs are a protest against this notion by believers. Water plays a crucial role as *isiwasho* (swash) for healing the sick. It is viewed as a form of healing power that is uncontaminated by herbs and is only enhanced through spiritual incantation

by abathandazi/intercessors. Hair and beard (izinwele nentshebe) are associated with a Nazarite (Num 6:5; Judg 16:17) like Samson whose power was his hair. This practice is common in Messianic (Shembe) and Apostolic AICs. It is only in Zion Christian Church are men not allowed to keep a beard. Broadly speaking, the AICs, excluding the Ethiopian-type churches, are characterised by the following features:

- Use of faith-healing and revelation through dreams.
- 'Jordan' baptism, in rivers.
- Ritual garments, often mostly white, and prophetic staffs.
- Food taboos, such as not eating pork.
- Some smaller denominations worship in the open-air and practise 'wheel' dances – dancing in circles, sometimes to the beat of drums.
- Some denominations accept polygamy.
- Some denominations show syncretic mixing of Christian and traditional African religious beliefs.

7.10 Pentecostal and charismatic revivals

Literature is abundant on the history of Pentecostalism from the Azusa Street revivals at the beginning of the twentieth century to the Wakkerstroom revivals in South Africa. However, as a matter of introduction to this discussion: The Pew forum, which has become an official informer on Pentecostalism (see Pew Research Centre 2008) informs us that Pentecostalism began spreading in South Africa after William J. Seymour, of the Azusa Street mission, sent missionaries to convert and organise missions. By the 1990s, approximately ten percent of the population of South Africa was Pentecostal. The largest denominations were the AFM, AOG and the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (FGCSA or just FGC). Another thirty percent of the population was made up of mostly Black Zionist and Apostolic churches, which comprise a majority of South Africa's AICs. In a 2006 survey, one in ten urban South Africans said they were Pentecostal, and two in ten said they were charismatic. In total,

renewalists comprised one-third of the South African urban population. Half of all Protestants surveyed said that they were Pentecostal or charismatic, and one-third of all South African AIC members said they were charismatic.

The oldest branch of Azusa Street revival of 1906 is known as classical Pentecostalism. The three denominations attached to this classification are the AFM, AOG, and FGCSA, as identified by Anderson (1992:7), Pentecostalism is divided into three main branches. The first classification is the Pentecostal Mission Churches. These are the groups that trace their roots to White mission churches that came from another continent, specifically, North America and are commonly called the Classical Pentecostals. In the real sense, they emerged and emanated from the Holiness Movement, and are influenced by evangelical tenets of faith. In some respectful ways, these are the fundamentalists who hold on to the conservative outlook of the Christian faith. They are pro-life, so anti-abortionists, anti-homosexuality, and anti-violence. In other words, they hold on to the purity of life and sanctity of sexuality. Before going to the next group, it is vital to reflect on a broader historical and current status of what is generally termed 'charismatics'.

In California in 1960 things started unconventionally. Dennis Bennet, the rector of St Marks Episcopal Church in Van Nuys confronted his congregation that the previous October he had received the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'. This was the beginning of the current charismatic movement. It swept through the mainline denominations, starting with the Anglicans, followed by the Catholics, and thereafter caught most, if not all the mainline denominations. The charismatic movement is Pentecostalism in the mainline denominations. Pentecostals who remained within their traditional churches evolved into what was later known as the renewal movement, or charismatic renewal. The movement led to the crumbling of barriers between the Pentecostals and mainline Protestants, making the movement ecumenical in composition. There was never a separate structure for the people who experienced Pentecost as they continue to exist and experience the Holy Spirit within their churches.

These Christians continue to hold on to their church dogma but go an extra mile by claiming the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and in many incidences, claim the divine healing. In the last decade or so, they used to have massive conventions in stadia, sometimes called 'Faith Conventions' or 'Renewal Conventions'. That has fizzled out, I think due to the mushrooming of smaller communities of the same kind everywhere.

Then, there are Independent Pentecostal Churches. These qualify to be part of AICs. They have exclusively Black control with no claim of relationship with White origin or control. They are mushrooming in South Africa with names such as Grace, Glory, Restoration, and End Times, and tend to employ biblical Hebrew or Greek names such as El-Shaddai, Alpha, Omega, Yahweh Shammah, Jehovah Jireh, Rhema, and Logos. They are found in small or very large groups (mega churches). One can think of groups such as the Grace Bible Church in Soweto and elsewhere, Benjamin Dube's Church in Vosloorus, and the Hope Restoration Ministries of Chris Mathebula in Kempton Park. As previously mentioned, some are small, and some are big. Most of them are South African-initiated and led, with limited network relationships with other African countries.

Some observations regarding these independents are noteworthy. Few of them claim the polity of the fivefold ministry of Ephesians 4:11. This church structure is always unworkable for many, hence they abandoned it later after attempts to govern the church with it. They, like many scholars, realise that these are the gifts to empower the church, not to govern it. In the recent past, there has been a strong slant of re-employing these Ephesians 4:11 titles whereby many pioneers adopt titles such as Apostle or Prophet. However, a few prefer traditional ones such as Evangelist, Pastor, or Teacher. The three that they tend to use most are Apostle, Prophet, and Pastor. There is also some revival of an Episcopalian tendency among them where the title of Bishop and bishopric regalia is becoming more prevalent. A good example is Musa Sono of the Grace Bible Church, who has now become Bishop Musa Sono. There is a circle going around conferring these bishopric titles and ordaining pastors to give them these titles.

Since ecumenicity within the charismatic groups, like many evangelicals, is an anathema, they developed networks where individual leaders or communities are adherents that just relate to each other. This is to preserve the autonomy of the local church communities, and not to temper with individuals' anointing regarding their specific authoritative revelation they are set apart for. For instance, in 1985, Ed Roebert of Hatfield Church (formally a Baptist Church) in Pretoria and Ray McCauley of Rhema Bible Church in Johannesburg formed the International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC). Mosa Sono's Grace Bible Church in Soweto was also a member of the IFCC. This network suffered a big blow when the leadership decided to join the SACC as observers. The White conservatives abhorred the idea of joining hands with liberals and left the IFCC. In the eighties and nineties, networks increased in existence. For instance, Fred Roberts initiated and led Christian Centres called Christian Fellowships International. Derek Crumpton headed Foundation Ministries, and Dudley Daniels, who is now a resident of Australia, heads New Covenant Ministries. Currently, there are many networks nationally and internationally that some South African charismatic churches or leaders are related to. There was even a time when there was a Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches (FPC) comprising AFM, Assembly of God (AOG) and the FGC. This network died a natural death after the three took different viewpoints concerning racism.

What still baffles many is the re-employment of the academic titles on some of these church leaders. Some fictitious institutions that may be very pseudonymous, claiming American connections, are going around instituting the academic titles in the name of honorary doctorates, professorships, etc. Numerous Independent Pentecostal leaders carry titles such as Dr, Prof, and suchlike.

Thirdly, there are neo-charismatic groups that are emerging and are a huge shock in Christian circles. Some are led by foreign pastors, some by locals, but their practices are the same. At the time of writing, there are three foreign pastors with some scandalous issues behind their names, mostly for either human trafficking including women abuses, money launderings such as financial misappropriation or embezzlement, faked miracles that include human abuse, and

pre-fabricated miracles for financial gains. On the other front, we are confronted by some of these churches, mostly South African, who perform miracles that endanger human life and degrade human dignity. The world was shocked when people were made to eat grass, drink petrol, eat snakes and rats, sprayed with insecticides on their faces, made to lie prostrate for the preacher to walk on their backs etc. Sometimes couples are made to engage in a 'prayed for sexual activity' for the healing of infertility; and in some cases, women's breasts were fondled to heal breast cancer; and men's genitals touched for healing impotency and prostate cancer. These leaders are either a laughing-stock or are mocking Christ and the Christian faith.

In the previous groups discussed above, one is justified to conclude that they are celebrity cults, wherein a charismatic leader has all powers revolving on and around him or her. Most of the leaders are the founders of these ministries, and they have their ultimate control on affairs such as financial administration and property ownership (church buildings are their registered assets, not corporate ownership). Full divine revelation is also owned by them. They are the only legitimate emissaries invested with divine authority to lead the way they do. And they should not be questioned by followers, as by so doing, this lack of submission may lead to curses and some form of mishaps.

The two groups discussed are scantily seen expressing the definition of the church as the place where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments are practised. Yes, the Word may be preached, but sacraments are not observed as a gathered church. One hardly hears of the baptismal services in these churches, but sometimes there can be a Holy Communion, though not expected. Motivational talks have replaced expository preaching, and commercialisation of the gospel has replaced the sacraments.

The neo-charismatics or the neo-Pentecostals do not have a defined dogma, as most of the kerygma is claimed to be having a divine origin, and this they call revelation. Unfortunately, most of kerygmatic activities are extra-biblical in nature and shape, without any reference to the metanarratives. Personal prophecies and motivational talks take a place of exegesis, with no hermeneutical

exercises to extract the truth out of the text. Going beyond the borderlines (metanarratives) is always claimed to be 'moving under the anointing'. Injustice to the text is a norm for the neo-charismatics.

Pentecostalism is a real phenomenon in Christianity as it is growing not sporadically but incessantly as it decimates mainline Christianity due to its dead liberalism. In South Africa Pentecostalism, just like in the rest of the continent, is a growing branch of the Protestant faith. There are three mainline classical Pentecostal denominations in South Africa. Each of them pioneered and grew in some unique ways. All three evolved as missionary churches. In other words, they are not originally from the African soil, therefore, cannot be labelled African Independent Churches. They arrived in South Africa as growth points of 1906 Azusa Street Revival in the USA, and were enhanced by mission agencies from other Western countries.

Apostolic Faith Mission

The Apostolic Faith Mission began in 1908 when John Lake and Thomas Hezmalhalch came from William Seymour's Azusa Street Mission as missionaries to South Africa. The Apostolic Faith Mission grew quickly, but soon became racially segregated.

Like many church formations in South Africa, the white leadership of the AFM unashamedly identified with the socio-political developments of the time by holding the rest of the church in its sway. This inter alia was enhanced by the ensuing Afrikaner nationalism prevailing at the time and articulated since 1948. (Resane 2018:1)

In 1996 the racially segregated branches reunited to form one of the biggest Pentecostal denominations in South Africa.

Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God is the largest Pentecostal denomination in the world. In 1908, missionaries arrived in South Africa from William Seymour's Azusa Street mission. Some of these missionaries organised a group that would eventually grow to become a part of the Assemblies of God. By 1936, this branch

of the AOG was a mostly Black denomination. Like many other Pentecostal denominations, the AOG preach of healing, miracles, as well as the Holy Spirit baptism. One major difference from other Pentecostal denominations is that the AOG believe in the Trinity, that people should be baptised ‘in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit’, rather than, ‘oneness’, where you are baptised in the name of Jesus. The Assemblies of God has its internal structure called the ‘Groups system’ that looks like a racially divided church.

These groups disintegrated, reformed and ultimately reformulated into the current tri-cameral or tripod structure based on racial lines as per the dictates of the apartheid government’s ideology of separate development. (Resane 2018:3)

Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa

In 1909, George Bowie was sent by the Bethel Pentecostal Assembly to South Africa. In 1910 the Pentecostal mission began. This would eventually become the Full Gospel Church of God in South Africa (*Volle Evangelie Kerk van Suid Afrika*). From as early as 1975, the Church engaged in a robust debate on racial disintegration to form one united Church. As Resane notes:

[I]n October 1997, the whole FGC in Southern Africa united to become one structural organisation. This made the FGC a non-racial and structurally integrated church. (Resane 2018:4)

The Full Gospel Church of God teaches of integrity, prophecy, and empowering members and leaders to operate within biblical standards. They are contemporary yet remain faithful to their Pentecostal origins

Pentecostalism is a force to reckon within South Africa. Half a century ago, it was still deemed by mainline Christianity as a sect, heresy, or even a cult. Things have changed and it is now recognised as another branch of Protestant Christianity. It invades all churches, and in some places takes over some old faith establishments as it continues to exert itself. It has conscientised the traditional and conservative Christianity of the need for the vibrancy of faith, and freedom of confession of what one believes about God. It has engrossed the need for balance between faith and feelings. One needs to feel what one believes.

Chapter 8

Is the status quo justified?

There is a younger generation in South Africa, disqualifying Christianity as an instrument of oppression. The so-called 'born-frees' are the generation that hears and reads about apartheid and its atrocities. They have never experienced or witnessed it in its naked form. They come from all racial groups in South Africa. This puts a spotlight into their identity crisis. They are happy to walk around with their egos bloated that they belong to South Africa, but deep inside their being, the reality of meaning and purpose of life reigns supreme. The vacuum that can only be filled by God still nags at the door of their lives.

The born-frees are a Bible-ignorant generation. In the past, parental responsibility for entrenching religious convictions was enhanced by the schooling system. That has been taken away. The parents who relegated their responsibilities to the school are now facing dawdles uncomfortably. The Bible and the church must become relevant to this emerging demographic reality. Some churches engage this generation, some disengage by holding on to the traditional ways of doing church, and yet others remain neutral. This is the time when Christ must become the centre of everything.

8.1. A new generation with no apartheid experience

In 1994, South Africa celebrated its first universal elections. The event marked the end of apartheid, the institutionalised system of racial segregation that characterised the country for almost half a century. The resultant effect of this transition was the birth of a new generation called 'born-frees' – those born after 1994 who have never lived under an apartheid government. Those of this generation were born after Mandela's ascent to power and were too young to experience White rule first-hand. This is a generation born in a country after it

transitioned to democracy. These are the growing population of South African youth born into a free and racially undivided South Africa; the generation that was supposed to embody Mandela's idea of a 'rainbow nation' and a non-racial South Africa.

It is not surprising to hear many of the younger generations in South Africa disqualifying Christianity as an instrument of oppression. The so-called born-frees are the generation that hears and reads about apartheid and its atrocities. They have never experienced or witnessed it in its naked form. Their parents became the reliable source of information regarding apartheid and the role or influence of Christianity in shaping apartheid into aristocratic ideology. This generation is confronted with the historical racial and religious fanaticism that, to a varying degree, affected all racial groups in South Africa. The young generation finds religion irrelevant and oppressive. Religion, especially the reformed faith is deemed by the youngsters as inhumane and an obstacle in their quest for identity. Critics among older South Africans contend that it is an apathetic, apolitical generation that is profoundly unaware of the history of struggle that made freedom and desegregation possible.

South Africa is marked by linguistic, cultural and racial diversities. As a country, it is still far from being fully integrated. Schools and universities are mixed, but neighbourhoods still tend to be populated by certain racial groups, with interracial couples uncommon. Though the born-frees can have friends and lovers of other races, the legacy of apartheid surrounds them. White South Africans still own the vast majority of land and control most of the country's wealth. South Africa's cities are patchworks of dense, mostly Black neighbourhoods of shacks – a direct inheritance of the segregated housing of the apartheid era – and gated communities fenced off with barbed or electric wires. But there are also stories of progression. South Africa is the only African country where gay marriage is legal, and many people are starting to feel positive about the changes in public attitudes towards homosexuality.

As mentioned above, the legacy of apartheid continues to jeopardise Christianity. The younger generation of all races holds some reservations about Christianity.

This highlights its identity crisis. They are happy to walk around with their egos bloated that they belong to South Africa, but deep inside their being, the reality of the meaning and purpose of life reigns supreme. The vacuum that can only be filled by God still nags at the door of their lives. Truth be told as the New Living Translation of the Bible in Ecclesiastes 3:11 states:

Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

In every human soul is a God-given awareness that there is 'something more' than this transient world. And with that awareness of eternity comes a hope that one day humans will find a fulfilment not offered by meaninglessness in this world. The human heart is an expression representing the mind, soul, or spirit of each person. God places *olam* (eternity) into the human heart and soul. This *olam* refers to God's placing an eternal longing or sense of eternity in the human heart. Humans operate in a different way than other forms of life. They have a sense of eternity in their lives; they possess an innate knowledge that there is something more to life than what can be seen and experienced in the here and now.

The truth of life remains that though the born-frees did not experience the season of apartheid, their season still needs God to fill in the emptiness they feel inside of their inner being. Seasons come and go, but does anything in this life truly satisfy? The answer in Ecclesiastes is, "no, all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). However, through all the ups and downs and vicissitudes of life, there is a glimpse of stability – God has 'set eternity in the human heart'. "Life is but a vapour" (James 4:14), but there is something past this life. There is a divinely implanted awareness that the soul lives forever. This world is not a permanent home for humanity.

Post-apartheid South Africa with its entrenchment of secularism kicked religious education and all faith-based extra-mural activities out of the schooling system. Moral education and ethics in a broader base were counted as syllabus content of the past that enhanced apartheid policies. This step opened the way for a valueless generation that sees no respect for human dignity, or even illustriousness of

personal integrity. The bottom line is God has been kicked out of the schooling system in honour of secularism. That these youngsters today live in the world that the adults had created, and that very soon the same adults will be living in the world that these youngsters will be creating is an inevitable eventuality to face.

The born-frees are a Bible ignorant generation. In the past, parental responsibility for entrenching religious convictions was enhanced by the schooling system. That has been taken away. The parents who relegated their responsibilities to the school are now facing dawdles uncomfortably. Religious education is biblically and primarily a parental responsibility. So when your children in future ask you:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9)

The removal of religion in schools opened the way for godlessness, hence schoolyards have become dens of iniquities: rapes, murder, substance abuse, etc. It has become a norm to hear of learners stabbing each other or teachers to death, or teacher-learner and learner-learner sexual escapades or orgies in schools. Ground has been lost as the culture of teaching and learning has vaporised. The born-frees fit a description proposed by Well (1978:99) that they are “uninterested in fixed principles, closed systems, transcendent ideals or enduring philosophical commitments”.

Regardless of all decadency, there is some spiritual revival among the post-apartheid generations. Search for spirituality is observable. Many churches, especially those of contemporary worship styles are drawing many youngsters to God and his Word. The charismatics are experiencing even those in the early to mid-twenties taking church leadership roles and responsibilities. The mainline denominations are striving to balance the hymnbooks with contemporary African music styles. The Reformed family churches, including the Lutherans and the Anglicans, are becoming more and more contemporary in their liturgies

and confessions. The reason for this is to hold the youngsters at the centre of the Christian faith. For instance:

- The Methodists are known for small cushions clanging like cymbals or hand-clapping to keep with the rhythm.
- The Lutherans introduced brass bands, and lately use small cushions and a bell. The singing of choruses or contemporary African gospel songs is becoming popular, with dancing around the altar. Bammann concludes his book, *The Bahurutshé* with a short description of how the contemporary Batswana Lutherans conduct their worship services (Bamman 2016:226-227).
- The Uniting Reformed Church combines cushions, bells, and sometimes a whistle.
- The Anglicans and Catholics use all these mentioned above but keep the tempo with African drums.
- Many African Initiated Churches use a big African drum, a whistle, hands clapping, and sometimes some modern instruments, such as keyboards, guitars, and drums.
- Pentecostals and Charismatics are very contemporary and, in some ways, traditional by re-rhyming traditional hymns into an upbeat and African tempo. Most of them are marked with powerful public address systems to aid keyboards, electric guitars, drums, and other instruments such as cymbals, tambourines, accordions, saxophones and flutes.

The lost generation or the born-frees of all racial groups tend to be gregarious in their sub-cultures. They like to belong to a group. Hence, they are found over the weekends in night clubs or community formations where they exert their identity as a way of rediscovering their inner being. It is for this reason that many of them find religious affiliation a better place to find this self-identity. The Neo-Charismatic churches and a sizeable number of African Independent Churches are composed of a high percentage of youngsters. Music and worship style is a magnet that attracts and glues them together as a group in a journey seeking the meaning of life that only Christ can offer. These church formations are generous with their platforms and offer these youngsters an opportunity to explore and display their talents. Traditional churches are losing them to these

formations, as they still hold on to the Afrikaans adage that *kinders moes gesien maar ne gehoor nie* (Children must be seen, but not heard).

The new generation with no apartheid experience does not see skin colour like their predecessors. They intermingle easily without any problems. Although biracial families are not very common, they are increasing all the time. The inhibitions and bigotries of the older generation regarding cross-racial marriages are not reigning supreme. These youngsters fall in love, get married, and raise biracial families. They are as homophobic as their parents. Even in this issue of same-sex relationships, the colour bar does not count. Walking in some of the communities, especially in the cities, one will often see Black and White males or females expressing their romance by kissing, holding hands, or doing other things that that shows that they are a couple in love. While the older generation trifles on this, for the born-frees this is acceptable and is treated as a norm. In cities and some towns, this generation finds it easy to embrace a multicultural church where races are not a determining factor regarding worship, ministry, or any form of participation in church life. The bottom line is that this is the “cultural *Geist* in which modern man lives and in which all theology must function either by way of attraction or rejection” (Wells 1978:98).

The born-frees are always considering leaving the church. My observation is that churches with more conservative, traditional views, such as sexuality, creation versus evolution; and biblical inerrancy, are a turnoff to the born-frees. Yet the liberal mainline congregations are still empty or half-full of this generation. Maybe these born-frees leave the church for the same reasons many others leave. Top on the list of the reasons is that they don't feel like they're encountering God. Religion is too rhetorical for them, and especially liturgy has become too dry to usher them into the presence of God. These youngsters want to be equipped to improve their lives, not wallow around in brokenness with perpetually broken people. A Christianity that does not change individuals will not change the world either. Maybe these young people believe that if Christians

are as messed up like everyone else anyway, they can just stay messed up while sleeping in on Sunday mornings.

The born-frees, like youngsters of their age in other parts of the world, find other ways to connect with people outside of the church, including social media. So, if the church does not offer relationships with substance, why would they want to stick around? There are a million places on TV and the internet to hear good preaching and teaching, without feeling the awkwardness or pressure that can come with attending church. There is a need of wisdom here, since now more than ever, the 'people factor' and genuine community are important for churches to get right because people do not need the church to connect anymore. One should bear in mind that these youngsters, like all other age groups, may walk away from the church because they feel as if they are 'backsliding'. Churches do everything right and still lose some people because of this. So, the South African church of today should continually examine itself as to how much it contributes or encourages a culture of backsliding in a congregation?

The other compelling introspection that the church must do is to see that the born-frees do not feel challenged, no matter how we try to meet them where they are by making the church too accessible. Most people want to grow spiritually, and it is difficult to do that in churches that spend an inordinate amount of time catering to the spiritual lowest common denominator. That does not mean we should stop offering plenty of on-ramps for new believers, the lost and the unchurched, but salvation does not stop after justification. People who do not feel they have opportunities to move forward spiritually may leave the church simply because they feel bored. The more I observe the alleged church generation gap, the more I think that most of the 'handwringers' are exaggerating it.

Our problem is not generational as much as it is cultural. Rather than engaging the culture and challenging the culture, maybe we have become a little too obsessed with following the culture. If anything, the church probably needs to become more countercultural, not less. But that does not mean withdrawing from the culture either. Cultural withdrawal is an equal opposite error to

hyper-relevance. South African Christianity needs to continue strategising in an attempt to reach out to the 'now' generation.

The church's mission field is growing regarding this generation. It calls for re-evaluating the traditional ways of doing the church. The church's message of the love of Christ should move from the front (platform) to the pews. Bible study contents should be contextualised to address the needs of these youngsters who are emerging out of the apartheid cage where their elders or parents had been locked in for a long time. Instead of traditional leading of the racial church, there should be lessons on how to lead the multiracial or multicultural church. Premarital and marital counselling should prepare the people for marriage across the colour lines. There is an ecclesiastical call to respond to. South African Christianity cannot and will not flourish if it has a parochial or blinkered attitude. The inevitable reality is that South African Christianity can and will always flourish in multicultural and multi-generational settings. South African theology must be unique in addressing these realities. In this vein, Bonhoeffer suggests that we must learn to put the biblical concepts into a non-religious language which the secular person will readily grasp, and which will be compatible with his own experience of being emancipated by God from religion (Bonhoeffer 1967:178-180).

8.2 Is there any hope for the church?

The church in pluralistic and secular South Africa is marginalised. Consultations by socio-political authorities are purposefully decimated. The fear is that the church is losing her prophetic prowess. Secularism is always intertwined with unbiblical or unethical practices due to its humanistic element in addressing life issues. However, secularism "should not be seen as a perversion but as part of man's divinely ordained maturation" (Wells 1978:103). The church in South Africa is cornered to take one of the two sides: either with or against the government. The voice of the former side seems to be loud and audible in the corridors of state powers, while the voice of the latter is dim and speak

from obscurity. There must be some transparency regarding the church's role in influencing public affairs.

The fact remains that theology and public policy are open for scrutiny. Theology plays a role of challenging the public policy if it overrides natural and social justice. The church's prophetic voice must not recoil into obscurity when the state repression escalates to the total onslaught of human dignity. Privatised religion is dangerous. (Resane 2017:22)

The church in South Africa can take one of the three sides: engage, disengage, or neutral. It will be of great assistance for one to examine all these three stances. First, some churches strongly believe in engaging with the socio-political structures. This engagement encapsulates social activities involvement, play a prophetic role of rebuking sin, and offer pastoral support to victims of social ills and those in political powers or positions of influence. These churches see themselves as the church in the world. They see themselves as the salt of the earth. The conviction here is that the church must influence and change the culture. For a long time, these churches were given different labels, such as liberals, social gospel preachers, and secularised religion. In the South African context, this categorisation has always been focused on churches affiliated with the South African Council of Churches (SACC).

A good example to cite here is that the Baptist Union (evangelically conservative reformed denomination) has never joined the World Council of Churches (WCC), although it did hold membership in the SACC. In 1967, it reduced its status with the SACC from 'Member' to 'Observer', and in 1975 the Union voted – by a large majority – to withdraw from the Council completely, largely on political and theological grounds.

On the other hand, the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA), which is a fully-fledged member of the SACC had always expressed to their Baptist Union counterparts their favourable interaction with the wider ecumenical community, and in particular the SACC, and expressed the desire for a united Baptist presence in the wider Christian community (Scheepers 2008:94). According to Thinane (2019:40), the Baptist Convention played a significant role collectively with other churches in the struggle against apartheid. In their submission to the TRC, the Baptist Convention highlighted the struggles that

the church had within itself to declare apartheid a heresy and even recorded that during apartheid in South Africa, the church remained passive

Many conservative Church formations, normally dubbed evangelicals, opt for political and social disengagement. For them, the salvation of the soul takes precedence over the disruptive human context. Eternal life is seen as the key to empowering humanity for the heavenly bliss. According to Du Plessis (2012:30), evangelicals raise the question of how effective the ecumenical movement is in carrying out the task of world evangelism. Evangelicals would criticise the WCC on this count, who in turn asks the question of whether it is not as important to shed the “light of the gospel on the great human problems of our time”? Even during the turbulent times of racial injustice, these formations broadly remained disengaged. Self-interests and parochial attitudes tainted their ecclesial understanding. There is a clear absence of prophetic relevance in their preaching, hence always missing the mark of exerting the incarnational love of Christ. This is stressed by Resane, who writes of “*Kerygma* that ignores the socio-political context robs *ekklesia* of its identity and mission in the world” (Resane 2017:22).

Some engage, some disengage, whilst others remain neutral. They remain and maintain lukewarm status. One of the condemnations of the Laodicean Church of Revelation 3 is lukewarmness. It is the attitude of divided allegiance. Divided allegiance is as wrong as open idolatry. An engaged community can purge, rebuke, purify, correct, and shape things up. Disengaged people can be livened up, revived, rekindled, and restored. But lukewarm communities carry no similar value – no saltiness, no sweetness, just nauseating, hence, the Lord’s response to the lukewarm Laodiceans, “I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (Rev 3:16). The Laodicean lukewarmness is no different from being dead. Jesus makes it clear that this is a dead church. The members of this church see themselves as “rich” and self-sufficient, but the Lord sees them as “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Rev 3:17). Their lukewarm faith was hypocritical; their church was full of unconverted, indecisive and pretentious Christians

Lukewarm deeds are done without joy, without love, and the fire of the Spirit. They harm the watching world. The lukewarm faith communities are those who claim to know God but live as though he does not exist. They may go to church and practice a form of religion, but their inner state is one of self-righteous complacency. They claim to be Christians, but their hearts are unchanged, and their hypocrisy is sickening to God. They live on an island. Their view of the world is parochial.

One of the tragic statuses of a lukewarm church is that Christ speaks and stands outside of this church (Rev 3:20). He is not welcomed into this church. His incarnational love is *briller par son absence* (conspicuous by its absence). Their lukewarm attitudes as “shameful nakedness” that needs to be clothed in the white garments of true righteousness (Rev 3:18). The post-apartheid era calls for this kind of faith community to be earnest, or zealous, and commit totally to God and his teachings, especially in areas of natural and social justice.

The neutral churches enjoyed race-based material prosperity that was intertwined with a semblance of true religion. This led them to a false sense of security and independence. The expression ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth’ (Rev 3:17) stresses that the wealth attained came through self-exertion. The South African theology of apartheid closed the eyes of the White communities not to see beyond the fence they were trapped in. Hence many of them were horrified to learn during the TRC hearings of the brutalities that were exercised on the seceding voices of the time. This entrenched self-exertion in areas of wealth and security, to give an opinion that Black communities that reacted violently or otherwise were seen as rebels who do not want to obey the righteous laws of the state. The crux is that spiritually, they had great needs. A self-sufficient attitude and lukewarm faith are constant dangers when people live lives of ease and prosperity, living on islands without seeing the seas of injustice and wickedness around them.

Neutrality in the hour of decision is a curse leading to tragic consequences. These ecclesial formations view themselves as tolerant. They claim to accept people for who they are without passing judgement on any action or lifestyle

choice. So, even if the government or any power structure errs, it is to be viewed as fine, since they are conversant with what they are doing. God has called them to exercise that duty or authority, therefore should not be tampered with, as tempering with them is equated with tampering with God. The missing mark for this view is that a biblically and theologically informed Christian faith cannot, in good conscience, approve of all actions or lifestyle choices. The Bible delineates some lifestyles as sinful and displeasing to God. When a Christian's convictions clash with the standard of tolerance set by society, the Christian is often labelled as 'intolerant', 'bigoted', or 'uninformed'. Ironically, those who claim to be the most tolerant are the least tolerant of the theological correctness.

The Apostle Peter before the Sanhedrin expresses a general principle that addresses neutral churches: "We must obey God rather than human beings." (Acts 5:29). Whatever pressure society brings to bear, the theologically sound believer knows who the Lord is and chooses to act soundly theological. In a racially polarised South Africa that abhors theological authority in civil matters, conflicts become inevitable. The tolerance espoused by the neutral Christian views leaves no room for theological application and Christian convictions, but for a theologically sound believer, Christian convictions are indispensable.

If tolerance is viewed as putting up with something one does not like, then tolerance does not require approval or support. In this sense, Christians ought to be as tolerant as possible, for their loving character to be visible to all (Mt 5:16). It means putting up with a lot, including ungodly practices and attitudes. But proper theology should be able to control the human impulse to resent anything that seems and sounds distasteful. The problem comes when tolerance is defined in a manner that implies an acceptance or even approval of what is humanly and divinely offensive. A Christian with Bible-based convictions can accept the fact that people sin, but he must still call it 'sin'. A Christian's convictions do not allow approval of sin whatsoever.

No matter how it is defined, tolerance has its limits. What message would be sent by a church consorting with a government that legitimises human abuse and racial bigotry? What if a judge decides to tolerate perjury or perpetuates

injustice in the court of justice? – “And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment – wickedness was there, in the place of justice – wickedness was there.” (Eccl 3:16). How much disrespect should a teacher ‘tolerate’ in her classroom when he or she is made vulnerable by a learner? What if a surgeon began to ‘tolerate’ septic conditions in his operating room?

When a faith community finds that theology and convictions conflict with the status quo, the open option becomes the biblical convictions and teachings. It is time to seek wisdom and courage. It calls for examining these convictions to ensure they are based on what the Bible says, rather than personal or subjective preferences. Taking a stand against the violation of natural and social justice is biblically and theologically supportable. Even amid a conflict between godly convictions and secular tolerance, Christians must demonstrate Christ’s love and righteousness, exemplifying how truth and love can coexist. In every situation, Christians should exhibit “deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (Jas 3:13). Christian conduct should be such that those who speak “maliciously against [our] good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Pet 3:16).

The good news is that since 1994, there has been an increase in political awareness and involvement by evangelical Christians. For most of the church history, evangelicals considered politics dirty, or a tool of the devil. Though many remain either disengaged or neutral, there is an increased involvement of evangelicals in political processes, hence evangelicals have become an increasingly powerful force in South African society. At the end of the day, the church in South Africa should learn that it cannot and ought not simply to exist for itself. Its mission is to transform the world. There is no middle road to justify disengagement or neutrality. I agree with Schweiker that “Any cultural force or social institution that nullifies our sense of the reality of justice and mercy is, practically speaking, atheistic and, theoretically stated, nihilistic” (cited in Stackhouse, Dearborn & Paeth 2000:33)

The hope for the South African church is to return to the biblical missional mandate of bringing Christ into the chaotic situation where tensions,

mistrust, and fear of each other reigns supreme. If Christ is at the centre of it all, there will be harmony and peace on no superficial ecclesiastical dictates. Yes, churches should engage and be incarnationally involved with the communities that are hurting, but Jesus must be the centre of it all.

8.3 Jesus at the centre (Israel and the new breed)

The popular American gospel singer, Israel Houston and the group, The New Breed, sing a song popularly known as *Jesus at the Centre*. It was one of the tracks of live recording since their critically acclaimed Grammy award-winning album, *A Deeper Level*. It was recorded live with thousands of worshippers at Pastor Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church. The song's Christocentric lyrics had become a contemporary confession appealing for the centrality of Christ in both personal and ecclesiastical life.

*Jesus at the centre of it all - Jesus at the centre of it all
From beginning to the end
It will always be, it's always been You Jesus
Jesus at the centre of it all*

...

Jesus You're the centre, and everything revolves around You

...

Chapter 9

South African Christianity and socio-cultural menaces

The church in South Africa is still divided politically and gender-wise and carries a stigma towards people's sex-orientation and those with HIV and AIDS. It is a church full of scandals in areas of dogma, finances, and sexuality. Corruption in socio-political structures signifies the church that has lost its influence in society.

Social sins and structural, systemic corruption abound. But the kind of moral perversity that harms the innocent church members and/or the vulnerable deserves no quarter. Moral laxity is rampant at all levels of the church community. This has become an obvious source of criticism of the church. Pastoral dignity and integrity are dragged in the mud. The commercialisation of the gospel is a mark of corruption in the church. The most lucrative and controversial corrupt practice used to raise funds for some church leaders is to sell points of contact such as water, oil and cloths.

When deemed to have sinned, people in desperation are asked to pay a certain amount of money to the local church or a so-called man of God instead of being led to repentance to receive grace – God's favour. The practice of milking finances out of the people easily lent itself to abuse. Initially, repentant Christians who pledged a certain amount, always dubbed 'planting seed', are promised to receive multiple blessings of manifold amounts of money they have pledged. Pledgers are made to believe that salvation is attainable simply through the honouring of pledges made.

The church must confront corruption and prophetically condemn it while pastorally embracing the perpetrators or corrupters to bring them to repentance and restoration.

9.1 Disjointed communion of the Saints

The church in South Africa is still divided. The legacy of apartheid still hangs over the national identity; and it will take decades or a century to disappear. Christians confess one Lord, and they sing from the same hymnbook when it comes to confessions, liturgies, Christian values, etc. Concerning catechetical lessons, *didomi*, and *paradosis* we sing in unison. All these terms refer to the traditional content of faith to be handed over to the next generation. However, in a communal lifestyle, we are far apart from each other. Attempts to break the walls of hostilities that divide us are not bearing significant fruits. Ideologies are still allowed ecclesiastically to formulate our decisions and creeds. The walls are visible through our denominational formations:

- The Uniting Reformed Churches of South Africa still co-exist with the Dutch Reformed Church, which still has one church for Africans, known as the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa.
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Africa still coexists with the Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa.
- The Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA) composed of the majority White Baptists exists side-by-side with the Baptist Convention of South Africa (BCSA), mostly composed of Black Baptists.
- The Assemblies of God in South Africa is the only classical Pentecostal denomination that carries a tarnished image of racial segmentation through its 'group' system.
- The New Apostolic Reformation movement continues to fail in exerting unity through its network or relational systems.
- African Independent Churches are proliferated as there are numerous associations that each tries to be attached to.
- The existence of The Evangelical Alliance (TEASA) and South African Council of Churches (SACC) shows no light at the end of the tunnel for one council representing Protestants. This is because the two bodies are members of their universal formations of World Council of Churches (WCC) and World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) respectively.

The Bible is interpreted by many people in different ways – including that of gender inequality and stereotyping. The creation and fall narratives in Genesis are often used as a double bind for women as a way of subjugating them and blaming them for their subjugation. The story of the creation of Adam and Eve is still today enough reason to justify the lower status of women by the church. This breeds the notion that women are born with inferior status. The male-dominated society with its fragile ego sees women as Eve incarnated; girls are seen as property; men and women are never equal. Women’s bodies and the oppression, marginalisation, vilification and the othering thereof in early Christianity is one of the most dishonourable teachings of traditional Christianity. The notion goes further to see men as superior because God ordained them to be superior. Sin originates from women’s embedded wickedness and weakness, and women may not be leaders because of their fragility. Some even declare that woman’s salvation is embedded within man’s salvation. What they mean is that a woman cannot be saved. Her salvation is solely intertwined with that of a man. Sad to say that this gender-biased reading of the Bible concludes that women are the secondary role players in God’s plan for humanity; as background figures; as being destructive and harmful to men; and not made in the image or character of God (Hadebe 2007). Divisions in the church are not just on dogma and polity. Gender inequality is the problem of harmful, patriarchal, traditional and cultural gender practices in the church. Our South African Christianity is still wrapped with homophobia and patriarchy.

The church in South Africa has become weak because of this stereotyping of women, which holds back their full potential. This is to demean and lessen women’s dignity. “Stereotyping women results in them being marginalised and discriminated against, which brings about unfair and inequitable conduct against them – whilst their human rights are being constrained.” (Wood 2019:3). Dominance and control over others are destructive over God’s creation order designed for harmonious living within the broader creation itself.

The more the church became bureaucratic, the more it became more insensitive regarding gender. For example, the women church leaders are limited when coming to the administration of sacraments such as baptisms and Holy Communion, sometimes, even conducting a funeral. It has been a long walk to freedom for many church formations to ordain women into the priesthood. Although many churches have made some significant shifts in this regard, some still grapple with the issue. This is especially common in the Catholic Church. Churches that resist women ordination often argue that Jesus only appointed male disciples, and that the apostolic doctrine, especially the Pauline one, ordered women to be silent in the church and that they are not allowed to teach (1 Cor 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-12)

There is also the problem of harmful patriarchal traditional and cultural gender practices. In the South African church, culture as a sociocultural variable is a socially perceived set of characteristics that distinguish between male and female and determine what is expected and what the allowed values between males and females are (Wood 2019:14). We are all indoctrinated into gender biases and roles through social institutions such as family, education, politics, economy, legislation, culture and tradition. Secular culture influences church culture. The dominating culture in which the church finds itself persistently exerts its influence on it. For instance, racial prejudices in a society breed racially separated churches. These prejudices shape the decisions, actions, and directions of the church – consciously or unconsciously. These directions have a high proclivity to discriminate people based on their gender and sexual orientation.

Patriarchy is egoistic and parochial. It elevates male ego to such an extent that it applies religious arguments that manifest into harmful traditional and cultural practices that enhance and support injustice towards women and people of different nationalities and those of different sexual orientation.

Patriarchy is interpreted to be antiwoman and oppressive in nature, and it upholds male dominance and male power. It often results in the right of men to dominate and to control. (Wood 2018:6)

Christ's intention has always been the unity of those who follow him. All divisions in the church are artificially made by humans who have a proclivity towards

disassociation, discrimination against each other, and negative perceptions about each other. The church as the called-out community is to showcase the body of Christ which is a unit by itself. The divided church misrepresents Jesus Christ and his eschatological purpose of reconciliation between the holy God and sinful humanity – with Christ as a mediator to reconcile the two. This mediatorial function of Christ is undermined when the church fails to bring the soteriological hope to the decadent culture where humanity lives in devastation, hopelessness, and indignity.

The legacy of apartheid and colonialism left South Africa with some indelible marks of inequality. This inequality pervades all spheres of society – economically, political, or ecclesiastical etc. “Inequality leads to injustice. Through its doctrines, practices and leadership, the church has to play an important role in the struggle against injustice.” (Wood 2019:7).

9.2 HIV and AIDS: An inevitable redress

In the mid-eighties when the public domain started to hear of HIV and AIDS, there were numerous reactions. Some members of the society jumped to say AIDS is nothing else, but the American Ideas of Discouraging Sex. Some from the other side of the fence shouted the serious rallying call that After Intercourse Death Strikes. In some traditional settings, some people even associated AIDS with *boswagadi* (ceremonially uncleansed widowhood). From some conservative religious views, denialism reigned supreme. Those embracing the biblical teaching of sex outside marriage as sin denied that they may be the carriers of the virus. For many religious fanatics, AIDS was just and only a behavioural disease. In many instances, these fundamentalists erased their pre-conversion lives that were marred with sexual promiscuity and convinced themselves that they are clean. The church was a bit hesitant and ambivalent, and at worst, negligent. Some church leaders have called AIDS God’s punishment on those sexually promiscuous, especially on homosexuals and prostitutes. Dixon (2003:75) points out that some leaders even say that Christians should have nothing to do with AIDS while others say that all Christians should make some response.

Young adults who intended entering holy matrimony were counselled to do HIV and AIDS counselling, but some refused as they feared the worst scenario of testing positive. Some pastors made testing part and parcel of premarital counselling. This led to many conflicts of interest as denialism was scaffolding into communal ranks, especially for the young adults intending to marry. Some churches joined the ranks of campaigning for HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention, while some churches abhorred the idea of mentioning even the word AIDS.

The campaigns became nationwide, promoting the principle of ABC (Abstinence, Be faithful, Condomise). The 'ABC' approach encourages young adults to delay 'sexual debut' (age of first sexual intercourse) or to use abstinence until marriage – the most effective way to avoid HIV infection, as advocated as the ideal by Christianity. The A and B approach was welcomed by all faith-based communities without any reservations or qualms. The problem became C, especially with the Catholics and those from conservative Protestant backgrounds. During the exhaustive and intensive ABC campaigns of the late nineties and early two thousand, there exploded a bombshell. A cat was thrown among the pigeons. The second democratic president of the Republic took the seat in the Union Buildings. He is remembered for the unwritten philosophy of denialism. There were always some fires inside the African National Congress (ANC) – the ruling party, and he always denied it. He was a mediator on behalf of the SADC and the AU to help rescue the looming socio-political insurgency in Zimbabwe, and he denied this by stating that there are no problems in Zimbabwe. At home, he vehemently denied that HIV causes AIDS. This impacted the directions of the National Health Department regarding the HIV and AIDS endemic that was vigorously decimating the population, consequently increasing the social imbalances in the livelihood.

HIV and AIDS denialism had a significant impact on public health policy from 1999 to 2008, when the president criticised the scientific consensus that HIV does cause AIDS. This is one factor that made him very unpopular. Frank Chikane says the policy loomed so much that some could not see anything else that Mbeki ever did before or during his presidency. "Mention the name 'Mbeki' anywhere in the world and it is associated with the HIV and AIDS matter" (Chikane

2013:255). In 2000, Mbeki organised a Presidential Advisory Panel regarding HIV and AIDS including several scientists who denied that HIV caused AIDS. For eight years of his presidency, Mbeki continued to express sympathy for HIV and AIDS denialism and instituted policies denying antiretroviral drugs to AIDS patients. His government even withdrew support from clinics that started using AZT to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. He also restricted the use of a pharmaceutical company that donated a supply of nevirapine, a drug that helps keep new-borns from contracting HIV from the mother during pregnancy, delivery processes, and lactation. Instead of providing these drugs, which he described as ‘poisons’, shortly after he was elected to the presidency, he appointed Manto Tshabalala-Msimang as the country’s health minister, through whom Mbeki promoted the use of unproven herbal remedies such as *ubhejane*, garlic, beetroot, and lemon juice to treat AIDS. This led to her acquiring the nickname ‘Dr Beetroot’. These policies have been blamed for the preventable deaths of between 343 000 and 365 000 people from AIDS. Mbeki’s successor, Kgalema Motlanthe, appointed Barbara Hogan as health minister to replace Tshabalala-Msimang on the first day of his presidency. Hogan told *The New York Times*, “The era of denialism is over completely in South Africa” (cited in Dugger 2008).

After his departure, things under the new regime changed dramatically. One positive contribution of the Zuma presidency was the right about turn caused by new approaches of redressing HIV and AIDS. This changed the status quo dramatically.

UNAIDS reports that South Africa has the biggest and most high-profile HIV epidemic in the world, with an estimated 7.7 million people living with HIV in 2018 and South Africa accounts for a third of all new HIV infections in southern Africa (UNAIDS n.d). The ongoing report of UNAIDS continues to highlight that in 2018, there were 240 000 new HIV infections and 71 000 South Africans died from AIDS-related illnesses. On the other hand, the statistics educate us that South Africa has the largest antiretroviral treatment (ART) programme in the world and these efforts have been largely financed from its domestic resources. In

2015, the country was investing more than \$1.34 billion annually to run its HIV programmes. According to the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC), the success of this ART programme is evident in the increases in national life expectancy, rising from 61.2 years in 2010 to 67.7 years in 2015 (SANAC 2017). Further research show that HIV prevalence remains high (20.4%) among the general population, although it varies markedly between regions. For example, HIV prevalence is almost 12.2% in KwaZulu-Natal compared with 6.8 and 5.6% in Northern Cape and Western Cape, respectively.

South Africa has made impressive progress in recent years in getting more people to test for HIV. This progress follows the launch of two nationwide testing initiatives: the national HIV testing and counselling (HTC) campaign of April 2010 and the HTC revitalisation strategy in 2013 which focused on getting people from the private sector, farms and higher education to test. Thanks to campaigns such as these, more than 10 million people in South Africa test for HIV every year. Yet the progress made in getting people to test has been uneven. In South Africa, women are much more likely to test than men. This is partly because Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) programmes enable women to access HIV testing services during routine antenatal appointments.

However, there are other barriers to men testing. Recent research has shown that men often are reluctant to test, as they see health facilities as being 'women's places' and so feel that testing for HIV is non-masculine and might be seen as weak. Men report worrying that queueing outside a testing facility will be taken as evidence that they are living with HIV, and also talk of avoiding testing because they are 'terrified' of a positive result. In South Africa, links have also been made between an individual's socio-economic background and the likelihood they will test for HIV. Those who have taken an HIV test and know their status are more likely to have a higher level of education, be employed, have accurate HIV knowledge and a higher perception of risk.

South Africa has made great strides in tackling its HIV epidemic in recent years and now has the biggest HIV treatment programme in the world. Moreover, these efforts are now largely funded from South Africa's resources – a big concern

for the ailing economy. HIV prevention initiatives are having a significant impact on mother-to-child transmission rates in particular, which are falling dramatically. New HIV infections overall have fallen by half in the last decade, however, there are still too many.

While the short-term financing of South Africa's HIV epidemic is secure, in the longer term, the government, in partnership with faith-based communities, needs to explore other strategies to sustain and expand its progress. There is a dire need for political direction to decide the future directions of dealing with AIDS. Whiteside and Sunter (2000:132) are correct that social instability rises in the absence of clear political leadership. In a nation facing economic uncertainty and lacking clear political leadership, the presence of AIDS with its associated stigma can cause a revolution with many unwelcome aspects.

The church and AIDS have been a theme of close to four decades now. The church has the biblical mandate to be vocal in matters related to human miseries including HIV and AIDS. It costs nothing to care. "We have been given much by God and we have the responsibility to reach out to others in practical, caring compassion." (Dixon 2003:119). The church is the incarnation of the love of Christ and should be there to present Christ in the situation. In another place, Dixon is correct that:

The battle against HIV will not be won by great programmes. It will be won as millions of ordinary men and women in every nation rise as a people movement, determined to take HIV issues seriously and to make a real difference. And as those who belong to Christ, we have a message of strength and hope, as well as of health and wholeness. (2010:208)

AIDS has become a worldwide public health concern. It remains a fatal disease. Its course before death brings profound misery to both sufferers and the loved ones. Hence, we are all either infected or affected by it. It is a fact that "HIV/AIDS is expected to adversely affect individual, household and national economic performance" (Muraa & Kiarie 2001:124). Amid trauma, there should be some redemptive experiences in the lives of those directly affected by AIDS. The prophetic role of the church amid these tragedies is to allow for the emergence of character, the occurrence of reconciliation between estranged

people, for bitterness to give way to acceptance and peace. The church is to show the neighbour and the stranger the perfect love that casts out fear. In the fear-ridden world of AIDS, the love of God as revealed in the Word and the work of Jesus Christ must be expressed in human works of compassion and ministry of caring that bear the name of Jesus Christ. The biblical and theological imperatives directing the church to the stranger, the outcast, and the poor are well understood, embraced, and accepted throughout the Christian community. People of God are called to be unique people in the hurting world. Their unique role is to be characterised in terms of community, of service and servanthood, of an embodiment of the good news of God's love and the presence of God's reign, and the reconciling intent of God's love (Shelp, Sunderland & Mansell 1986:7-8). The restated views of Mbeki that to manage the enormous HIV problem, serious attention is needed towards social and economic causes of AIDS, not just on a small tiny virus. Mbeki promotes social cohesion measures that can address immigrant labour, social and economic disempowerment of women, pervasive poverty, illiteracy, etc. These forces, according to Mbeki, contribute enormously towards the spread of the virus, therefore need redress. Look at it in this way: Poverty drives an eighteen-year-old girl into prostitution, which will expose her to viral infection. What drives her there is poverty that needs to be addressed. Or think of an illiterate woman who never received any sexuality education, and now becomes a tool for sexual pleasure to promiscuous men. If she knew her rights and what sexual contact with diverse mean, she would not have allowed herself to get to that point. All these forces are the subjects that the church must deal with.

Dixon lists the roles and responsibilities of Faith-Based Organisations in this regards as follows:

- Working to end the marginalisation and HIV-related stigma and discrimination.
- Including people living with HIV in the design, programming, implementation, research, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and decision-making processes.

- Advocating for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services.
- Respecting all human beings as equally worthy of health, dignity and care, regardless of whether they share the same faith, values or lifestyle choices as people of any particular faith.
- Providing services openly and transparently, according to agreed criteria for the handling of finances, serving the community, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Providing services based on evidence-informed practices consistent with the FBO's own faith and values.

Refraining from attempts to discredit or undermine evidence-informed practices of other actors in the AIDS response. (Dixon 2010:215)

9.3 Corruption trickling down in socio-political structures

Corruption has become a buzzword, not only in South Africa but throughout the continent. Broadly defined, corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. In his monograph, *The Things that Could Not be Said*, Frank Chikane elaborates in detail how corruption has slithered into the South African political landscape. Reading through his work, one may be horrified but at the same time understand what has landed South Africa into the alleged 'state capture' that is currently dominating our political landscape with the Zondo Commission of Enquiry at the helm of it all.

Corruption can be classified as grand, petty and political activity transacting a form of payback in a form of property, finance, sexual favour, or nepotism, depending on the sector where it occurs. Grand corruption consists of acts committed at a high level of government that distort policies or the central functioning of the state and enables leaders to benefit at the expense of the public good. Petty corruption refers to everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who are often trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments and other agencies. Political corruption is a manipulation of policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and

financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status, and wealth.

Chikane's words help make this all relevant to South Africa:

Corruption corrodes. It eats its way steadily with destructive persistency. Corruption is not just about petty bribery issues like paying for a favour you want from someone in authority in the public or private sectors. It is also not just about paying a traffic cop to let you go without giving you a ticket. Corruption goes deeper than that. It involves the awarding of tenders, contracts, etc. At even higher levels it includes the use of power to dish out goodies for themselves, family, or friends. Today it even goes beyond family and friends to political factions (Chikane 2013:228).

Over time, 'corruption' has been defined differently, but is generally understood as dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery. It is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by a person or organisation entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire illicit benefit or an abuse of entrusted power for one's private gain. Throughout history, there have been varying forms of corruption, including bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, parochialism, patronage, influence peddling, graft, and embezzlement. Corruption may facilitate criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, money laundering, and human trafficking.

Corruption impacts societies in many ways. In the worst cases, it costs lives. Short of this, it costs people their freedom, health or money. The cost of corruption can be divided into four main categories: political, economic, social and environmental.

As Chikane correctly observes:

Corruption is devastating. It can compromise leaders to such an extent that they abandon their mission to serve the people and instead serve their own interests or the interests of those who have compromised them or those who know that they have been compromised. (Chikane 2013:144)

Political corruption is the use of powers by government officials or their network contacts for illegitimate private gain. For example, in a simple context, while performing work for a government or as a representative, it is unethical to accept a gift. Any gift could be construed as a scheme to lure the

recipient towards some biases. In most cases, the gift is seen as an intention to seek certain favours such as work promotion, tipping to win a contract, job or exemption from certain tasks in the case of junior employee giving the gift to a senior employee who can be key in winning the favour (Tanzi 1998:559-594). Misuse of government power for other purposes, such as repression of political opponents and general police brutality, is also considered political corruption.

An illegal act by an officeholder constitutes political corruption only if the act is directly related to their official duties, is done under colour of law or involves trading in influence. The activities that constitute illegal corruption differ depending on the country or jurisdiction. For instance, some political funding practices that are legal in one place may be illegal in another. In some cases, government officials have broad or ill-defined powers, which make it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal actions. A state of unrestrained political corruption is known as a 'kleptocracy', literally meaning 'rule by thieves'.

One can see that on the political front, corruption is a major obstacle to democracy and the rule of law. In a democratic system, offices and institutions lose their legitimacy when they are misused for private advantage. Corruption is a huge challenge to the integrity of leadership. Corruption causes leaders to define themselves as being above or beyond the law. They easily throw away the regulatory framework when it comes to self-interest.

This is harmful in established democracies, but even more so in newly emerging ones like South Africa. It is extremely challenging to develop accountable political leadership in a corrupt climate.

Economically, corruption depletes national wealth. Corrupt politicians invest scarce public resources in projects that will line their pockets rather than benefit communities and prioritise high profile projects such as dams, power plants, pipelines and refineries over less spectacular but more urgent infrastructure projects such as schools, hospitals and roads. Corruption also hinders the development of fair market structures and distorts competition, which in turn deters investment.

Corruption corrodes the social fabric of society. It undermines the people's trust in the political system, in its institutions and its leadership. A distrustful or apathetic public can then become yet another hurdle to challenging corruption.

Environmental degradation is another consequence of corrupt systems. The lack of, or non-enforcement of, environmental regulations and legislation means that precious natural resources are carelessly exploited, and entire ecological systems are ravaged. From mining to logging to carbon offsets, companies across the globe continue to pay bribes in return for unrestricted destruction.

South African Christianity is always marred with scandals. The church's corruption news making newspaper headlines has become a norm. The church is full of scandals when coming to morality, money, and self. Scandals are around sex, power, and finances – the popular three Gs (Glory, Gold, Girls/Guys). Many church scandals revolve around one or more of these three. At the time of writing, three pastors are making headlines revolving around human trafficking, faking miracles, and money laundering. Human trafficking is always accompanied by sex trafficking. Faking miracles is all about power – the power to attract or to dominate. The story of these three pastors reflects the three Gs we are talking about.

Social sins and structural, systemic corruption abound. But the kind of moral perversity that harms the innocent church members and/or the vulnerable deserves no quarter. Moral laxity is rampant at all levels of the church community. This has become an obvious source of criticism of the church. Pastoral dignity and integrity are dragged in the mud. The commercialisation of the gospel is a mark of corruption in the church. The most lucrative and controversial corrupt practice used to raise funds for some church leaders is to sell points of contact such as water, oil, and cloths. People in desperation when deemed to have sinned, are asked to pay a certain amount of money to the local church or a so-called man of God instead of being led to repentance to receive grace – God's favour. The practice of milking finances out of the people easily lends itself to abuse. Initially, repentant Christians who pledge a certain amount, always dubbed 'planting seed' are promised to receive multiple blessings of manifold

amounts of money they have pledged. Pledgers are made to believe that salvation is attainable simply through the honouring of pledges made.

The church must confront corruption and prophetically condemn it while pastorally embracing the perpetrators or corrupters to bring them to repentance and restoration. “The prophetic task involves both modelling what God intends and speaking out for policies and institutions that support the biblical mandates for peace with justice.” (Wallis 2006:6). Genuine faith cannot be privatised. When we privatise our faith, it limits our witness and it questions whose side we are. Instead of backing away from so-called ‘difficult’ conversations or topics, such as race or sexual orientation, or corruption, we are encouraged to boldly participate and dialogue. God’s call on the church is a call for all of life, and the church should not be ashamed of that. Christianity’s enormous capability of adjusting itself to cultural and social dynamics and ever-changing political circumstances is the basis of its popularity in South Africa. There has been a lot of mess and a lot of challenges with people of faith going into public spaces and being corrupted, but that does not mean that Christ cannot redeem those spaces. The church is called upon to step in and redeem that, rather than disengaging or maintaining the neutral stance. Unfortunately, the church through clericalism mostly addresses the situation of power or pride of life. It doesn’t address the corruption of the flesh. It doesn’t respond to the degeneracy of spiritual worldliness and ecclesiastical materialism.

The church is an eschatological community on an eschatological journey. The church is *simul justus et peccator* — both saint and sinner. Both whole (holy) and corrupt. And now and always in need of renewal and reform. As a community of justified sinners, Resane (2017:215) encourages the church to continue to see itself as *peccatrix maximus* (the greatest of sinners) that has failed to live up to its calling. It is, therefore, called upon to become *ecclesia docens* as well as *ecclesia discens* (the teaching and the learning church), since the grace of God is still available, and as fellows with the trinitarian God, still is *ecclesia cruces* (the community of the cross).

The natural observation is clear that national church unity in many denominational operations is still a far-fetched dream. The post-apartheid South Africa is swamped by escalating and proportional poverty and sicknesses. This regardless of opening accessibility to health care and facilities to all population groups. The separate development of the past that made basic services accessible offered the White population comfort and basic care, while for the majority population long queues and overcrowding at the service centres were a norm. For instance, a Black person would stand in a queue for hours to apply for the Reference Book (current identity document), while on the other side of the building a White person would come in and within minutes will be served and done. The health service centre for the Black majority would be crowded, and attention stalled for hours before any action, hence many lost their lives on the hospital beds. In the specifically designed side of the building, 'Whites Only', most of the cases would be treated as emergencies and due to low population composition, there was no overcrowding or delays of services. The same treatment would be observed in the church. Whenever the White church in town wanted to replace or renew furniture items, the Black church in the township would be the ideal place to dump them – whether it is a pulpit, benches, chairs, Bibles, hymnbooks, and other similar things, their destination, no matter their antiquity, was the Black church in the township or village. The architect of the White church could not be compared to that of the Black church. Separate development promoted White supremacy and enhanced Black subjugation. This created two gods in the Black mind. The God of the Whites who elevated them, and the god of the Blacks who suppressed them. The gap between Blacks and Whites was and still is, wide in the religious arena of South Africa. This division created questions within Black minds, and especially the younger generation. They want to know if the God of the Bible is the God of all people, regardless of the colour of the skin. Questions go deeper to enhance the notion of skin colour as a defining factor for one to gain favour with God. Economic instability and meltdown is a scary reality that is calling for theological engagement. Some people blame the Black majority government for economic mismanagement and accuse them of a lack of acumen or intellectual ability to

handle socio-political challenges. South African theology becomes relevant only when it immerses itself into human misery, not just to analyse, but to redress for better life outcomes. We all agree that poverty, misery, sickness, marginalisation, and unemployment are the realities of the South African landscape. The nation is discouraged, distressed, morally deflated and emotionally drained. So, religiously meaningless. Politics, religion, and civility have become demobilising factors leaving the population in a stressful situation.

Chapter 10

Back to the drawing board

Poverty, misery, sickness, marginalisation and unemployment are the realities of the South African societal landscape. South Africa is a nation that is discouraged, distressed, morally deflated, and emotionally drained. So, religiously meaningless. Politics, religion, and civility had become the demobilising factors leaving the population in a stressful situation. A theology of dialogue should be brought to the centre of the community. What is crucially needed for South Africa Christianity is a discussion on the ways that a theology of dialogue can be developed and how this can be applied on the practical level in the dialogue between religious communities and persons in different cultural contexts. Discussions should also cover theology and communal concerns, theology and political formations, theology and environmental issues, etc. This dialogue is as important in theology and the political landscape as it was three or more decades ago when apartheid was addressed as a heresy to be brought down.

A theology of reconciliation should be engaged as a guard against prejudices. Reconciliation enables humanity to be reconciled to God, community, and self, due to human fall that separated humanity from God, human community, and from self. Humans alienate themselves from themselves because hamartiologically, humans are not forming into what they were created to become. In human interactions, disagreements are inevitable. Conflicts and contentions are sometimes resolved and dissolved, and relationships continue normally. Reconciliation is the restoration of friendly relations. It is the action of making one view or belief compatible with another. Reconciliation means restoring one's relationships to be compatible and friendly with one another again.

In the process, the South African church is to strive towards a theology of transformation which leads towards a new way of being a theological community. Transformation theology offers a theological recognition of the place of the commissioning Christ in our lives and the lives of others. This theology is a response to cultural pluralism like the

one we encounter in South Africa. It may also be a response to the pastoral need for the Christian community to give a clearer witness to the oneness of Christ in a multi-faceted world.

These theologies will move the church out of the parochial mentality and make a theological voice vocal in the world.

10.1 Theology of dialogue at the centre of the community

The theology of dialogue is when dialoguing partners share their religious faith and experiences in an atmosphere of peace, to seek to understand a partner's religious convictions. In religious dialogue, two or more human beings meet each other, with mutual trust and openness, each respecting the convictions of the other. The object is to understand each other in their varying religious traditions and to be mutually helped in one's grasp of the truth.

The dialogue between Christians of different denominational confessions and dogmas has become important in contemporary South Africa. This dialogue presupposes as its ultimate aim the restoration of full communion between separated churches. This aim, however, is not easily achievable, therefore, requires a lot of work for full realisation. Inter-Christian dialogue bears much good fruit for those engaged in it. Communication between dialogue partners of different traditions leads to a better understanding of each other and mutual enrichment. Awareness of the other brings about a change of mind. When this happens, there is a transfer from the dialogue for an understanding of the dialogue for change. In the theology of dialogue, there is a reassessment of the past, especially of the events that caused disagreements and divisions between churches, which were often accompanied by condemnations and anathemas. Purification of memory, therefore, becomes an important aspect of any interconfessional dialogue.

This also applies to any interreligious dialogue, which has also become important in South Africa. Dialogue should take place in the atmosphere of genuine and authentic love towards each other. It is love that lies at the very heart of any true dialogue, which, therefore, can properly be called the dialogue of love.

“He who does not love does not know God; for God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). Love is non-exclusive and open to the whole creation. Nothing is alien or threatening. Love and compassion for the whole creation is the characteristic of Christ. The Church as His body shares in this love and compassion in faithfulness, integrity, and openness with sympathetic understanding. This is a sufficient rationale to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths. It is love in Christ that sends one to dialogue. This seems to give a sufficient theological basis for dialogue. Therefore, any theological reflection on the dialogue should begin before it turns to the discussion of different aspects and levels of dialogue, both theoretical and practical.

The concept of dialogue, due to the works of twentieth-century thinkers such as Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Mikhail Bakhtin has taken an important place in the contemporary philosophical and theological discourse. It seems, however, that this often remains at the level of scholarly talks about ‘dialogue in general’, full of fascinating and exciting ideas but without any significant realisation in terms of praxis. In this sense, any theology of dialogue should be ultimately orientated towards concrete work in the field of inter-Christian and inter-religious relations. What is crucially needed for South Africa Christianity is the discussion on how a theology of dialogue can be developed and how this can be applied on the practical level in the dialogue between religious communities and persons in different cultural contexts. Discussions should also cover theology and communal concerns, theology and political formations, theology and environmental issues, and suchlike. This dialogue is as important in theology and political landscape now as it was three or more decades ago when revolved mainly around the Black Consciousness Movement and Black theology. Ishmael Mkhabela, the chairperson of the Biko Foundation and The Johannesburg Inner-city Partnership captures the truth of those decades that “We believed that critical dialogue, reading, exposure to real situations and carrying out corrective actions served awareness” (cited in Ndaba, Owen, Panyane, Serunula & Smith 2017:xv).

Simple questions related to Christians engaging in dialogue should be with people of other faiths, confessions, traditions, and religions. Therefore, there should be theological and practical considerations leading to undertaking dialogue with people of other Christian denominations and religions. From the onset, dialogue partners should seek to clarify, the spirit, attitudes, and expectations of the dialogue. They should state the important lessons to be learned from the dialogue experience with partners from different spectrums.

Healthy dialogue brings healthy results of togetherness and the unity in Spirit as intended by Jesus in his High Priestly Prayer of John 17.

If Christians regard dialogue partners, such as those of different confessions, or even unbelievers in our secular society, they (Christians) would be regarded as bigoted and narrow-minded. We cannot write off a Gandhi or a Marx or a Lenin, or a Mandela as simply pagans with splendid vices. Exclusivism creates walls of hostilities and high pedestals of arrogance. There is a theological caution against a similar exclusivism and bigotry manifested by reputable Protestant theologians like Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer. It is unfortunate that Protestant Christians who want to engage in dialogue with people of other faiths still find themselves inhibited by the contention that God's revelation comes only to Christians and that others are so totally in error that there is no point in talking to them. There should be open-mindedness like that of Karl Rahner, with a broad-minded Existentialist, neo-Thomist orientation, who have been quite open to the possibility that other religions can be a positive factor in the understanding of divine revelation. This is murky water for many evangelical and reformed thinkers, as they still unapologetically and uncritically pursue and embrace the Augustinian notion of exclusive grace.

If engaging in dialogue with the secret intention of converting dialogue partners, then that partner is bound to be wary and label that dialogue inauthentic. The dialogue attempt is to present first the Christian theological basis for dialogue with all other partners, and then to advance a few simple arguments to show that we should begin a dialogue without much more dilly-dallying with theoretical reflection.

Dialogue can help to remedy the defective notion of exclusivism. Instead of embracing an exclusive approach to dialogue, theologians and Christians, in general, should support an inclusive approach to religion and interfaith dialogue. This kind of dialogue pursues and works towards the same universal goals. The goal of inclusive dialogue is not to destroy scientific materialism and the destructive materialistic worldview; rather, the very nature of religion demands this dialogue for peaceful and mutual coexistence. If religion is a system of belief embracing all races, then dialogue is a road that brings everyone together into a community.

Regardless of how religious people implement their faith in their daily lives, such generally accepted values as love, respect, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, human rights, peace, brotherhood, and freedom are exalted and attained through an understanding of each other. What God does in history cannot be confined to Christians alone. How Christ has affected people who are not members of the Christian Church is an important aspect of God's action. The great religions of the world have been profoundly affected by exposure to the person and teachings of Christ. As one exposes oneself to people of other religions, one's judgmental criteria are transformed. One's understanding of Christianity itself can be changed. Dialogue with other churches and religions strengthens and stimulates one's Christian faith.

The common observation is that dialogical encounters and theological reflections question each other and are mutually enriching. Thus, there are two dialogues: the dialogue between believers of different religions, on the one hand, where there may sometimes but not always be theological overlap due to living together; while, on the other hand, theological dialogue within Christian communities – a dialogue brought about by the existence of religious pluralism and hence the issue of its interpretation. Dialogical encounters expose partners to the complexity of some realities.

The South African church, like any Christian church anywhere in the world, is an instrument of God for bringing humanity together in unity, creativity and righteousness. Such unity can neither impose uniformity nor condone

unrighteousness. It means a critical reconciliation of opposed elements so that their creative possibilities are enhanced and released. There is a great need for a tradition that is rich in its diversity, conscious of its incompleteness, and always open for the future in an unlimited way. The South African church has to play its role as a unifying force among the various discordant elements in humanity created by colonialism and apartheid. The unfortunate part of South African history is that religion became one of the most deeply rooted elements that divide humans from other humans. By facilitating and putting community members into dialogue with each other, the church would contribute towards a rich and diverse creative unity of humankind. Dialogue in this context is a religious act, and every religious act is a saving act, insofar as it directs persons to a greater love for one another.

10.2 Theology of reconciliation as a guard against prejudices

The theology of reconciliation is the pursuance of peace between humanity and God that results from the expiation of religious sin and the propitiation of God's wrath. It raises crucial theological questions about how reconciliation can be brought into regions of political conflict. Reconciliation differs from the conventional theological understanding though it emphasises themes of justice, truth, forgiveness, and repentance.

Reconciliation is conventionally understood as a central theological concept: God reconciles himself with humanity through the atonement of Christ and, likewise, the followers of Christ are called to become peacemakers and reconcile with one another. The Greek term for reconciliation *katallagē* means to 'exchange enmity, wrath and war with friendship, love and peace'.

However, the Christian concept of reconciliation has recently been applied to political conflict zones of the world by John W. de Gruchy, Robert Schreiter and others and is called 'reconciliation theology'. De Gruchy demonstrates four interrelated ways of reconciliation:

- Reconciliation between God and humanity, and what it brings to mean in terms of social relations.

- Interpersonal ways of reconciliation between individuals.
- The meaning of reconciliation between alienated communities and groups at a local level.
- Political usage of reconciliation such as the process of national reconciliation. (De Gruchy 2002:195)

The understating of reconciliation theology has raised crucial questions about how this concept of reconciliation can be applicable in each context. When it attaches to political discourse and goes uncriticised, it is sometimes seen as being greatly inappropriate and even dangerous. Thus, there is a strong emphasis on the historical and contextual considerations, and a “reflection on what is happening on the ground” in the actual process of reconciliation (De Gruchy 2002:197).

De Gruchy further notes that the issue of reconciliation needs to include the understanding of “covenant and creation, sin and guilt, grace and forgiveness, the reign of God’s justice and human hope”, all of which could have political significance. Joseph Liechty and Cecelia Clegg present in their study *Moving Beyond Sectarianism* that a true understanding of reconciliation has to deal with “the interlocking dynamics of forgiveness, repentance, truth, and justice” (Liechty & Clegg 2001:338-340).

To bring it home, reconciliation enables humanity to be reconciled to God, community, and self, due to human fall that separated humanity from God, human community, and from self. Humans alienate themselves from themselves because hamartologically humans are not forming into what they were created to become. In human interactions, disagreements are inevitable. Conflicts and contentions are sometimes resolved and dissolved, and relationships continue normally. In some instances, attempts of reconciliation are tried and fail, without reaching any consensus, leading to further estrangements.

Fundamentally and commonly, reconciliation is the restoration of friendly relations. It is the action of making one view or belief compatible with another. The two words, ‘restoration’ and ‘compatible’ are part of reconciliation. However, the root of reconciliation is the word ‘conciliation’, which is the

action of stopping someone from being angry. Reconciliation means restoring one's relationship to one to be compatible and friendly with one another again.

The Old Testament word for reconciliation is the Hebrew word *kapar*, pronounced 'kaw-far'. This is one of the most theologically significant words in the Bible. In addition to 'reconciliation', *kapar* is also translated into English words such as 'forgive', 'purge away', and 'merciful'. By far, the most commonly translated word for *kapar* is the English word 'atonement'. When the word atonement is broken down to its historical parts (a-tone-ment) it means a condition without tension. When Christ died on the cross for humanity, he removed the tension between humanity and God (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:16-21). His shed blood reconciled the conflict between humanity and God the Father. Reconciliation, therefore, has its biblical foundation in the atonement of Christ.

The biblical teaching and mandate are that humans must make it a priority to reconcile. This is stressed in Matthew 5:21-25 where we are told that if we have an unresolved disagreement with someone that we should resolve it as soon as possible, even before we go to church again. This is reinforced in texts such as Hosea 6:6, Matthew 6:6, and Matthew 12:7 where the command is that restoring relationships is more important than religious practices.

The second biblical teaching concerning reconciliation is that when approaching someone about a conflict situation, it should be done in a spirit of meekness and kept private (Mt 18:15). The goal is to communicate the intention towards the resolution of the problem, instead of naming and shaming the other person's image or to jeopardise her integrity. This approach communicates grace and love to the other person. This is reinforced in texts such as Proverbs 10:12, Galatians 6:1-5, and Ephesians 4:1-3, 25, 29-31 where exhortation is that love should be the ultimate means and motivation for reconciliation.

Finally, the biblical teaching is that reconciliation is requesting for forgiveness and offering forgiveness when requested. (Mt 18:21-35). Forgiveness is the process whereby the offended party 'gives' up the right to 'enforce' justice. Therefore, forgiveness involves a two-way transaction: the humbling and asking

for forgiveness by the offender and the release of the right of the offended to enforce justice.

Practically speaking, a wrongdoer or offender should humble himself and confess to the offended or the victim that the actions done against the offended are wrong and call for pleading for forgiveness. It is the honourable thing for the offender to ask for forgiveness for what he or she has done. The offended should grant forgiveness based on the fact that the person confessed their sin and asked for forgiveness. This is what Proverbs 10:12 means when it says: "Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs." Love enables us to forgive all sins! Seeking reconciliation through asking for forgiveness is not apologising. Apologising is not part of the biblical reconciliation process. The original meaning of the word 'apology', means without the ord. An apology does not involve a two-way transaction and does not acknowledge guilt. Therefore, if someone does not want to biblically resolve an issue, then the process given in Matthew 18:15-20 should be followed. Remember, reconciliation has its biblical foundation in the atonement of Christ. When Christ forgives us, are we still accountable for our sin? No, our sins are forgiven, our debt is paid by the atoning blood of Christ! The forgiven sin should be remembered no more (Heb 8:12, 10:16-18).

In retrospect, South African Christianity should view reconciliation as the process of restoring a relationship that was spoilt due to ideologies of racial or ethnic separation, colour bars, hostilities, prejudices, and bigotries towards each other. God values the reconciliation of relationships more than religious practices. Church life is the life of relationships, not programmes or structures, though these are to be designed in ways that enhance togetherness or communal life. Reconciliation should be a high priority and done in private with an attitude of humility and love. The person who has sinned should confess their sin and ask for forgiveness from the other person. Racists of all backgrounds must take a lead in asking for forgiveness. Once forgiveness is granted and reconciliation is completed, the sin is no longer allowed to be brought up. Our motivation to reconcile with someone should be because of

our love for Christ because of the reconciliation He gave us with God by His death on the cross.

10.3 Theology of transformation towards an intended goal

Transformation theology is first and foremost a new theological community. More precisely, it is a new way of being a theological community. The reason for that is that transformation theologians allow the commissioning Christ of history to be at the centre of their theological method. This is to bring the Church into the centre of theological practice. Transformation theology offers a theological recognition of the place of the commissioning Christ in our lives and the lives of others. Theology is an important part of how we make sense of ourselves in the Church today in a developed or rapidly developing world and shapes how we present the Christian faith to others. This new 'high level' theology allows a greater recognition and reception of the commissioning Christ of history in Church culture. It strengthens the capacity of theology properly to reflect an orientation to Christ who commissions in history. This in turn can feed into many different forms of Christian education, strengthening and supporting different forms of Church practice. It can also counter the various ways in which we allow those things which we associate with him to substitute for him, whereas in reality, they should mediate his life.

Transformation theology is a theology distinctively for a globalising age. It is a response to cultural pluralism like the one we encounter in South Africa. It may also be a response to the pastoral need for the Christian community to give a clearer witness to the oneness of Christ in a multi-faceted world. This is a great need for the South African church which has been consciously bruised by the ideological injustices of discrimination and prejudices. This theology may also simply mark a natural point of theological evolution from victimisation to victory – from oppression to liberation. Transformational theology is an attempt to capture the deep changes that are underway in our globalising world around the themes of self and sociality, meaning, embodiment and mind. It seeks every possibility to explore the new world that is taking shape around us

and to discover ways in which theology can both learn from and contribute to its tasks and challenges.

Transformation theology is a comprehensive new orientation within the broader field of theology. It is the theology that is scriptural and traditional as well as deeply contemporary. It is addressed to all the Christian communities for whom contextual engagement is important as expressions of and into the life of faith. It is important too for theologians to look to the life of faith and active discipleship as the unparalleled source of meaning for theology in practice.

In the latest research fields, transformational theology has become the development in both systematic and philosophical theologies. In these disciplines, there are collaborative engagements with dogma, philosophy, arts, politics, social ethics and natural sciences. The greater part of the theology of transformation's engagements concerns social inclusivity, creativity and resilience through East-West theological encounters.

In a real sense, church leaders long to see a transformation in the lives of people, their church, and their community. Purpose-driven and spiritually concerned church people always find that their mission is not complete until people's lives have changed. The word from the Scriptures often associated with transformation is 'metamorphosis'. It communicates lasting and irreversible change at the core, not merely external alterations or tweaking the appearance. Metamorphosis is used to describe the process a caterpillar goes through to become a butterfly. The apostle Paul paints a picture of transformation:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. We all, with unveiled faces, are looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Cor 3:17-18)

The language Paul uses is intentional. God is the one who does the transforming. Humans do not transform themselves. We 'are being transformed'. All this, all the transforming, is 'from the Lord who is the Spirit'. God desires to bring His people through this metamorphosis process. He seeks to transform the people

into his image, and he wants to do so with ever-increasing glory. He wants the people to be more like him tomorrow than they are today.

Transformation theology fails when leaders and Christians drift toward passivity in their approach to spiritual transformation. They rightly believe that God is the one who transforms, but they wrongly assume no responsibility for their maturation. The apostle Paul trusted God to do the transforming while simultaneously rejecting a passive approach to discipleship. He challenged Timothy to “train yourself in godliness” (1 Tim. 4:7) and strained toward the goal of Christlikeness (Phil 3:13).

Other leaders and Christians drift to performance in their view of discipleship as if they are the ones who transform themselves. These leaders trade in their freedom in Christ for an updated version of the law filled with human regulations and legislated self-righteousness. The proper perspective is neither passivity nor performance but a partnership. Spiritual transformation is divine-human synergy over a lifetime. Church leaders must teach that reliance upon God does not preclude personal responsibility for obedience. God graciously commands his people to humbly put themselves in the right posture to be transformed, and He does the transforming. The divine-human synergy is well seen in Paul’s encouragement to believers in Philippi:

So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose. (Phil 2:12–13)

Engaging transformation theology is like personal spiritual growth. It is a divine-human partnership. The role of church leadership is not to transform people. One cannot, and it is offensive to God if you believe you can. Engaging a theology of transformation involves placing people in the pathway of God’s transforming power. Leadership, preaching, teaching, investing, and counselling are to be instruments God uses for his holy endeavours to transform people. Those sacred practices must be used to show people how attractive Christ is so that they are positioned for transformation.

A transformation theologian is defined by where and how to locate Christ in a practical living space. This theologian bears in mind that one cannot separate where humans are from where Christ is. It may call the theologians to go from the place where they normally do theology to some other strange place. They may need to be with or among others who are also part of the context where their lives are immediately bound up with the transformational power of God in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in social action or practice. The methodological implications here are primarily to do with needs at hand and/or a challenging context, or even the embodied life. The challenges of the context they may be facing are not reducible to questions about the faith of the individual theologian. Rather they concern the sociality of theological reasoning which cannot only be that of the modern research university, however important the resources of the university may be for sustained critical thinking. It must also be the distinctive sociality of the Church, which in communion with Christ are those called by him and who act in his name. In this way, theology grows from the church and belongs to the church rather than to individuals. It becomes a theology that is conceived in Christ and the Holy Spirit. This focus upon the Christological 'where' has further implications for transformation theology as a critical theology. The space-time continuum has been conceptualised very differently in the ancient world, in modernity, and our contemporary world. Transformation theology is always calling itself to be self-aware as critical, historical theology. But this leads also to its constructive phase by locating Christ into the right context and seeks to understand what the ancient Church meant when it spoke of the living Christ in terms of the cosmology of its modern-day. As a distinctively ecclesial theology, transformation theology needs to be occasionally received and discerned by the Christian community. It needs to be judged by its fruits. A theology predicated upon the commissioning Christ in context has to be itself inclusive to be relevant therefore in its orientation to the world. It can in principle exclude no one and no thing.

Those who theologise transformatively have a world in common with each other through a shared focus upon the commissioning Christ of history, whatever may also distinguish them. Transformation theology does not remove

the Christian distinctions of history, tradition and culture, but it does relativise these boundaries *theologically* by reordering theology to the Lordship of Christ through the Spirit in our situational history and the personal histories of others. Here the radical openness of Christian discipleship finds its theological receptivity. To be a 'transformation theologian' is to strive to think as someone who follows, and it is to give first place theologically to the act of following, as the real human response to Christ's presence in history, which begins and ends, and begins again, in the posing of the 'where' question.

10.4 Church parochial mentality is to be destroyed

One of the major problems of the South African church is parochial attitudes. Churches operate as silos, living for themselves, doing things for themselves, and utilising resources on and for themselves. Parochialism is the state of mind, whereby the local church focuses on small sections of an issue rather than considering its wider context. More generally, it consists of being narrow in scope. It is an act of 'navel-gazing' (naval staring). All eyes are on us, and no blinks for looking beyond ourselves.

Navel-gazing (Greek: *Omphaloskepsis*) or staring at one's navel (Dutch: *Navelstaren*), literally means mediating intently staring at one's navel. It is used as an idiom to mean being absorbed in one's thoughts, feelings and concerns, to the exclusion of all others. In some instances, this idiom refers to meditation, but in a jocular manner, it refers to self-absorbed pursuits. It has some connotations of thinking too much or too deeply about oneself, one's experiences, one's self-interests, or one's feelings. In a nutshell, navel-gazing is a useless or excessive self-contemplation. Synonyms of the term 'navel-gazing' that may be found in a thesaurus are selfish, indulgent, self-indulgent, self-reflection, self-absorbed, introspection.

Navel-gazing is not often considered a mystical reflection or deep self-analysis. It carries the connotation of narcissism, practised by self-absorbed people. Accusing a person of navel-gazing is most often a critique of engaging in excessive introspective thought, rather than acting. The church in South

Africa is, in a broader scope captured by the misguided notion that thinking about injustice past and present is not the right course to take in the present dispensation. She forgets that contemplating a problem by herself without the input or perspective of others (victims of injustice), may not yield the best results. The White church in South Africa screams that Black Christians should bury the hatch, forget the past and move on. One thing they forget or choose to ignore is that Africans define themselves by their historical experiences. Some intellectuals like Lumumba and Nketsia V highlighted this notion during the different annual memorial lectures of Onkgopotse Tiro, by reflecting that in the post-apartheid South Africa, apartheid is gone and should not be brought up or talked about (Tiro 2019:214). Healing the memory does not exclude reflecting the past. The present makes sense when the past is retrieved and is faced to lead to an apology that will usher in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. The church must look beyond the fence either historically or beyond the context of its existence.

In this context, a 'parochial church culture' is when members led by their leaders have only limited awareness of the existence or realities of the world (navel-gazing). It is a limited or narrow outlook, especially focused on a local church; whereby a local church finds comfort in its narrow-mindedness. The term 'parochial' originates from the idea of Latin *parochia*, which in English became a 'parish' – commonly used by Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican traditions to refer to the smaller divisions within the bigger community. A parochial church practising a parochial theology lives around events and decisions within a local church or parish. Decisions and strategic directions of the church are based locally – sometimes taking little heed of what is going on in the universal or wider church. A parochial church can sometimes be excessively focused on the local scale by having too little contact with life outside its walls. In many ways, this church shows a meagre interest for and possibly knowledge about the universal realities.

To escape from these parochial silos, the church in South Africa is challenged to bring back sound theological training and critical thinking. This theology

should be the one that looks beyond the church walls to impact families, churches, and societies. It has been done effectively before when the church became the incarnation of Christ even in the decadent cultures. Narcissism and salinity should be erased from the church's outreach and educational ministries. The arms or the organs of the church, such as home groups, colleges, and seminaries, should desist from asking questions or promoting ideas such as 'how do you feel about this passage'-Bible studies, ancient mysticism, religious oneness, legalistic (what you think is right)-bondage, or books that 'God told one to write'. The non-parochial churches should train Christians to articulate their faith intelligently and educate them on the important differences between their faith and other religions, including the religion of ancestral veneration. A non-parochial church should ask questions such as:

- Does the Koran teach the killing of infidels?
- Is spiritual formation biblical?
- What does it mean to take Jesus' name in vain?
- How has Plato influenced our church culture?
- Is abortion murder?
- How should we reach out to refugees?
- Will there ever be peace on earth?
- What about effective women leaders in the church?
- What should be Christian attitudes towards people of different sexual orientation? (gay marriages, and/or LGBTQ issues in general?).
- How do we reach out to the prostitutes?
- What are ways we can employ to avoid urban decay?

The non-parochial church outlook touches on a key theological perspective on the definition of what it means to be 'church'. When Paul says "Come out from among them; touch no unclean thing" (2 Cor 6:17, quoting Isa 52:11), he is saying something both nuanced and yet vital. The New Testament characterises the people of God in two paradoxical ways. The first is the *ekklesia*, which is the word used in the Old Testament for the 'congregation' of Israel but also used

by Greeks as the gathering of citizens for decision-making concerning their city. This is an established, respectable, and reasonable understanding of the meaning of ‘church’. But the other, an equally important insight is the idea of being *paroikia* and *parepidemo* (1 Pet 2:11). This means being resident aliens, or refugee pilgrims. Christians are citizens, but citizens of a different kind. They are called to “seek the welfare” (Jer 29:7) of the city where they are residents, but also to remember that they are citizens of a different city (Heb 12:22). Christians are to be embedded in society, and yet distinct from it.

10.5 Theological voice steps out of a cocoon: Church militant and church triumphant

After crossing the Rubicon in 1994, theology in South Africa became peripheral in national and civil affairs. The church’s voice disappeared as its echo silenced into the valley of darkness. Its deafening silence expedited the reign of darkness into South African socio-political landscape. When Mandela, at the recommendation of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, declared South Africa a secular state, the ungodly forces of darkness raged into all spheres of South African society. It was like opening a can of worms. Beasts of destruction came with their extended claws to destroy morality and ethics. Corruption took root as some people in the highest echelons of the political sphere embraced and promoted the culture of entitlement. The legitimate qualifications for higher office in civil service became Robin Island incarceration, and/or few decades of exile lifestyle. In the midst of all that, the voice of the theology of reconciliation was a thin blanket over the nation; and parochialism for the South African church became a comfortable cocoon to retreat to. The attitude of ‘we-them’ extended into the religious spheres.

Christian theology is prophetic and kerygmatic. The church is both militant and triumphant. Silence and passiveness are theological oxymorons. Without rhetoric of theological jargons of the statement that the church is both militant and triumphant, let me use it to demonstrate that theological coiling into the

cocoon or keeping silence in current South Africa cannot gain any legitimate ground for justification.

‘Church militant’ refers to Christians on earth who are engaged in spiritual warfare against sin so that at the end of the age they might enter heaven and join the ‘church triumphant’. The church militant is composed of Christians engaged in warfare, the eschatological community still under construction and on its way towards Christlikeness. There is some proliferation of interpretations regarding the church militant. Some are teaching that the church militant will become the church triumphant at the coming of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Other people believe that the church militant changes to the church triumphant when they receive their crown from Jesus at the entrance of the gates to the Holy City. Others are not sure when this transformation occurs.

As the term ‘militant’ suggests, the church of Christ may be compared to an army. The life of every soldier is one of toil, hardship, and danger. On every hand are vigilant foes, led on by the prince of the powers of darkness, who never slumbers and never deserts his post. Whenever a Christian is off his guard, this powerful adversary makes a sudden and violent attack. Unless the members of the church are active and vigilant, they will be overcome by his devices. The militant church is engaged in aggressive warfare, to make conquests for Christ, to rescue souls from the powers of darkness where humanity carrying God’s image is exposed to indignity, brutality, and disrespect. These believers are called to fight the good fight of faith amid trials and temptations. As soldiers in the field of war (ungodly environment), the church must fight at every step to incarnate the love and character of Christ.

The church militant refers to the church on earth. The term ‘militant’ suggests an antagonistic relationship between the church and the world. Nevertheless, it refers to an authentic reality: that the church on earth works to overcome the imperfect and sinful dimensions of human existence. The militant church is prophetic and confrontational. It is expected to always be at the loggerhead with the status quo. The biblical prophets were never at the table with the

political power-sharing a meal with the golden spoon. The prophet was always confrontational that the man of God would even be labelled the ‘trouble-maker of Israel’, which in this case means that Elijah was seen as a number one enemy of the state. During the apartheid era, the church through its ecumenical formations such as the South African Council of Churches and the South African Council of Catholic Bishops, was confrontational in pointing out that the ungodly regime was brutal and destructive to human dignity. This is the church militant.

The church is yet militant in a world that is apparently in the midnight darkness of sin and this is growing worse and worse. While the requirements of a plain ‘Thus says the Lord’ remain unheeded by the worldly element in the church, the voices of God’s faithful servants are to be strengthened to give the solemn message of warning. Unfortunately, the works that should characterise the church militant and the works of the church that have had the light of truth for this time, do not correspond. The Lord calls upon the church to clothe herself with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness. Her mission is not to oppose the world and society, but to work for their transformation by the preaching of the Word (proclamation), acts of service (*diakonia*), and fellowship (*koinonia*). The church’s best asset is saintly activity and the example of those who have chosen the Christian way of life. It is therefore absurd for the church to remain silent or to retreat into some cocoon while the world is hurting.

The militant church guards itself against the worldly element in the church, where she makes a profession of faith, without willing, genuine love and obedience. She is not to claim to draw near to God with the mouth, while the heart is far from him. This will be a mockery to God. God’s church in this world is his chosen people, who keep his commandments and faith. The church is to lead, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but to become the salt and the light of the world.

The church is charged with a divine and prophetic message of the love of God, and through the church, Christ longs intensely to impart this love to others in rich measure. The church is, therefore, a vehicle through which Christ wants to heal the world. Through Christ’s character of compassion beaming from

his countenance and his conduct characterised by grace, humility, truth, and love, the church becomes militant. The love of Christ is so broad, so full of glory, that in comparison to it, everything that people esteem as great, dwindles into insignificance. When the church obtains this view, her mission on earth becomes possible.

The church triumphant describes the Church in heaven in communal fellowship with the trinitarian God, the angels and saints already in God's kingdom. These are those who have reached the fullness of salvation in Christ and already exist here and beyond as the church. But it will have its fullest being at the end of time when all of creation, including humanity, will be fully conformed to Christ and all reality will be one of divine praise and glory. It is the state when all human sin will have been transformed, death and suffering will be no more, and the glory of God will have triumphed over all the imperfections of human history. The church triumphant is victorious after going through conflicts and fiery trials. It was never an easy task for the church in South Africa. Some church leaders suffered ex-communication, house arrests, banning, physical brutalities, detentions without trials, and poisoning, yet the church remains triumphant. For those who suffer for their faith, the church fathers' dictum remains: 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church' South African church leaders who suffered were sustained by the faith mentioned amongst the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11. They saw the promises of God.

As we have seen, the church militant is made up of believers here on earth. The church triumphant is made up of believers who have gone to be with the Lord. Though this distinction is helpful, we need to be careful that we understand that these are not two separate churches. It should be an encouragement to the believer to remember that the church militant and the church triumphant are ultimately one church.

It can be hard for South African Christians, especially Blacks, to think of the church as victorious. The social anathema is the reality of churches slipping into lawlessness and even anti-Christian teachings. Many South African Christians experience deep wounds from divisions, disappointments, or betrayals that

happened within the church. Personal sins and weaknesses as members of the body of Christ weigh on one's consciences at times. The coldness of faith, church racialism, faked miracles, strange practices of people eating grass or howling as dogs lead one to question the triumphalism of the church. How do we reconcile what we see at times with the glorious and triumphant church that the Bible describes?

The church in the world, as is now, is already united with the church triumphant in a real, present sense. She is surrounded by an army of angels and a massive company of all the saints. The picture is that the Old Testament saints are also the witnesses of the great works of God and their example encourages us as we run through life (Heb 12:1). This glorious, victorious hope of being united to this assembly does not rest on our performance, but it all rests and focuses on the perfect work of Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant.

Looking at the church, one should not narrow the lenses as one may end up focusing in the wrong directions. The church is not on the defensive, fighting a losing battle, but it is always on the offensive, always conquering. The church is never shrinking—it is always growing. When converts are added, they are members for all eternity; the second death has no power over them. In the present life, they continue to fight victoriously.

Amid battle against apartheid and its resultant human abuses, and even in current democratic South Africa, it is easy to get discouraged by the bumps, bruises, and wounds due to prophetic confrontations. It is devastating to see social and natural injustices leading to many Christians fail, fall, or pass away. What keeps the church resilient and triumphant is the fact and faith that the Lord Jesus Christ has already conquered sin and death. He is risen indeed! His strategies will never fail, and all of his soldiers will triumph. Believers' focus is his ensuing time when he will dwell amid his perfected church and will make all things new.

Chapter 11

Theology in the democratic South Africa

Historically, theology in South Africa came wrapped under the blanket of colonialism. The Bible was interpreted with the imperialist's lenses. White supremacy prevailed over the biblical hermeneutics, while Black inferiority was wrapped under the blanket of indignity, slavery, and inhuman treatment. White normativity became the central spoke of the theological turning wheel. Every facet of life was evaluated from the White European perspective.

Theological decisions based on racial supremacy, and an incorrect interpretation of Romans 13, led to separate churches, mission churches, entire separate denominations, the doctrine of separate development, and finally to full-blown apartheid. South Africa is a convergence point of Afrocentric and Eurocentric cultures. She has the highest White population on the continent. South Africa is one of the most misunderstood parts of the world when one considers the notion of God, including worship and belief systems. This creates challenges for doing theology in South Africa. And this is a rationale behind the proclivity towards syncretism whereby Eurocentric theology is mixed with Afrocentric religious worldviews.

The trinitarian God remains the foundation and the pillar of Christian theology and the hallmark of Christianity. God remains transcendent God. Christ remains the very God of the very God and the very man of the very man. Holy Spirit remains the third member of the trinitarian God, whose ministry is uniquely to reveal Christ to humans. Theology continues to speak to bring order out of chaotic social miseries caused by irresponsible human activities. Theology in South Africa should remain steadfast; and her Christianities, in all their diversities and proliferation, should synergise to bring order to the hurting world.

11.1 The historical foundation is where it all went wrong

After a long history spanning three centuries, theology in South Africa has gone through many phases. From colonial theology to apartheid theology to postcolonial and post-apartheid theology, many cuts and turns had surfaced and disappeared. Historically, theology in South Africa came wrapped under the blanket of colonialism. The Bible was interpreted with the imperialist's lenses. White supremacy prevailed over the biblical hermeneutics, while Black inferiority was wrapped under the blanket of indignity, slavery, and inhuman treatment. White normativity became the central spoke of the theological turning wheel. Every facet of life was evaluated from the White European perspective.

As per observation in the previous chapters, 'white' was associated with good; and 'black' with evil. The indigenous populations found on the land were seen by White settlers as savages, barbarians, uncivilised masses that needed the gospel that could Westernise them. Africans Europeanised was the goal of the missions of the time. Evangelism was equated with Westernisation. Dispossession of Black dignity by the supremacists was not just on land, but on selfhood, national pride, and African identity. One of the modern theologians, Miroslav Volf, a Croatian based at Yale University rightly assert:

Europe colonised and oppressed, destroyed cultures and imposed its religion, all in the name of its identity with itself – in the name of its own absolute religion and superior civilisation. (Volf 1996:17)

Separate development was regarded as God's divine intention where Black and Whites should not mix. The twentieth-century theologians in the White Afrikaner Christianity of South Africa preached and taught that God created apartheid. Their central theme was that racial segregation was more than desirable. It was God's will. It was biblical and in line with the order of nature. Learned and seemingly godly Reformed theologians developed an impressive biblical case for apartheid – apartness. They were convinced that the Bible endorsed the separation of the races. They insisted that their policies were pleasing to God because they were grounded in Sacred Scripture. The story of the Tower of

Babel was interpreted as a foundation of the theology of apartheid. For these theologians, God created men as a single race. After Babel, God “scattered them over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:9). The White theology of apartheid further claims that God “divided all mankind and set up boundaries for the peoples” (Deut 32:8). He also “determined the times ... and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26). This has led to many Christians, including some evangelicals, to conclude that the Bible approves racial segregation. For over three centuries, South African Christians accepted that racial segregation was justified like other cultural realities. Most post-apartheid Christians find it unfathomable that the best theologians in this country argued that God instituted apartheid and approved of it.

Many Reformed theologians in South Africa supported this theology. The unambiguous and overwhelming support of apartheid by the Reformed churches justified and legitimised the system.

Many Afrikaans-speaking Christians feared that multiculturalism would lead to a *gelykstelling*, an equalisation of the races. Missionaries and ministers faced the problem of how they would integrate the new Black converts into the existing church structures pioneered and led by Whites. The White opposition to *gelykstelling* posed a serious threat to the Christian mission among the indigenous people. Richard Elphick notes:

Gelykstelling was the evangelical’s problem. Their zeal for missions brought the issue into the bosom of the church, and from their ranks came the principal advocates, and opponents, of neutralising whites’ wariness of missions by instituting racially separate churches. (Elphick 2012:43)

The main problem that tainted theology was a compromise. Missionaries, especially at the dawn of the twentieth century assured the colonial regime that theirs was just evangelistic outreach to the indigenous populations, and nothing else. They claimed that they were not promoting racial prejudice as much as safeguarding the priority of missions among the indigenous people. By assuring the Dutch settlers that missions would not automatically lead to racial integration they safeguarded their evangelistic mission among the indigenous people. They chose evangelism as being more important than racial equality.

The right to evangelism was to be safeguarded at all costs. Even at the cost of the very gospel, they sought to preach. Theologians effectively developed a theology of saving souls which denied the basic humanity of those deemed lesser humans. Indigenous people were regarded as worthy to have the gospel preached to them but not as people fully made in the image of God. Theological decisions based on racial supremacy, and an incorrect interpretation of Romans 13, led to separate churches, mission churches, entire separate denominations, the doctrine of separate development, and finally to full-blown apartheid.

South African communities remain separate and divided to this day. South Africa still bears the scars of spatial apartheid in the population settlement patterns. The country is still economically and materially greatly unequal to this day. Resources, schooling and economic capital reflect vastly different histories. Churches remain areas of great inequality when it comes to power, resources, and influence.

Reformed theology allowed apartheid and this created the space for evil to flourish in the name of Christ. Theology in South Africa must be realistic and answer the following questions regardless of how uncomfortable these questions may seem:

- How does our good decolonised theology allow the substantial economic and racial inequality experienced in South African today to continue?
- How can we call ourselves brothers and sisters when our family is so dysfunctional and unequal?
- How can we speak of equality in the gospel when some of us are more equal than others?
- How can we teach that because of the redeeming, reconciling work of Jesus the dividing walls of hostility are down when quite clearly the parts of the cities or towns where one resides still divide us today?

There is something deeply flawed with our theology when we can preach the gospel of King Jesus – the King who took all the brokenness, the injustice, the sin and hatred upon himself and allowed the full wrath of God for all our complicity, apathy and wilful injustice to be poured out on him – yet have little

to say to the devastating economic and racial inequality in our country and the systems which uphold and perpetuate it. We have separated what never should have been separated. Evangelism and justice belong inextricably together in the kingdom of God and the mission of his Church.

11.2 Theology remains the architect

South Africa has changed dramatically, both socially and politically. Ecclesiastically, the ground is still wide with wild thickets and weeds. Clearing the weeds is not as easy as some people think. Theology in South Africa has a big challenge. The proliferation of Christian communities cannot be addressed by or through one theological perspective. Mainline Christianity is still divided between Black and White. This is further complicated by Black, Afrikaans and English Christianities. There is classical Pentecostalism couched with Charismatic faith in its diversities. There is a swelling of African Independent Churches with their different slants such as Apostolic, Zionist, Messianic, and Ethiopianist. In South Africa, and Africa in general, Protestant theological divisions found in the West, such as Calvinists and Armenians, Presbyterial and Congregationalist, pre-millennialists and post-millennialists do not carry weight or surface in theological discourses. It is not a matter of which camp one belongs to, but of what one believes. The Christian orthodox faith remains the architect of African Christianity. The liturgies and confessions still matter a lot to Africans, but how these make sense to African worldview matters.

South Africa is a large and complex country composed of tribes and cultures of African descent, Asian components, and White population with European descent. The country is a convergence point of Afrocentric and Eurocentric cultures and has the highest White population in the continent. South Africa is one of the most misunderstood parts of the world when one considers the notion of God, including worship and belief systems. This creates challenges for doing theology in South Africa. This is a rationale behind the proclivity towards

syncretism whereby Eurocentric theology is mixed with Afrocentric religious worldviews.

Africans believe that there is one God. They were never irreligious. Most, if not all the attributes of God as found in the biblical Christianity are also believed in by Africans. Generally, Africans do not dispute the reality and the existence of the Supreme Being, as expressed in the different ethnic names referring to this Being. God's unity and uniqueness remain intact. God is acknowledged in many ways, including giving names to children. Resane (2018:3) points out that in the Setswana language many theophoric names are starting with 'O' referring to God, for example, Omolemo (God is good), Olerato (God is love), Obakeng (Praise God), Olefile (God has rewarded), Otlotleng (Honour God). Then some start with 'Re', for example, Rebaone (We belong to God), Remmone (We have seen God), and Reshoketswe (We have received God's mercy). The last examples are names that speak directly about this God and literally mentioning his name (Modimo), for example, Goitsemodimo or Goitseone (God knows), Tiroyamodimo (God's work). These names are always an expression of faith in this God. They are hermeneutical, possessing value in hermeneutical and exegetical processes. They communicate feelings, perceptions, worldviews, and serve as a memorial to the generation that gave birth to these children.

There is no need to enter the battlefields of trying to defend the African religiosity. Emmanuel Martey correctly points out that "Indeed, gone are the days, when it was imperative for African Christians to defend the religiosity of African people, but also to prove their cultural maturity." (Martey 1993:13). Debates on whether Africans are religious or not is like returning to the stale food that has lost the taste. "Religion remains part of African consciousness. Identity is tied up with it and so it relates more fully to everyday life, it contrasts to the European secular self-understanding." (Bediako 2004:xvi).

11.3 South African theology of dialogue and reconciliation

South African theology is called upon to embrace the theology of dialogue and the theology of reconciliation. There is a need for dialogue to reconcile.

Dialogue opens the avenues of understanding each other. Once dialoguing partners understand each other, the path towards reconciliation opens up. The walls of hostility become thin and finally crumble. Moving towards Jesus' desire 'That they may be one' will be an experiential reality.

A theology of dialogue is undergirded with transparency, where the oppressed and the oppressor walk together in the light. The designations 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' finally become prefixed with 'former'. In dialogue, the dialoguing partners strip themselves naked before each other. They become bare to penetrate the deep underlying issues of hatred, bitterness, and prejudices. There should be no room for suspicion because a suspicious spirit is blind to the good qualities of others. It functions as a prejudice, rendering one incapable of seeing others rightly. It magnifies bad qualities and minimises the good (Anizor 2018:11-12). In dialogue, there should be an apology, repair, and embrace. The apology is fundamental to gaining forgiveness.

To apologise means to say to the person we have wronged that we are sorry – sorry not that we have been caught, sorry not merely that the other person has been wronged, but sorry that we have committed the wrongdoing – and sorry not so much for our guilt and shame as for the suffering we have wrongfully caused. (Volf 2015:179)

When an apology is rendered, the victim must return it with forgiveness. White South Africans should apologise on behalf of their forbears and ancestors for the sins committed against the Blacks in the past. Blacks must move to embrace and offer forgiveness. Black people also need to apologise for unethical retaliations and self-defence methodologies that did not honour human dignity and ownership of property. This is a contentious socio-political issue as some claim the legitimacy of their acts while others embrace the rights and entitlement. But the fact remains that apology should be genuine and followed by sincere repentance from quarters of both the perpetrator and the victim. When an impasse is overcome, it is through dialogue that commitment towards changed behaviour ensues. Perpetrators' apologies together with victims' forgiveness are acts of liberation: they free perpetrators from guilt and victims from resentment (Volf 2015:181).

Differences should not be allowed to dominate the dialogue. I propose we apply Nicholas Wolterstorff's dialogic pluralism whereby dialogue partners listen carefully and responsively to whatever serious objections raised by those who view things from a different standpoint (Wolterstorff 2013:20).

Churches are the presumed agents of reconciliation. If this has to become the reality in the historically proliferated and segregated nation, the church must take the lead. The nation that is carrying the scars of cultivated bigotry needs the church to prepare the way for the Lord. The eschatological journey towards reconciliation invites engagement in the struggle against oppression. Liberation comes when we learn that the struggle against oppression is guided by a vision of reconciliation between oppressed and oppressors (Volf 1996:109). For reconciliation to take place, a wrongdoer must make a good-faith effort to remove as much as possible, the damage the wrongdoing has done (Volf 2015:181).

Theology in South Africa must be eclectic in approach. It has to be liberational, inclusive, yet remain fundamental in dogma and foundational in biblical hermeneutics. For no matter the different angles of argument dogma, in the best sense, is the inevitable guard of truth in the realm of history and drama in which a religion of history and revelation moves (Niebuhr 1955:103). In its eclectic endeavours of answering South African plethora of theological questions, the relevant theology is the liberation theology as narrated by Gutierrez in his book, *A Theology of Liberation*. In summary, Gutierrez argues that theology must emphasise the need for the alleviation of the conditions of the poor. For him, this is the theology of liberation, which is the real theology in action in the world, not the one primarily driving towards eschatological idealism of salvation. It is a theological reflection born of the experience of shared efforts to abolish the current unjust situation and to build a different society, freer and more human (Gutierrez 1988:xiii). This theology is not an armchair theology, but a theology of social transformation with a conscious political agenda, fuelled by the rediscovery of an old biblical theme, namely of the special position of and Jesus' concern for the poor in life (Pietersen 2015:99). For Gutierrez, proper theology

plays a critical function in relation to the historical situation of especially the poor and oppressed members of society (Gutierrez 1988:xiv).

11.4 Gutierrez is relevant for South African theological solutions

Apart from the liberational ideals of Gutierrez, his reformist theology is a rational theology based on Aristotelian scholasticism, with a high proclivity towards Thomas Aquinas' aim of reconciling nature and grace, reason and faith by way of a comprehensive rational system (Pietersen 2015:100). Gutierrez's liberation theology is relevant to South Africa because:

- It is founded in the biblical truth of liberation-salvation – in Christ as the total gift (Gutierrez 1988:xiv). This means that this theology harmonises soteriology with Christology. No salvation does not liberate and there is no salvation with Christ. This truth is all rooted in proper bibliology, with thoroughly biblical hermeneutics.
- Liberation is all-embracing and emphasises that human beings transform themselves by conquering their liberty throughout their existence and their history. Liberation is not just spiritual but holistic emancipation of people from social miseries with consequent transformation realities in human experiences.
- It is a radical challenge to the Christian faith and the Church. They are “being asked to show what significance they have for a human task that has reached adulthood” (Gutierrez 1988:xv). Liberation theology challenges the belief systems and the institution (church) that propagates those belief systems. Ecclesiology must focus on human need rather than just rational *apologia*.
- It is a real-life movement in which “faith and life are inseparable” (Gutierrez 1988:ix). In liberation theology, what one believes should be radiantly reflected in one's life. Believer's faith cannot be divorced from real-life situation. It is improper and biblically asynchronic to divorce confession of faith from a practical lifestyle. This was a bone of contention that African Christians in South Africa struggled with for many years. The struggle was when the oppressive master during the week becomes the preacher of the gospel of Christ on Sunday. This same oppressive and cruel master, who happened to be white, will run a devotion for his staff with an open Bible in the mornings but will be wielding a whip on their backs in the afternoons.

- It is rooted in three perspectives: “the viewpoint of the poor, theological work and the proclamation of the kingdom of life” (Gutierrez 1988:xx). This is a matter of the synchrony between the context, the content, and the action. Life realities should be the starting point to lead to what the biblical content says regarding the plight of the poor, and what kind and how should kerygma be engaged in this context (the poor). Addressing the plight of the poor biblically or theologically should be the whole mission of theology. This is theology in context.
- It is “a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God” (Gutierrez 1988:xxix). This is theology in action. It is the biblical hermeneutics in reality; and the one that focuses on the practical challenges of life. There is no navel-gazing without transporting oneself into issues at stake. The Word of God (Bible) is at the centre of interpreting the context in which life is lived. So, liberation theology moves theology out of the dark corner into the brighter public domain.
- It is “liberating praxis endeavours to transform history in the light of the reign of God” (Gutierrez 1988:xxx). As mentioned earlier, healing comes through memory. Reflections on the pains of the past are the way Africans deal with their ensuing miseries. Historical experiences when reflected upon, escalates memory healing. These reflections on the past give chance to immerse into human situations and facilitate the process of recovery. They are not for opening the wounds, but for awakening the conscience to see the progressive acts of grace thus far. As the human conscience and mind catch the historical hurt and God’s sustenance thus far, glory is given to God!
- The central focus of rational discussions about God is centrally located in a more challenging course of action, which is practically to follow Jesus (Gutierrez 1988:xxxii). Liberation theology calls for practical exercises to follow Jesus and the revelation of his character in all situations of life. It is the kind of discipline that kicks the theologian or the practitioner out of the starting blocks. It kicks theology out of the comfort zones.
- A principal task of ‘reflection on praxis in the light of faith’ will be to strengthen the necessary and fruitful links between orthopraxis and orthodoxy. The emphasis here is not only what one knows, but what one does. What does one do with what he or she knows? It is a matter of striking some balance between knowledge and action. Rationality must also be practicality.
- It is a theology of salvation. Salvation is God’s unmerited action in history, which God leads beyond itself. Liberation theology is soteriological. It calls

for one to be saved, not only from the shackles of sin but also from social human miseries. Salvation is complete when it elevates one's mechanisms of life such as balances in the fields of economy and politics. The liberation of the soul is also the liberation of the mind. The liberation of the soul is also the liberation from the self.

- It is "an overall attitude, a particular posture toward life ... influenced by Marxist thought" (Gutierrez 1988:xxxix). Marxism and Christianity have always been thought of in juxtapositions. It is an ideology perceived as antithetical to Christian beliefs. However, Marxism has transformed the way theologians understand the nature of the church, state, politics, and democracy. Liberation theology is embraced by the progressive Christians in South Africa who are committed to social transformation of the church and the society.

The relevance of Gutierrez's theology for South Africa is further highlighted by his words:

It is a theology which is open – in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of humankind, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just, and comradely society – to the gift of the Kingdom of God. (Gutierrez 1988:12)

The liberation Gutierrez refers to is in three levels. Pietersen summarises these levels as:

- a) Liberation from oppressive socio-economic structures that forces people to live in conditions contrary to God's will.
- b) Personal liberation or transformation, by which people live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude (Gutierrez 1988:xlvi).
- c) Liberation from sin, for sin is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings (Gutierrez 1988:xxxviii). (Pietersen 2015:102)

The starting point of liberation theology is a reflection on the real and concrete struggles of people who are oppressed and exploited. It stresses the importance of obtaining an authentic and sympathetic understanding of the people's life situation through actual lived experience with them. It affirms the trustworthiness and reliability of grassroots people's insights about life and the Christian faith. Their experiences – pain, aspirations and struggles – as well as

faith and witness, are the very stuff that constitutes a genuine South African theology.

Belief in God, the Supreme Being, is not debatable. The point of contention surfaces when coming to Christology and pneumatology – the subjects that Chapters 2 and 3 tried to answer. Theologians in South Africa must drop their masks and engage in dialogues, even the difficult ones, to work together towards reconciliation. In all *kerygmatic* activities, reconciliation must never be one-sided. It must be both vertical and horizontal. Diaconal activities should be genuine in the spirit of love and servanthood. The *koinonial* attitudes must be of fellowship, unity and communal understanding following biblical dictates.

South African theologies and Christianities are complex and need an open-minded examination for synergistic conclusions that may leave all stakeholders in the Christian faith in harmony, understanding each other, and working together for nation-building and the kingdom of God. The reflections do not mean imbibing the ideas of the stronger dialogue partner, but listening to understand each other's viewpoints. Of course, there should be some endeavours of walking together in the light – apologies tendered, and forgiveness offered for the prejudices of the past. The central spoke of theology is understanding God the Creator from different perspectives. The mainstream theology is encouraged to remain couched in all speculative, scientific, narrative, and pragmatic theologies; and strive to make practical applications of these theologies into context and social realities.

The trinitarian God remains the foundation and the pillar of Christian theology – the hallmark of Christianity. God remains a transcendent God. Indeed, God is a fugue, a conversation, a personal event (Jenson 1999:35). Christ remains the very God of the very God and the very human of the very human. Holy Spirit remains the third member of the trinitarian God, whose ministry is uniquely to reveal Christ to humans. Humans remain unique as careers of *imago Dei*. The world continues to be a platform on which the unity and the attributes of God are expounded. And creation continues to be under the creative scrutiny of God through humanity for a better life as a whole. Theology continues to speak

to bring order out of chaotic social miseries caused by irresponsible human activities. South Africa theology should remain steadfast; and her Christianities, in all their diversities and proliferation, should synergise to bring order to the hurting world.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

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Theologically and historically sound, Resane's *South African Christian Experiences: From Colonialism to Democracy*, envisions a robust Christianity that acknowledges itself as "a community of justified sinners" who are on an eschatological journey of conversion. This Christianity does not look away from its historical sins and participation in corruption and evils such as Apartheid. Resane argues that failing to adhere to Jesus' teachings is not a reason for Christianity to recede from public life. Rather, doing so further pushes Christianity away from Jesus who emphatically called for the Church to engage in the liberation of society. By framing how the Christian must engage with his/her community as a component to belief – that saying must mean doing for belief to happen – Resane frames his theology as an eschatological clarion call for internal and social renewal, an interplay between the individual Christian, the communal churches of Christ, and society at large. **Dr J. Sands** – *Northwest University*

"Drawing from our own wells" is a prophetic call for theologians to develop context specific liberation theologies drawn from their own contexts, history, experiences, and different types of knowledge. This book locates its loci in the historical and contemporary context in South Africa, as well as drawing from the rich legacy of liberation theologies including African, Kairos, Black, Circle and many other theologies to address contemporary issues facing South Africa. Resane's book contributes towards enhancing the much needed local theologies of liberation based on contextual realities and knowledges. **Dr Nontando Hadebe** – *Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*

South African Christian Experiences: From Colonialism to Democracy captures the societal binaries that are part and parcel of Christianity, especially in the African context. The definition of God is also affected by these binaries, such as, is God Black or White? The book proposes both the non-binary approach, and the process of inculturation. The work also shows how not to have one theology, but different theologies, hence references and expansions on the Trinity, Pneumatology, Christology, etc. Furthermore, this work portrays Christ as seen from an African point of view, and what it means to attach African attributes to Christ, as opposed to the traditional Western understanding. **Rev. Fr. Thabang Nkadameng** – *History of Christianity, University of KwaZulu Natal*

Resane has dug deep into the history of the church in South Africa, and brought the experiences of Indigenous people and Christians, including theologians, to the attention of every reader. The author demonstrates an intense knowledge of the history of Christianity. He also portrays that there is still more to be done, both from the Christian historical perspective and the theological perspective for the church to be relevant to all the contexts in which it finds itself. **Prof. Mokhele Madise** – *Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa*
