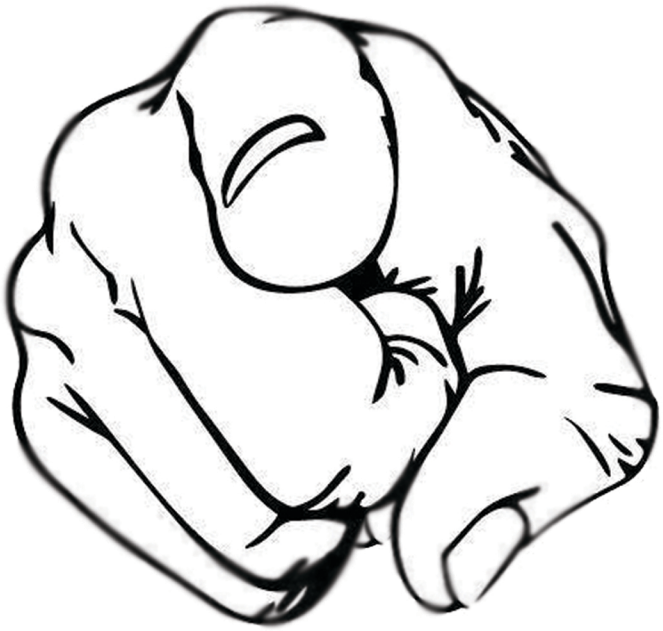
ALTERNATION

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa Special Edition 38a (2021)
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Abuse of Religion, and Gullibility in the Public Sphere in South(ern) Africa



ARE YOU GULLIBLE? FIND OUT FOR ONLY $1

Thinandavha D. Mashau

*Alter*nation

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

*Alter*nation Special Edition 38a
Open Issue #05

Abuse of Religion, and Gullibility in the Public Sphere in South(ern) Africa

Editor
Thinandavha D. Mashau

2021

CSSALL
Durban

Acknowledgement of Reviewers

We wish to acknowledge the participation of the following reviewers in the production of this issue of *Alter*nation.

Dr. Bekithemba Dube, Faculty of Education, Qwaqwa Campus, University of the Free State
Dr. Zenzo Dube, National University of Science and Technology, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe
Prof. Francis Machingura, Religious Studies and Religious Education, Mt Pleasant, University of Zimbabwe
Prof. Thinandavha Mashau, Christianity, Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, School of Humanities, College of Human Sciences, Pretoria, University of South Africa
Dr. Bishop Vushebwashe Mhaka, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Eastern Diocese, Zimbabwe
Prof. Herbert Moyo, Practical Theology, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, Programme in Religion and Social Transformation, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Dr. Sifiso Mpofu, Department of Religious Studies, Classics and Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe, Harare,
Dr. Sylvia Mukuka, The United Church of Zambia University, Kitwe, Zambia
Dr. Josephat Mutangadura, Department of Linguistics, University of Zimbabwe
Prof. Johannes A. Smit, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, Programme in Religion and Social Transformation, University of KwaZulu-Natal
Dr. Mungwari Teddy, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe

***Alter*nation Special Edition 38a, 2021**
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

ARTICLES

PRINT CONNECTION Tel (031) 202-7766; 202-7766

Editorial:
Abuse of Religion, and Gullibility in the Public Sphere in South(ern) Africa

Thinandavha D. Mashau
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9914=8982

In 2015, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (the CRL Rights Commission), which is one of the Chapter Nine Institutions according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, launched an investigation into the 'Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems'. In June 2017, a report was tabled to Parliament with proposals that seek to regulate and license all religions in South Africa. Accordingly, all religious practitioners must be registered and fall under umbrella organisations that will use their respective monitoring mechanisms regularly. The commission also called for stringent rules to be applied by the Department of Home Affairs with regard to the regulation of foreign religious leaders who are involved or part of churches in South Africa. (See for instance, Mdakane 2017; CRL Rights Commission 2017; and Mkhwanazi-Xaluva 2017.)

Against this background, and independent from the project of our colleagues from Zimbabwe (cf. Bishau 2020, *Alter*nation Sp. Ed. 35 2020), the investigation in South Africa, of which we publish some articles in this issue of *Alter*nation, was prompted by the abuse of religious rights by religious leaders, and the continued gullibility of the public, when it comes to the wide variety of projects and schemes related to the commercialisation of religion.

The University of South Africa project on 'abuse of religion and the gullibility of the public in South(ern) Africa' was initiated within the College of Human Sciences (CHS) at UNISA for two reasons.

Firstly, it served to provide a forum for reflection and a critical voice in the public square, regarding some of the bizarre activities conducted in the name of religion in a variety of organisations in South Africa. *Secondly*, it was

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a15

also initiated to critically engage the regulations concerning religions, proposed by the CRL Rights Commission.

The scope of research covered events, activities and practices dating from the apartheid era to date. Hence, the issue of church and land is also addressed.

The research for the project takes as its basis, the right and freedom to belong to and practice a religion of choice, which is enshrined and protected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

With regard to the facts of a sample of religious malpractices that have been reported on widely in the media, we have, for instance, witnessed a growing phenomenon of 'doom' prophets who abuse their unsuspecting followers by feeding them snakes, grass and petrol, or spray them with doom for purification purposes, in the name of religion.

Some extort money from their followers. They use dubious and underhanded financial get-rich-quickly programmes like pyramid schemes, or charge exorbitant amounts of money for one-on-one sessions between the client and 'the prophet'.

It has also been reported that some even sleep and have sex with young girls as well as with young unmarried or married women for religious purposes. One case that has been widely reported on, is that of the alleged sex pest scandal related to Timothy Omotoso of a Jesus Dominion International Church in Port Elizabeth.

The issue of the commercialization of religion and profiteering, has also seen the emergence of the so-called 'paparazzi' or 'celebrity' pastors.

At the heart of all these challenges, and if they do not only relate to financial gain and extortion, or sexual gratification and forms of material opportunism, it appears there might also be aspects of the occult.

But be this as it may.

Through all these reports and alleged forms of the exploitation of the public we do have to recognise that these malpractices can only find material expression due to the gullibility of different South African publics. Gullible members of our publics – often due to their own experiences of hopelessness and discontent – succumb to the empty promises and practices of charlatan 'pastors', and 'prophets'. Some of these prophets seem to be doing so blindly, because they are, in the biblical expression, 'sheep without a shepherd'. From within their hopelessness, people follow, believe and pay these religious leaders, as if they are caught under their spell, or even as being hypnotized.

So, without a doubt, these practices require serious scrutiny and reasonable analysis and sensitive discernment.

Hence, it is hoped that this special edition of *Alter*nation on 'Abuse of Religion, and Gullibility in the Public Sphere in South(ern) Africa', will make a small contribution to the analysis of the problem of the gullibility of the public, in view of forms of religious exploitation. It is also hoped that it may spark the continuous engagement of this matter of the gullibility of the public, and so, provides a creative space, to allow both academics and the ordinary religious follower or believer, in the dusty roads of our villages and informal settlements and those coming from the pavements of our cities, to engage and seek long term solutions to the challenges identified above.

We have to critically think how we think, and teach about religion, but also how we practice and adhere to our respective religious systems.

To ensure that religious rights and freedoms are not abused, but used for the benefit of all citizens in our country, academia has to play its data generation and data analytical and interpretation roles as well as its role in facilitating constructive engagements of academia and the public, and vice versa.

❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋ ❋

After having screened and followed the processes and procedures of double-blind peer reviews by academics, the following articles were accepted for publication in this special edition of *Alter*nation.

The article by **Christof Sauer** and **Georgia du Plessis**, **'Safeguarding Freedom of Religion or Belief: Assessing the Recommendations of the CRL Rights Commission in the Light of International Human Rights Standards',** serves as a basis upon which the discussion around the abuse of religious rights and the protection thereof, are founded. Using International Human Rights Standards, Sauer and Du Plessis critically analyse their research focus and also caution that CRL rights in South Africa, should guard against the abuse of their Constitutional mandate in their approach. As a way forward, the article encourages the CRL to be as transparent as possible in their approaches of studying alleged abuses of CRL rights, and also to learn to respect religious communities in their own right. This is an approach that encourages open dialogue in an effort to seek lasting solutions to challenges of religious abuse in South Africa.

Zuze Banda's, **'Touch the screen': Christian Television and its Influences and Challenges to the Church in South Africa'**, speaks to challenges that come with the emergence of the uses and abuses of Christian television, or the so-called multi-media mission approach. Banda notes that while the uses of religious television media may be helpful for some, and may present a welcome and dynamic approach to doing missions, it simultaneously exposes forms of the abuse of Christianity and some of the forms of its traditional ways of ministry and mission. Challenges relate not only to the abusers themselves, which may be good, but also to Christian groups, by losing membership and revenue. It is Banda's thesis that the traditional Church is advised to contend with this new environment if it has to survive the new realities going into the future. As his topic indicates, the South African public should be wary and employ discernment, of religious leaders who claim that the touching of television screens will bring healing, or when the 'touch the screen' approach is embraced by prophets to gain more members and, or revenue.

In his article, **'Developing a Theology of Discernment in Response to the Abuse of Religion by some Pentecostal Churches in Postcolonial South Africa'**, **Mookgo Solomon Kgatle** looks at the issue of religious abuse by some Pentecostal church pastors in South Africa. He affirms some of the observations by the CRL commission around bizarre activities. According to Kgatle, these pastors have been involved in controversial, criminal and fake miracle practices that point to the abuse of religion. The article also speaks about the gullibility of the public in that some of the members of these churches follow and engage in these activities, like the eating of grass and the drinking of petrol, without question. The author points out that many South Africans have become gullible to the abuse of religion given their economic conditions, gender injustices, and for theological and psychological reasons. The article concludes by proposing that churches and the public at large should embrace the spirit of discernment and be able to critique every action by prophets in the light of the Scriptures.

In **'Perceptions on the Relevance of Black African Faith based Structures in Democratic South Africa'**, **Ntokozo Mthembu** deals with perceptions of the relevance of black African faith-based structures in democratic South Africa. He tries and dissect the rationale behind *abefundisi,* pastors and their churches who adopt a specific rite, such as water baptism, the use of detergents – that is Jik and other related artefacts – to perform their 'perceived' function of healing and praying for sick individuals. He analyses and confronts the

challenge of the 'colonial trappings' and the spirit of consumer culture by black African faith-based structures.

Phillip Musoni's article, **'Touch not mine anointed! An Enchanted Worldview within the Millennium African Pentecostal Churches (MAPs)'**, explores the impact of Pentecostalism and the abuse of religion from a South(ern) African perspective. Musoni uses the example of the Millennium African Pentecostal Churches (MAPCs) in Zimbabwe, and South Africa. He interrogates their worldview and mindset which seem to involve the un-critical support of prophets or leaders of these churches, as the anointed ones of God – whose support should be unconditional. Musoni also exposes the abuse of the office of founders and leaders of this typology of churches. Accordingly, the article concludes by highlighting that it is the propagation of 'gap theology' that has sustained the unremitting abuses of religious offices within the MAPCs today.

In **'A Critical Appraisal of the Silence and Apathy of the Church Regarding Land Reform with Special Reference to the Lutheran Church as a Case Study: Towards Making the Church a Caring and Humanising Institution'**, **Olehile A. Buffel** critically explores abuse of religion with regard to the scandal around church land. He looks closely at the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) as a significant land owner, but land that has been received during the colonial era – an era of the perceived marriage between Christian mission and imperialists. He advocates for an approach where the church can contribute significantly in restoring humanity to society and creating a caring and humane society, by the compassionate distribution of land to dispossessed blacks. Buffel contends that the church is supposed to be a caring and humanizing institution. In this instance, the church is encouraged not to turn a blind eye to the perpetual injustice of the landlessness of blacks.

References

Bishau, D. 2020. Religion and Gullibility in Zimbabwe. *Alter*nation Special Edition 35: 1 – 427. Available at: http://alternation.ukzn.ac.za/pages/volume-27-2020/alternation-special-edition-35.aspx

CRL Rights Commission 2017. *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems.* Available at:

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201708/report-commecializationofreligionandabuseofpeoplesbelievesystems.pdf

Mdakane, M. (Chair Person) 27 June 2017. Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems: CRL Rights Commission Briefing. Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Available at: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/24693/

Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, T 2017. Foreword. *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems.* Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201708/report-commecializationofreligionandabuseofpeoplesbelievesystems.pdf

Thinandavha D. Mashau
Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology
School of Humanities
University of South Africa
Pretoria
mashatd@unisa.ac.za

Safeguarding Freedom of Religion or Belief: Assessing the Recommendations of the CRL Rights Commission in the Light of International Human Rights Standards

Christof Sauer[1]
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4976-7574

Georgia du Plessis
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4149-9058

Abstract

Following widespread media coverage of spectacular cases of abuse within religious communities, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities initiated steps towards regulating the so-called 'religious sector'. Their proposals need to be critically assessed not only with regard to their constitutional mandate, but also in light of international legal authorities on freedom of religion or belief and human rights standards. It is argued, that the proposals would impose an inappropriate limitation on freedom of religion or belief. On that basis, alternative recommendations are suggested.

Keywords: church and state, regulation of religion, registration, abuse of religion, limitations of rights.

[1] C. Sauer is the main author of this paper. He has taken part in some major aspects of the named events himself and has been able to peruse minutes and recordings of the others where existent. Much of the legal argument has been taken from a joint written submission with Georgia du Plessis to the COGTA Portfolio Committee in response to the CRL reports. Angela Kirschstein has provided valuable research assistance, and helped fill gaps that remained in the oral presentation of the substance of the paper. Any mistakes however remain the responsibility of the main author.

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a16

Introduction

In their 'Report of the Hearings on the Commercialisation of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems', the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (hereinafter CRL) proposed a strong regulation of religious communities based on a 'Peer-Review-Mechanism' of accreditations and licensing. With mandatory registration they hope to be able to exercise control to cut the roots of abuse in the name of religion and thus 'helping [religious] Organisations to get their house in order' (CRL 2016a:29).

But the CRL's actions and communications have been highly problematic: There are conflicting messages, there is a lot of confusion about terminology and procedure, and there is limited transparency surrounding the CRL. Therefore, some distinctions are needed – between the actual problems of abuse and gullibility versus the problems that the CRL creates by their own actions; between the CRL narratives and framing versus documented and established facts; between their communications versus their actions and in what attitude they are performing their work; between the interest of religious communities versus the interests of the CRL; between paternalism versus protection, promotion and empowerment.

For better orientation, a timeline of the events will be presented. It will be made clear that the CRL's procedure lacks transparency and respect for religious communities.

Then, a closer look will be taken at international standards regarding human rights and freedom of religion or belief (hereinafter: FoRB), because a balanced perspective is needed: Being contextually relevant and not isolationist, but learning from others outside South Africa. There are international authorities that defined those benchmarks which also inspired the South African constitution. In light of those standards, the relation between human dignity, human rights and FoRB as well as the limitations of that right and the role of the state will be discussed. Finally, recommendations will be given, how to implement a holistic empowerment approach for a better future for religious communities, and how to deal with actual issues legally.

Regulation as Response to Unusual Practices? A Tug of War between Opposing Positions

To give some context to the current debate around the regulation of religion in

South Africa, a closer look at past events regarding the handling of abusive outgrowths within religious communities on the part of governing entities is needed.

In early 2015[2], the chairperson of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Bishop Ziphozihle Siwa, submitted a complaint to the SA Human Rights Commission, after several cases of abuse became public. As he stated in a working group at the Religious Summit on 13 February 2019, he had tried to engage offending religious figures without success. Without him knowing, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities stepped in and started issuing subpoenas to all sorts of churches based on complaints that he allegedly lodged. 85 church leaders were subpoenad to so-called hearings under threat of imprisonment in case of non-compliance (cf. CRL 2016a:8,47-50; FOR SA & SACRRF 2017:3-7). This was perceived as undermining the required respectful relationship between the CRL and the religious communities in the further course (cf. REACH SA 2017:3).

Those hearings took place between October 2015 and March 2016 (cf. CRL 2016a:8). In August 2016 the CRL issued a Gauteng Pilot Study that evaluated 'the commercialisation of religion in the Republic of South Africa' (CRL 2016b:1), based on opinion polls among 905 religious leaders, heads of households, congregants, and traditional healing practitioners, which Unisa had been commissioned to conduct between March and May the same year (cf. CRL 2016b:7). Coupled with the presentation of some results were specific recommendations suggesting a stronger regulation of religious groups. Critics attribute this outcome to an agenda-driven method and study design (cf. SACRRF 2017:5f).

After releasing a preliminary report on 25 October 2016 and conducting a 'Consultation on the state of the nation's psyche' in March 2017, the final report on 'Commercialization and Abuse of People's Belief Systems' was published on 11 July 2017, proposing a CRL-controlled, so-called peer-review-mechanism based on compulsory registration of religious organizations and religious practitioners (cf. CRL 2017:34-48). Every religious practitioner would belong to a predefined religious institution or worship centre, and those institutions or centres would be grouped in 'Umbrella Organisations' (CRL

[2] A request to the HRC for a copy of this complaint to verify its date and content remained unanswered to the date of publication of this article.

2017:42) that are subordinate to peer-review-committees. They would decide on the accreditation and sanctions, in close cooperation with the peer-review council built up by representatives of the committees. But on top of the structure would stand the CRL as the 'final arbiter' (CRL 2017:48) to implement final decisions. Therefore, a new legislation on religion would be needed, as well as an amendment of the CRL Act to increase the powers of the CRL (cf. CRL 2017:48). A sizable amount of preceding substantial submissions from churches and other religious communities were mostly ignored or remained unanswered.

Two weeks before the publication of the report, on 27 June 2017, the CRL gave a briefing to the parliamentary 'Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs' (hereinafter COGTA), which has the oversight over CRL. There, the CRL claimed to have the support of the majority of churches (cf. COGTA 2017:3), but a number of representatives of named entities refuted this on the spot and later sent a petition to the ANC on 18 September.

The COGTA Portfolio Committee then reacted in an uncommon manner by organizing its own hearing of the religious leaders to establish the facts, and called for submissions. They received numerous requests to speak. The COGTA Hearing took place on 17 and 18 October the same year, allowing about 40 speakers to take a stand (cf. Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2018:8f). The CRL regarded this intervention as a disruption of their planned agenda and wanted to activate public opinion and the media to achieve the results they envisioned, as the CRL chair Mrs. Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva pointed out in a meeting with Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) and the South African Council of Religious Rights and Freedoms (SACRRF) (cf. FOR SA 2018b).

The subsequent COGTA report, issued in February 2018, did not endorse the peer-review-mechanism, but instead favoured self-regulation of religious communities. In that regard, a National Consultative Conference should convene as a platform to discuss challenges and to develop a charter for self-regulation and a legally recognized code of conduct. The report also recommended to strengthen the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa to penalise misleading media claims and legislation like the NPO Act or Income Tax Act to ensure registration of religious institutions (cf. Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2018:7).

The following month, the CRL chairlady communicated the intention

to go to Constitutional Court for them to prove the legally binding character of the CRL reports (cf. FOR SA 2018a) – a view that conflicts with the CRL Act (cf. Government of South Africa 2002: Part 2,5(1)(i)).

In September 2018, things took an interesting turn, when the CRL announced at a press conference to 'hand over' the further process to Ray McCauley, senior pastor of Rhema Bible Church (cf. FOR SA 2018c). Additionally, CRL presented their own Code of Conduct for Religious Leaders as a draft resolution to be approved by a subsequent religious summit and the National Consultative Conference (NCC). From the outside, what seems as an act of empowering religious communities for self-regulation, has a background story that points into a different direction.

Firstly, the relevance and authority of those unilaterally appointed by CRL needs to be regarded as questionable. McCauley is considered by many in the religious communities as having a dubious history of uncritical cooperation with the deposed and corrupt state president Jacob Zuma[3].

[3] McCauley helped Zuma in his election campaign by having him speak at Rhema Bible Church, one of the largest Churches in South Africa (cf. Howden 2010). Zuma had formed an alternative body of faith leaders ('National Interfaith (Leaders) Council South Africa' (NICSA or NILC)) in 2009, which had the effect of side-lining the South African Council of Churches and other established religious networks, which were far more critical of the president.

Zuma had promised McCauley the position of chairman of NICSA, however Bishop Qundu was elected as the first chairman (cf. IOL 2009; SAnews 2012; Ellerbeck 2019) and NICSA is defunct in the meantime. – A list of specific questions sent to the leadership of Rhema Bible Church on 16 April 2019 about their own perspective on the background of the Religious Summit was left unanswered, and when the author insisted on a written response instead of the phone conversation offered more than 2 months later, the addressed referred to the CRL instead:

> The CRL are custodians of the mandate and they are in a better position to answer whatever questions you have in this regard.

However, any earlier attempts since 14 June 2019 to get a substantial response from CRL have been equally fruitless so far, as no form to make a formal PAIA application has been provided to date.

Secondly, by promoting their own 'Code of Best Practice for Religious Organizations', the CRL ignored and was seemingly seeking to marginalize the already existing draft 'Code of Conduct for Religions in South Africa', that had been extensively mandated in a consensus process and mirrors the South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms (cf. SACRRF 2018).

One month later, in October 2018, the parliamentary 'Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency' published a press statement, demanding strong regulation of churches, including strict registration and closing of churches (cf. PC on Women in the Presidency 2018). Immediately prior to that, the Committee had met with the CRL, discussing gender-based violence in religious contexts (cf. FOR SA 2018c), after the rape trial of Nigerian pastor Timothy Omotoso received large media coverage. The CRL chairlady supported the main witness Cheryl Zondi in initiating the 'Cheryl Zondi Foundation' for rape victims who have been abused in religious contexts, in which Mrs. Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva serves as the deputy chairperson (cf. Ngqakamba 2018). In this light, the question emerges whether the Women in the Presidency-press statement was actually arranged by the CRL to further underline their agenda.

On 13 November 2018, the CRL announced at a Press Conference that a national conference of religious leaders would be held at Rhema Bible Church in order to ratify the CRL Code of Conduct and to give a final statement. But unfortunately, until the day before that meeting, no agenda or any other documents were circulated, which amplified the impression of a lack of transparency. All those who had given critical statements at the COGTA hearing, were excluded from the organizational process and no invitations were given to them (cf. FOR SA 2018d) until they requested such.

When the day came on 13 February 2019, approximately 750 religious and church leaders gathered for this 'Religious Summit' (notwithstanding other terminologies; cf. National Religious Consultative Forum 2019).

In her opening speech, the CRL chairperson pressured the participants, saying:

> We need to warn you … if this thing doesn't work, our goal is to protect and to promote the rights of religious communities …. So, if this train doesn't leave the station, we've got a meeting on the 25th and the 26th of February which is our National Consultative Conference which is attended by the ordinary community …. They will tell us what

> to do …. I always say: People, if you don't take this as the religious leaders, government will take it on for you. And you don't want that to happen. When governments take over what should be your responsibility, governments really take over. Look at what has happened in other countries (Mkhwanazi-Xaluva 2019).

This was like lighting a fuse: The audience interrupted the agenda of the day due to frustration about the preceding process, the heavy-handed manner of the CRL, the harsh rhetoric, non-transparency and the need for further clarifycations. They asked: What is the authority of the organizing group? Is this the conference that the COGTA report recommended? Why are processes and agendas not inclusive and community-based? In the end, the CRL representatives were requested to leave the summit to ensure an independent and self-determined procedure (cf. National Religious Consultative Forum 2019).

The participants then split into various pre-arranged discussion groups, including an additional one to map out the way forward. The final motions and agreements contained an emphasis on the importance of self-funding of the consultative process to maintain independence – which is a reaction to the fact that the Cheryl Zondi Foundation (partly) funded the Rhema Summit (Ellerbeck 2019); the building of a more inclusive Interim Steering Committee including a legal expert; and a bottom-up consultative process by religious communities from a local and provincial to a national level, culminating in an interreligious national consultative conference in October 2019 (cf. National Religious Consultative Forum 2019).

An 'Addendum to the Commercialization of Religion Report' (CRL 2019) dated 24 February 2019 later appeared on the website of the CRL 'in order to clear any misunderstandings that may have emerged around the report within society at large'. In it, the top position of the hierarchical peer review structure now remains blank for any other impartial entity beside the CRL to take, and the term 'self' is emphasised in the otherwise unchanged proposal of a 'self-regulatory framework' of 'the religious sector'.

A few days later, on 25/26 February 2019, the CRL held their legally prescribed National Consultative Conference (NCC) to which the chairlady had referred to before the Religious Summit. The NCC has to decide upon the resolutions that need to be implemented in the subsequent term of the CRL. About 500 people were in attendance. Most of the seats were taken up by

community council leaders, provincial and other representatives, with only 30 religious leaders allowed – even though the major topic was about religious communities with far reaching resolutions to be voted upon (cf. FOR SA 2019:1f). The majority of the audience was neither informed about the processes that had taken place to that point, nor were they informed about the motions of the Religious Summit held at Rhema Church. There was an agenda item for a report about the Religious Summit, but the CRL seemingly had failed to issue an official invitation to the task team to present their resolutions. Among the delegates were participants of the Religious Summit who wanted to present on their behalf, but this was not allowed. The chairlady ruled that,

> … as the CRL Rights Commission, we cannot give a report of something we were not a part of. We can't say this is a true reflection of what happened there when we're asked to leave …. That would be illegal of us to talk about something we don't know …. The Rhema meeting can't come back. It's dead and gone (FOR SA 2019:5).

However, the task team of the Religious Summit had sent a four-page report, including motions, to the CRL immediately after the summit, as pastors Giet Khosa and Ezekiel Mathole confirmed in a telephone conversation with FOR SA (Ellerbeck 2019). The CRL decided to refuse to acknowledge the outcome of the Religious Summit, that opposed their intentions to enforce top-down regulation of religious communities.

Finally, without the NCC participants having any background information and with no discussion time granted, they had to formulate recommendations on the matter of regulation of religion. Some of the submissions were chosen to be presented, and out of this, a four-item resolution was issued, demanding a peer review mechanism and control of religious practitioners, enforcement of the CRL proposals, control of religious media and televised church services, the repealing of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act and the creation of a federation of traditional health practitioners (FOR SA 2019:7f).

This outcome differs greatly from the Religious Summit motions. But the CRL still sees itself as mandated to push the process forward towards a top-down interference into the exercise of religious freedom, that they perceive as a potential danger to other human rights.

CRL Actions		Civil Society
Subpoenas and Hearings	**10/2015-03/2016**	
Gauteng Pilot Study	**08/2016**	
Preliminary Report	**10/2016**	Critical analysis and submissions by religious representatives
CRL Consultation: State of the Nations' Psyche	**03/2017**	
	06/2017	Parliament: COGTA CRL Briefing, objections by attendant church representatives
Final Report	**07/2017**	
	10/2017	COGTA Hearing of religious leaders
	02/2018	COGTA Report rejects CRL proposals
CRL intention to go to Constitutional Court	**03/2018**	SA CRRF et.al. begin to draft a Code of Conduct for Religious Institutions
'Handover' to Ray McCauley, including a Code of Conduct	**09/2018**	
Women in the Presidency Statement demanding strict regulation of religion	**10/2018**	
CRL Press Conference at Rhema announcing a summit	**11/2018**	
CRL threatens religious leaders at Religious Summit at Rhema Days later: CRL NCC ignores summit resolutions	**02/2019**	Religious Summit: Attendees ask CRL to leave and develop own resolutions

On 28 February 2018 the 5-year mandate of the past CRL Commissioners ended. New Commissioners only came into office on 1 July 2018, due to a delay in the nomination/ selection process and the general elections. The past chairlady is no longer a Commissioner, but the past Vice-Chairperson has now become the chair. By the close of manuscript the current CRL had not yet made any statement pertaining to the matter of 'regulation of religious communities'.

International Standards

In private conversation with the author after his presentation on relevant international human rights standards at the COGTA hearing of religious leaders, several CRL Commissioners voiced: 'You have a very different understanding of religious freedom'. In the public debate they argued that their task was protecting the dignity and defending the religious freedom of vulnerable, poor, gullible, mainly female religious adherents who were helpless against exploitative and abusive religious practitioners. This in their mind justified the limitations and burdens the proposed remedies would entail for religious communities at large, including all the bona-fide and non-offensive ones. They strongly criticized any appeal to religious freedom as an alleged defence of malpractice that would occur in the name of religious freedom.

Playing off human dignity against FoRB results from a deep misunderstanding of the interwovenness of human rights and the material nature of FoRB. Therefore, it may help to consider the international standards and authorities regarding human rights and FoRB, that are of normative importance.

As South Africa is bound by these standards and because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by now is part of common law, human dignity and human rights must be interpreted not only within the South African constitutional framework, but also within the international human rights framework. The South African constitution must be read in the light of those international standards to ensure adequate interpretations when it comes to specific implementation.

From this broader international human rights perspective, concerns can be raised regarding the CRL Report and subsequent actions.

Authorities on Freedom of Religion or Belief

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In recognition of the dignity that all human beings inherit in their 'potential of responsible agency' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:13), and the lessons learnt from the history of diversity and pluralism, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereinafter UDHR) on 10 December 1948. It is widely seen as a milestone in human history because of its universal and global moral claim; and is accepted as an ideal that provides orientation, but has no legal binding character in its own right (cf. Steiner & Alston 2000:151). This way it is recognized that universal rights belong to all human beings prior to any administrative aspects. Only in combination with the International Covenant on Cultural and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which have binding character for those who ratified, they constitute the International Bill of Human Rights as the very basis for International Law and an important influence on several national constitutions (cf. OHCHR 1996). However, in the meantime the UDHR has become an element of Common Law, which is universally applicable.

The holistic conceptualization provides an understanding of human rights as a web of 'universal, indivisible and interrelated and interdependent' items (VDPA 1993:I,5), which 'means that taking away one human right would not only leave us with a specific gap; it would seriously affect and damage the entire system of human rights' (Bielefeld 2016:29). Regarding FoRB, Article 18 clearly provides that,

> everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

It needs to be stressed that the wording aims to incorporate 'theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief' (UN Human Rights Committee 1993:2) as was pointed out later by the Human Rights Committee.

It is easy to see that – for example – Article 19 and 20, which protect

the freedom of opinion, expression, information, press, assembly and association, are inherently connected to Article 18. In basically recognizing human beings individually and collectively in their existential and 'identity-shaping convictions and conviction-based practices' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:38), FoRB as expressed in Article 18 is described as the 'gateway' (Bielefeldt 2017:348) to other rights and freedoms.

International Covenant on Cultural and Political Rights (ICCPR)

Unlike the UDHR, the ICCPR does constitute a multilateral treaty of which the implementation is prescribed and monitored by the Human Rights Committee, as is specifically laid down in part IV of the covenant. In terms of FoRB, Article 18 of the ICCPR is divided in four subsections. Section 1 repeats Article 18 of the UDHR, section 2 prohibits coercion, section 4 ensures the parental right to pass on religious or moral education of their own conviction to their children. Section 3 deserves special attention with a view to the CRL's proposals, as it defines the conditions of possible limitations as follows:

> freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others (ICCPR 1966:Art. 18,3).

It needs to be highlighted, that the 'forum internum'– the inner existential conviction of a person – cannot be subject to limitation (cf. Bielefeldt 2017:342). Due to the concise character of the covenant, section 3 especially needs further interpretation and exact definitions to prevent abuse.

General Comment 22

In 1993 the Human Rights Committee issued General Comment 22 to further elucidate the rights and freedoms of the ICCPR, with a view to the dissolution of the Soviet-Block. The comments and recommendations were adopted by the Human Rights Treaty Bodies and thus add to the foundations of International Law. Whenever legislators operate within the sensitive field of human rights, they are legally bound to consider this General Comment.

General Comment 22 provides a more detailed interpretation of article

18 of the ICCPR. In 11 subsections, different aspects of FoRB are taken up, for example the broad construction of the terms 'religion' and 'belief', the distinction between 'forum internum' and 'forum externum', the broad range of acts protected under the terms 'worship', 'observance', 'practice' and 'teaching', the guarantee to objective education on religion and beliefs in public schools, the prohibition of discriminatory manners in different contexts such as state religion, state ideologies, conscientious objection etc. The longest subsection examines the narrow confines of the possibility of limitations, that touches upon the most sensitive area of FoRB. This will be discussed in more detail later.

European Court of Human Rights Case Law

When dealing with human rights legislation, the previous and present interpretation practice needs to be taken into consideration as well. Currently, the European Court of Human Rights provides the most extensive case law based on the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), which is,

> almost identical to the parallel provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. As such, they constitute highly persuasive authority on the meaning of the latter provisions, which are now binding on most countries on earth (Durham 2010:9).

The Court's general take on FoRB is to protect the far-reaching scope and the fundamental character, as could be seen in the case of Kokkinakis v. Greece:

> [It *is*] one of the foundations of a 'democratic society' within the meaning of the Convention …. A fair balance of personal rights made it necessary to accept that others' thought should be subject to a minimum of influence, otherwise the result would be a 'strange society of silent animals that [would] think but … not express themselves, that [would] talk but … not communicate, and that [would] exist but … not coexist (ECHR 1993).

Regarding the CRL's proposals, the key decisions on registration issues, com-

ing mostly from countries of the former Soviet bloc transitioning into a democratic system, as well as Greece (having a State-Church) and Turkey, provide a firm foundation of major principles (cf. Durham 2010:7). Thus, mandatory registration laws and laws that prohibit religious activity without registration are not permissible (cf. Masaev v. Moldova App no 6303/05), the registration process should neither pose a major obstacle (cf. Church of Scientology Moscow v. Russia App no 18147/02), nor include arbitrary discretion of the authorities (cf. Manoussakis v. Greece App no 18748/91; 97 Members of the Gldani Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Georgia App no 71156/01), high membership requirements (cf. Kimlya v. Russia App nos 76836/01 and 32782/03), licensing of certain beliefs (cf. 97 Members of the Gldani Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Georgia App no 71156/01; Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia v. Moldova App no 45701/99), discriminatory manners, manipulation (cf. Church of Scientology Moscow v. Russia App no 18147/02) or obligation for religious communities to 'structure themselves in ways that are not consistent with their own beliefs'(OSCE 2004:17).

OSCE

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is the largest regional organisation with 57 countries as its members that cover the northern hemisphere. Its main purpose is conflict prevention, crisis management and rebuilding of democratic institutions through instruments like a highly functional monitoring system, independent information databases, as well as advisory and negotiation activity. In issuing several policy documents, the OSCE has set standards for the behaviour of states and governments. Although they are not legally binding, they ensure the assessment of concrete policies of member states (cf. Gareis 2015).

One of these documents are the 'Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief', adopted by the Venice Commission in 2004, which is inter alia based on the ICCPR, the ICESCR, the UDHR, UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 22, the ECHR and the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (cf. OSCE 2004:6). These Guidelines add to the foundations of interpretation practice and address a broad range of issues that 'typically arise in legislation' (OSCE 2004:3). Concerning registration processes, most of the principles outlined mirror the key decisions of the European Court of Human Rights as stated above.

In view of the umbrella-structure proposed by CRL it is worth highlighting the note that,

> consistent with principles of autonomy, the State should not decide that any particular religious group should be subordinate to another religious group or that religions should be structured on a hierarchical pattern (OSCE 2004:17).

In general, when dealing with crimes in the name of religion, the OSCE guidelines counsel caution before implementing new legislation:

> If a religious group is involved in a fraud or assault, for example, it is not necessarily best to respond by enacting new laws on religion. Thus, it is appropriate to consider whether the general laws on fraud or assault may be sufficient to address the problem without enacting a new statute to cover offences when committed in conjunction with religious activity (OSCE 2004:8).

Reports of UN Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion or Belief

As a 'central element of the United Nations human rights machinery' (OHCHR 2019), the UN Special Rapporteurs are independent experts that monitor, investigate, assess and report global human rights compliance. In order to ensure independence from narratives construed by national authorities that might collide with international standards, it is most important for legislators to take into account the outside perspective of these UN representatives.

The reports of UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief 2010-2016, Prof. Dr. Heiner Bielefeldt, systematize patterns, root causes and motives of infringements. He observes that 'the scope of the right to FoRB is often underestimated' (Bielefeldt 2017:339) as he examines the profound character and inclusive conceptualization of that right.

Concerning the problem of inappropriate political control mechanisms, he notes in his report of August 2016 that,

> relevant test questions are whether religious communities can run their own affairs outside of tightly monitored official channels, whether

> community members can meet spontaneously and in self-chosen religious centres, whether religious leaders can deliver sermons or address the community without previously being submitted to censorship […] The dividing line runs between those communities cooperating with State agencies by remaining within predefined and closely monitored channels, on the one hand, and those wishing to keep their community life free from excessive Government control and infiltration, on the other (Bielefeld 2017:348).

International Law Commentary on Freedom of Religion or Belief

The most extensive reference source on FoRB would be the recently published International Law Commentary by Heiner Bielefeldt, Nazila Ghanea and Michael Wiener (2016). It comprehensively considers all relevant provisions for protection of freedom of religion and belief as well as their interpretations by various Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs. It is currently seen as the authoritative reference work. Certain chapters specifically deal with registration issues (1.3.8) and with limitations (5.2).

Foundational Issues

Having presented the relevant international norms and authorities to consult on the matter of FoRB, the foundations are laid to engage materially some foundational issues. The proposed regulation of South African religious organisations by a peer-reviewing umbrella structure touches upon a number of sensitive issues regarding FoRB. It may be subsumed under the topic of 'registration', regarding which experts warn:

> while 'registration' may *prima facie* appear to be a merely technical theme of less political significance, the issue is actually a source of major human rights problems in the area of freedom of religion or belief (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:223).

Thus, overly strict registration laws can amount to serious and far-reaching limitations of this human right. Those who do not wish to be registered according to their beliefs but are forced to join a certain structure might lose their distinct identity, while communities which applied for legal status but

were denied can in the long term be seriously impeded in organizing their community life. Consequently, 'virtually the whole catalogue of manifestations of religion or belief' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:227) would be negatively affected.

The concerns around the CRL proposals can be grouped in three broad topics. *Firstly* the interrelations between human dignity, human rights in general, and the specific right to FoRB; *secondly*, the narrow confinements of permissible limitations of FoRB; and *thirdly*, the role of the state in general towards religious communities.

Human Dignity, Human Rights and Freedom of Religion or Belief

The UN Special Rapporteur noted that,

> Respect for freedom of religions or belief – or lack of such respect – typically manifests itself in the ways in which Governments deal with grounds for limitations. Unfortunately, the Special Rapporteur has frequently noticed loose and overly broad invocations of grounds for limitations, which often seem to be undertaken without due empirical and normative diligence (Bielefeldt 2017:342f).

Exactly this is the case with the CRL's claim of general 'abuse of human rights' (CRL 2016a:28) taking place in the name of religious freedom, neither understanding the holistic conceptualization of human rights (cf. VDPA 1993:I,5) nor the human rights approach. As stated above, the concept of FoRB is a gateway to other human rights and freedoms in general that protects 'a broad range of free activities in the area of thought, conscience, religion or belief' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:38). By no means is it generally opposed to other rights and freedoms. They are all based on the axiomatic basic assumption that dignity inheres in all human beings, as they all have the 'potential of responsible agency for which they – and indeed all of them – deserve respect' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:13). This respect for human dignity is unconditional and independent from concrete behaviour (cf. Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:17). As such, human beings are automatically, equally and universally right-holders to all rights and freedoms, prior to any administrative recognition (cf. Bielefeldt 2017:353). The human

rights approach therefore aims to empower the human being individually and collectively in every aspect and hence doing justice to the existing and emerging diversity.

Applied to FoRB, it means that,

> it cannot be confined to particular lists of religious or belief-related 'options' predefined by States, within which people are supposed to remain. Instead, the starting point must be the self-definition of all human beings in the vast area of religions and beliefs, which includes identity-shaping existential convictions as well as various practices connected to such convictions (Bielefeldt 2017:340).

FoRB understood within the realm of the human rights approach recognizes the historical and empirical experience that there is no other common denominator between different religions, beliefs and convictions than the sole human being, who is the one professing and practicing his or her religion or belief, as an individual and/or in community with others. It also means, as the Special Rapporteur clearly reminded, that the focus of the right to religious freedom should be the believer (the human being) and not the beliefs (cf. Bielefeldt 2017:340). Therefore, the attempt of the CRL to define such a common denominator within an artificial and static umbrella-structure of predetermined religions ignores not only the basic insights of the mothers and fathers of the UDHR learned from the history of pluralism, but also the 'fluid and flexible nature of religion and belief as such' (Du Plessis 2019:154), which cannot be packaged into strict institutional patterns. It seeks to place religious organizations within boundaries that do not exist and tries to find consensus that does not exist nor is necessarily profitable.

Nevertheless, it is true that conflicts between different rights do occur in concrete cases: 'The practice of human rights, to a large degree, is a practice of managing conflicts' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:29). Handling those cases means to carefully examine the scope, nature and aim of the concerned rights and finding specific, proportionate, reasonable, transparent, non-discriminative means reflecting the spirit of dignity, equality and empowerment that permeates all human rights. 'It is important not to turn concrete conflicts between (seemingly or actually) colliding human rights interests into abstract antagonisms on the normative level itself' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:29). Therefore, instead of trying to deal with 'commer-

cialization of people's belief systems' as allegedly systematic abuse of human rights in general by limiting FoRB through overly strict registration laws, it would be more in line with the international authoritative interpre-tations of human rights to restrain from profound interventions into the system but to prosecute concrete criminal actions with adequate existing laws. Durham illustrates this with parallels from common practice in the enforcement of environmental protection among corporates:

> The point is, corporate registration laws are not used as a primary means of regulation of bad practices. […] Negative activities are more narrowly targeted, and non-offending organizations are free to proceed in ways that benefit society. Only in extreme circumstances is corporate dissolution the appropriate or necessary remedy. By analogy, religious communities should be allowed to organize as legal entities, and only actual negative conduct should be subject to administrative or criminal sanctions (Durham 2010:9).

Yet another foundational issue should be discussed when assessing the CRL proposals in the light of human dignity, human rights and FoRB. As we have seen, human dignity inheres in all human beings and thus establishes the principle of equality. Consequently, all manifestations of religions, beliefs or convictions held by human beings enjoy *equal protection and treatment*. No one has to justify the existence or exercise of his or her religious beliefs. It is argued that the type of regulation envisioned by the CRL disregards this principle of equality in two ways: *Firstly*, it *discriminates* against non-traditional minority groups that do not meet the licensing criteria (initially) set out by the CRL, such as a sufficient number of followers, a religious text, a founding document and a set of rules and practices that are not condemned as 'harmful' (cf. CRL 2016a:33). It needs to be remembered that,

> religious minorities are especially vulnerable to being characterized as engaging in behaviour that is either excessive or that diminishes agency and the ability of an individual to consent [and is therefore] in need of limits and control (Beaman 2008:12).

Secondly, it *favours* non-religious belief systems as they will not be subjected to the same strict organization and will be less restricted than reli-

gious belief systems. This stands clearly in stark contrast with section 2 of the General Comment 22, which declares the following:

> Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms 'belief' and 'religion' are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reason, includeing the fact that they are newly established, or represent religious minorities that may be the subject of hostility on the part of a predominant religious community (UN Human Rights Committee 1993:2).

Moreover, the proposed regulation ultimately violates section 9 and 15 of the South African constitution that ensures *equal* protection without predeter-mining which set of beliefs, values and convictions fall under the scope of FoRB.

The Narrow Confinements of Permissible Limitations of Freedom of Religion or Belief

It has become clear that the registration, licensing and structuring proposed by the CRL does in fact impose a limitation of FoRB. While it is true in general that limitations of that freedom can be appropriate when implemented 'in compliance with the binding criteria set out in the international rights law' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:22), the question remains whether this restriction or limitation of an international human right is warranted and whether the isolated instances of the abuse of religion amount to a threat to 'public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others' as stated in Article 18 (3) of the ICCPR.

The need to respect the autonomy of religious communities precludes the State from prohibiting internal (voluntary) religious practices that seem to be irrational, unreasonable or harmful from the outside – this will be doctrinal entanglement. Therefore, a common pattern among the more authoritarian governments is to refer to the broad and unspecified limitations of 'security', 'order' or 'morality' in order to discriminate against minorities and tighten control over independent religious communities (Bielefeldt 2017:342).

In fact, 'the question of where to draw limits and how to prevent the frequent abuse of limitation clauses is one of the most sensitive issues in human rights law' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:21).

With paragraph 8 of General Comment No. 22, the Human Rights Committee insists 'that paragraph 3 of Article 18 is to be strictly interpreted' (UN Human Rights Committee 1993:8). For limitations to be justifiable, they must meet *all* of the criteria set out in Article 18 (3) of the ICCPR and other relevant norms of international human rights law (cf. ibid.). Furthermore, 'limitations may be applied only for those purposes for which they were prescribed and must be directly related and proportionate to the specific need on which they are predicated' (ibid). Hence, they should be no more restrictive than it is required, and moreover 'the least restrictive among all the adequate measures that could be applied' (Bielefeldt 2017:342). The 'Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation of Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' (AAICJ 1984) further add: 'The scope of a limitation referred to in the Covenant shall not be interpreted so as to jeopardize the essence of the right concerned' but 'in favour of the rights at issue' (AAICJ 1984:I,A,2f).

The limitation must be prescribed by law to ensure transparency and needs to be 'subject to the possibility of challenge to and remedy against its abusive application' (AAICJ 1984:I,A,8).

It has to serve a legitimate aim: the protection of 'public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others' (ICCPR 1966: Art. 18,3). Those terms are exactly defined in the 'Siracusa Principles' to prevent any arbitrary use. Special Rapporteur Bielefeldt draws attention to the fact that 'respect for the inalienability of human rights thus requires a high degree of empirical diligence and normative caution whenever limits are deemed necessary […]' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:22) because 'the onus of proof falls on those who argue on behalf of limitations, not on those who defend or practice a right to freedom' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:21).

The CRL has not proven that the incidences of harmful practices and fraud in the name of religion are of such systematic character that they threaten the basic functions and values of society. The CRL has not proven that the establishment of new, limiting legislation for religious communities is inevitably the only means to deal with such incidences rather than enforcing existing criminal laws. Finally, the CRL has not proven how the proposed registration, licensing and structuring will specifically and concretely prevent

cases of abuse within religious communities, as registration laws are not suited to prosecute criminal behaviour, as Durham points out:

> association law is not viewed as the primary control mechanism. Rather, instead of trying to address potential problems before they occur through association law, actual problems are dealt with as they arise by criminal, tax or other administrative remedies. […] Experience in other countries suggests that in general it is not registration authorities that identify such conduct, but police, neighbours, disgruntled insiders, and perhaps most frequently the media. In short, if the issue is controlling problems, a more productive way to proceed is to relax registration rules and rely on other social monitoring mechanisms to deal with the actual problems (Durham 2010:5,10).

The Role of the State

Throughout history, the relationship between state and manifestations of some religions (in a narrow sense) has always been tense because inherently, they pursue the same aim in their very own realm: To order the human life in community with a set of binding rules derived from a higher source (which – with regard to the state – can be a political ideology or just the common will of citizens). In the face of emerging diversity and pluralism, both had to rethink and negotiate their respective domain, which lead to a broadened degree of self-restraint. Hence, the most effective quality for the state to ensure FoRB would be a 'respectful non-identification' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:35) as political secularity. A neutrality with general benevolence towards religion or beliefs would not invade internal doctrinal affairs, would not judge irrational practices, would not force to adopt alien structures and would not determine whether a system of values can be recognized as a 'religion'. It rather deals exclusively with the secular aspects of organizations and associations, acknowledging and facilitating the social benefits that derive from religious and belief-related communities.

> As such, political secularity has no value for its own sake, but, it has the status of a 'second order' principle whose normative persuasiveness originates from higher (i.e. first order) principles, namely, freedom of re-

> ligion or belief in conjunction with the requirement of non-discriminatory implementation (Ibid.).

This mirrors the basic insight of the 'Böckenförde theorem', which claims that 'the freedom-oriented secularized state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself' (Böckenförde 1976:60). Such a state requires a certain self-regulating moral substance of the individuals which is inter alia brought forth or provided by various religious or belief systems manifested in communities. If the state would enact disproportionately restrictive laws to structure and control them, it would not only loose the social benefits, but ultimately loose its character as a democratic, liberal, benevolent-secular state. Durham lists those positive influences that eventually consolidate the state in its existence:

> Religious organizations play a powerful role in inculcating altruism and other personal characteristics that enhance social stability, productivity, and other forms of social capital such as increased volunteerism, social commitment, integrity, and general creativity. This impact is felt not only within religious organizations, but in other social settings as well. While religion can have negative as well as positive effects, it is socially wasteful to regulate religion in ways that unnecessarily curtail its positive effects (Durham 2010:9).

Therefore, it is the state's duty to act in a threefold way: It needs to respect, to protect and to promote or fulfil freedom of religion or belief (cf. Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:33f). 'Respect' means to be aware and acknowledge its status as an inalienable right of such profound impact that it needs to be handled with care and not to underestimate its scope. The state should 'protect' that freedom from violations by non-state actors and should implement legislation and policies for that purpose. 'Promote' and 'fulfil' entails the provision of 'an appropriate infrastructure that allows persons living under their jurisdiction actually to make use of their human rights' (Bielefeldt, Ghanea & Wiener 2016:34). That includes a functioning and accessible judiciary as well as 'a broad range of promotional activities, such as education about religions and belief diversity as part of the school curriculum, and the building of societal resilience against religious intolerance' (Bielefeldt 2017:345).

This is the background for the mandate of the CRL as enshrined in the 'Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act'. The CRL was established as a representative of the interests of religious communities before the state, quasi as the best friend and protector of religious communities. The CRL is to,

> promote and develop peace, friendship, humanity, tolerance and national unity among and within cultural, religious and linguistic communities, on the basis of equality, non-discrimination and free association (Government of South Africa 2002:Part 2,4(b)).

Actually, it should 'conduct programmes to promote respect for and further the protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities' (Government of South Africa 2002:Part 2,5(b)). It has to educate, lobby, report, promote awareness and monitor government or legislators in order to protect. Thus, the CRL was never intended to act as a hostile adversary, or a legislator, or an executive, nor as a judiciary towards religious communities.

Recommendations

The South African Constitution is widely regarded as one of the most progressive in the world and mirrors international human rights standards. This precious asset would be severely undermined if official institutions and commissions began to adopt authoritarian patterns of behaviour, ignoring the initial spirit and history of those human rights standards.

Dealing with harmful practices and abuse in the name of religion, that are deeply interlaced with issues of poverty, rural traditions, lacking infrastructure, poor quality of education, theological confusion etc., requires a holistic long-term process of educating and empowering communities on several levels rather than installing restrictive top-down control mechanisms. The general approach should be one of facilitating dialogue in order to be effective, as the joint general recommendation/ general comment on harmful practices by the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have pointed out:

> vertical coordination requires organization between actors at the local, regional and national levels and with traditional and religious

> authorities …. Capacity-building should aim to engage influential leaders, such as traditional and religious leaders; … partnerships [with them could] help to build bridges between constituencies … [States should] initiate public discussions to prevent and promote the elimination of harmful practices, by engaging all relevant stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of the measures, including local leaders, practitioners, grassroots organizations and religious communities (CEDAW & CRC 2014:34,70,77 and 81(F)).

That requires a respectful and *broad-based* cooperation and general trust between the CRL and the religious and belief-related communities. Unfortunately, this has been damaged by the CRL's harsh way of communicating with a hostile attitude, rash media statements, sloppy research and the propagation of misleading half-truths, as well as by hidden agendas and non-transparent actions. Hence, the first and foremost recommendation would be for the CRL to earn new trust by developing an attitude of respect and benevolence towards the communities that they are mandated to represent, as well as properly considering the international standards on freedom of religion and belief (cf. Sauer 2019).

To be more concrete, the following could be done:

– The CRL should acknowledge and further support the adoption process of the 'Code of Conduct for Religions in South Africa' that has already been developed by the CRRF (2018) based on a broad consensus process. Only by a grass roots approach such as this can it be ensured that the values set out in such an ethics code will be backed by the majority of the respective communities[4]. As 'Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA)' has pointed out:

> Although subscription to this Code would be voluntary, it would define the benchmarks and certify individuals or organisations as being in compliance, which would be an endorsement of their adherence to these standards (FOR SA 2017).

[4] The 'Anti-Regulation Group' has already adopted this code by integrating it into 'The Alberton Declaration' on 21 March 2019, by adding a few additional framing phrases.

– The CRL is permitted to maintain a database of religious organizations, as defined in the CRL Act para 5(j). They are also allowed to register 'religious practitioners' (e.g. leaders and office bearers) there, but it must never be a precondition to worship.

– The CRL should implement educational initiatives in cooperation with schools and communities on root causes and prevention of abusive practices, on orientation within religious diversity, and specifically on legal obligations for religious leaders and organizations. FOR SA observed, that,

> Many of the issues identified in the CRL's Report derive from a lack of compliance fuelled by ignorance. The reality is that some religious practitioners simply do not know or understand the various aspects of the existing legal framework they need to comply with (FOR SA 2017).

Thus, the CRL needs to encourage respective organizations towards accountable behaviour. Furthermore, the CRL could inform on how to file a lawsuit in case of an abusive incident and also raise awareness among the police and other state organs. This way they could further provide the basis for the enforcement of existing laws.

– Following up on this, the CRL should focus on those 'tools in the state's legal arsenal such as criminal laws and administrative sanctions' (Durham 2010:10) and use them to address these issues when they occur. With this in mind, they could install a ''rapid response' unit to alert the relevant authorities whenever it receives a complaint' (FOR SA 2017). In that line, they should remind parliament to act in every way that they can to safeguard an efficient judiciary that is not overstrained.

However, the general attitude of the CRL and the civil society must be shaped by a balanced view of religious and belief-related communities, particularly acknowledging that the overwhelming majority of these communities contribute greatly and profoundly to the South African society at large, even filling in the gaps where other institutions fail. Cases of abuse are an exception and not the rule.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it must be reiterated, that despite all criticism offered, the CRL Rights Commission is a unique and helpful instrument to promote and protect the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities. However, it must be uncaptured from controlling agendas. A holistic human rights approach aims to empower individuals and communities to enable them to develop self-regulating mechanisms. This happens in a bottom up movement from local and regional levels to the national level. Therefore, an atmosphere of freedom and respect within a democratic and non-discriminative, benevolent secular state is necessary.

(1) Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is a fundamental and protected human right. It inheres in all human beings prior to any administrative act. Its public manifestation may only be limited under very narrowly defined circumstances and the state bears the burden of proof.

(2) The instances of so called 'commercialisation' of religion or 'abuse of people's belief systems' are isolated. They do not warrant the creation of umbrella organisations to regulate religion. They can be dealt with by existing laws that need to be enforced, but registration or association laws are unsuited for prosecution of abuses.

(3) The regulations proposed by the CRL report would definitively place a severe and unjustified restriction on free worship and religious practice.

(4) In addition, they would negatively discriminate religious groups compared to non-religious and other societal groups. They would also discriminate minority and less organized religious groups compared to majority and better organized religious groups. They would in effect substantially favour some religious or non-religious beliefs.

(5) The CRL has not proven that the isolated cases of 'commercialization' of religion or 'abuse of people's belief systems' constitute a general threat to public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. Therefore, the proposed limitations of manifestation of religion are unjustified. In addition, the measures proposed are not pro-

portionate, they are too restrictive, and there are less restrictive means available to engage the problem.

(6) Furthermore, the confining by the state of the exercise of religion or belief to a predetermined list of options acceptable to the state is an illegitimate restriction of freedom of religion or belief in itself.

(7) Even if all that were not the case, the proposed measures would still not be practical and feasible as they are based on the flawed assumption that there would be a common denominator between religious organisations that would allow grouping them in umbrella organisations. This ignores the fluid and flexible nature of religion and belief as such.

(8) In summary, the proposed regulations severely restrict the enjoyment of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and violate fundamental human rights. They are unjustified, unwarranted, illegitimate, discriminatory in many respects, disproportionate, unnecessary, based on flawed assumptions, unpractical and unfeasible.

References

Anti-Regulation Group 2019. The Alberton Declaration. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nVCmFd4PwhU (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

American Association for the International Commission of Jurists 1984 (AAICJ). Siracusa Principles on the Limitation and Derogation Provisions in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by Professors, Practitioners and other Experts in Human Rights at a High-Level International Conference in Siracusa, Italy, from 30 April to 4 May 1984 (Annex, UN Doc E/CN.4/1984/4 (1984)). Available at: https://bit.ly/2LNkNGD (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Beaman, L.G. 2008. *Defining Harm: Religious Freedom and the Limits of the Law.* West Mall: UBC Press.

Bielefeldt, H., N. Ghanea & M. Wiener 2016. *Freedom of Religion or Belief. An International Law Commentary.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bielefeldt, H. 2017. *Freedom of Religion or Belief: Thematic Reports of the UN Special Rapporteur 2010-2016.* Bonn: VKW.

Böckenförde, E.W. 1976. *Staat, Gesellschaft, Freiheit: Studien zur Staatstheorie und zum Verfassungsrecht.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) 2016a. *CRL Rights Commission's Preliminary Report of the Hearings on Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems.* Pretoria. Available at: http://www.crlcommission.org.za/docs/Report%20On%20Commecialization%20of%20Religion%20and%20Abuse%20of%20People's%20Believe%20Systems%20final.pdf (Accessed 10 July 2019.)

Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) 2016b. *An Investigative Study of the Commercialization of Religion in the Republic of South Africa 2016: Gauteng Pilot Study*. Pretoria: COGTA. Available at: https://bit.ly/2JrPgbF (Accessed in April 2019.)

Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) 2017. *Report of the Hearings on the Commercialization and Abuse of People's Belief Systems.* Johannesburg: CLR Commission. Available at: https://bit.ly/32bbgyO (Accessed in April 2019.)

Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) 2019. *Commercialisation of Religion Report Adendum (sic) on 24 Feb 2019.* (1 page.) Available at: http://www.crlcommission.org.za/download-documents.html (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW & Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 2014. *Joint General Recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Harmful Practices.* UNCRC. Available at: https://bit.ly/2JvV0Bq (Accessed on 12 July 2019.) https://doi.org/10.14202/vetworld.2019.7

South African Council for Religious Rights and Freedoms (CRRF) 2018. *Code of Conduct for Religions in South Africa (Draft 2).* Available at: http://forsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-Code-of-Conduct-for-Religions-in-South-Africa-2.pdf (Accessed on 10 July 2019)

Du Plessis, G. 2019. The Constitutionality of the Regulation of Religion in

South Africa – Untoward Restrictions of the Right to Religious Freedom? The South African Law Journal 136:131-164.

Durham, C. 2010. Legal Status of Religious Organizations: A Comparative Overview. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8,2: 3-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2010.487986

Ellerbeck, D. 2019. Email to A. Kirschstein, 13 April.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 1993. Kokkinakis v. Greece App no 14307/88 (judgement of 25 May 1993). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-57827 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 1996. Manoussakis v. Greece App no 18748/91 (judgement of 26 September 1996). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-58071 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 2001. Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia v. Moldova App no 45701/99 (judgement of 13 December 2001). Available at: https://bit.ly/2S9BZHx (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 2007a. 97 Members of the Gldani Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses v. Georgia App no 71156/01 (judgement of 03 May 2007). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-80395 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 2007b. Church of Scientology Moscow v. Russia App no 18147/02 (judgement of 05 April 2007). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-80038 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 2009a. Kimlya v. Russia App nos 76836/01 and 32782/03 (judgement of 01 October 2009). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-94565 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) 2009b. Masaev v. Moldova App no 6303/05 (judgement of 12 May 2009). Available at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-92584 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) & South African Council for the Protection and Promotion of Religious Rights and Freedoms (SACRRF) 2017. Comments on the 'CRL Rights Commission: Final Report of the Hearings on 'Commercialization' of Religion'. Available at: http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/171017SARRF.pdf (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2017. Concerns and Objections to CRL Recommendation to License Religion in South Africa (Press release). Available at: http://forsa.org.za/press-release-concerns-and-objections-to-crl-recommendation-to-license-religion-in-south-africa (Accessed in June 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2018a. Parliamentary Committee Challenges CRL on 'Reckless' Statements (Press release). Available at: https://forsa.org.za/press-release-parliamentary-committee-challenges-crl-on-reckless-statements (Accessed in April 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2018b. CRL Pressing Forward on Regulation of Religion (Web log post). Available at: https://forsa.org.za/crl-pressing-forward-on-regulation-of-religion (Accessed in June 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2018c. Parly Committee 'Shocks' with Call for State Regulation of Religion (Press release). Available at: https://forsa.org.za/press-release-parly-committee-shocks-with-call-for-state-regulation-of-religion (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2018d. Proposed National Summit for Religious Leaders in 2019 (Web log post). Available at: http://forsa.org.za/proposed-national-summit-for-religious-leaders-in-2019 (Accessed in April 2019.)

Freedom of Religion South Africa (FOR SA) 2019. Highlights from CRL Rights Commission's (CRL's) 4th National Consultative Conference (NCC) (Email circular received by C. Sauer on 1 March 2019.)

Gareis, S.B. 2015. OSZE – stille Kraft im Hintergrund. Available at: http://www.bpb.de/izpb/209702/osze-stille-kraft-im-hintergrund (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Government of South Africa 2002. Act No. 19, 2002. Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities Act, 2002. Available at: https://bit.ly/2G1eyvd (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Howden, D. 2010. Inside the Most Powerful Church in South Africa. *Independent* (Newspaper). Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/inside-the-most-powerful-church-in-south-africa-2006129.html (Accessed in April 2019.)

Independent Online (IOL) 2019. SACC Excluded from Interfaith Council. Available at: https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/sacc-excluded-

from-interfaith-council-455696#.UKt-HuQ3uz4 (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966. Available at: https://bit.ly/2Mrt9ke (Accessed on 12 July 2019.)

Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, T. 2019. Setting the Scene and Legislative Framework. Speech at Religious Summit at Rhema Church. Johannesburg: 13 February. (Transcript of audio recordings by C. Sauer and others)

National Religious Consultative Forum 2019. Brief Report – Religious Summit. [14 February] (Unpublished document, 4 pages).

Ngqakamba, S. 2018. Cheryl Zondi Launches Foundation to Help Victims Abused in, Sacred Places. News24. Available at: https://bit.ly/2LdWNwG (Accessed in April 2019.)

Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) 1996. Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1). The International Bill of Human Rights. Available at: https://bit.ly/2zyXV5R (Accessed in June 2019).

Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) [2019]. Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Available at: https://bit.ly/2MazgcL (Accessed in June 2019.)

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 2004. Guidelines for Review of Legislation Pertaining to Religion Or Belief (Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 59th Plenary Session. Welcomed by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly by its Annual Session). Available at: https://www.osce.org/odihr/13993 (Accessed in June 2019.)

Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) 2017. Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems: CRL Rights Commission Briefing. Meeting Summary. Available at: https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/24693/ (Accessed 10 July 2019.)

Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency 2018. Committee says Legislation must be Drafted to Regulate Churches (Press release, 30 October). Available at: https://bit.ly/2xJPlk8 (Accessed in April 2019.)

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2018. Report of the PC on COGTA on the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) on the Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Beliefs Dated 14 February 2018 (ATC180214). Available at:

https://pmg.org.za/tabled-committee-report/3260/ (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa (REACH SA) 2017. Commentary on the CRL Rights Commission Preliminary Report of the Hearings on Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems. Cape Town.

Sauer, C. 2019. 'Un-capturing Religion'. Towards a Better Future for Religious Communities and the CRL Rights Commission in South Africa. Available at: https://www.iirf.eu/site/assets/files/116532/uncapturing_religion-commentary_cs.pdf (Accessed 10 July 2019.)

SAnews 2012. President Zuma Meets Religious Leaders' Council. Available at: https://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/president-zuma-meets-religious-leaders-council (Accessed in April 2019.)

SA Council for Religious Rights and Freedoms (SACRRF) 2017. Response by the Council for the Protection and Promotion of Religious Rights and Freedoms to the CRL Rights Commission Report on the Commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems.

SA Council for Religious Rights and Freedoms (SACRRF) 2018. A Code of Conduct for Religions in South Africa. Available at: http://forsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-Code-of-Conduct-for-Religions-in-South-Africa-2.pdf (Accessed in April 2019.)

South African Government 1996. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Available at: https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-1 (Accessed in June 2019.)

Steiner, H.J. & P. Alston 2000. *International Human Rights in Context.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Human Rights Committee 1993. General Comment No. 22: The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion (Art. 18), adopted on 30 July 1993). Available at: https://bit.ly/2xIRk8B (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. Available at: https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) 1993. Available at: https://bit.ly/2GiUrJd (Accessed on 10 July 2019.)

Prof. Christof Sauer
Professor of Religious Freedom and
Research on Persecution of Christians
Freie Theologische Hochschule
Giessen, Germany, and

Visiting Researcher
College of Human Sciences
University of South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa
sauer@fthgiessen.de

Dr. Georgia Du Plessis
Postdoctoral Researcher
KU Leuven
Belgium, and

Research Associate
Evangelical Theological Faculty Leuven,
Belgium

Research Fellow
Centre for Human Rights
University of the Free State.
georgia.duplessis@kuleuven.be
georgia.myburgh@gmail.com

‘Touch the screen’: Christian Television and its Influence and Challenge to the Church in South Africa

Zuze J. Banda
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2431-1087

Abstract
The advent of Christian television broadcasting in South Africa around the 1980s brought about innovative methods of evangelism. While this presented a welcome and dynamic approach to doing missions, it simultaneously exposed Christianity and its traditional way of doing ministry to numerous challenges, including loss of membership and revenue. This article provides a brief historical background to televangelism in South Africa, from its inception to the explosion noticeable to date. The critical and dynamic features arising from this ‘phenomenon’ are outlined in the development of the argument. These dynamics present both vulnerabilities as well as opportunities for the traditional church as understood in South Africa. The argument proposes new names and concepts arising from the peculiar features of the new church, which are born out of televangelism. The traditional church is advised to contend with this new environment if it has to survive the new realities going into the future. Finally, the church is encouraged to constructively embrace this technology.

Keywords: Televangelism, Televangelists, Christian Broadcasting, New Methods, Mainline Churches, Technologies, Church Growth, Abuse.

Introduction
Background to Television in South Africa
Resistance to the introduction of television has a long history in the South African landscape as demonstrated by the leadership of the National Party in

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a17

the 1960s. When the Nationalist Party, then the ruling party of the Whites-only South African government, initially refused to allow TV into the country, it was out of fear of the 'evils' of the silver screen, which brought the then Prime Minister, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, to liken it to an 'atomic bomb' or 'poison gas', arguing that 'the government has to watch for any dangers to the people, both spiritual and physical' (*Time* 1964). In fact, his Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, Dr. Albert Hertzog, went further to call television the 'devil's own box for disseminating communism and immorality' (Bevan 2008). Due to their standing in society, the position of these two[1] influential political figures undoubtedly carried sentiments that, in the first instance, underlined a fear of 'political and antichristian' influence, and in the second, a fear of moral degeneration and all kinds of perceived evils that they thought might harm the nation. Opposed to these sentiments were the views of their political counterparts, which included the official opposition party, namely the United Party, which pointed to an embarrassing situation[2] the country had placed itself in amidst a technologically evolving world. There were also additional dissenting public voices (Bevan 2008). It was not until 1976 that South Africa started TV broadcasting, initially screening limited recorded programmes over very limited hours per day, in the morning and in the evening.

It does appear that there was no clear response to this challenge to the political stance on television by the Church[3] in South Africa, except to assume that the National Party always had its spiritual guidance from the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The DRC was regarded as the State Church and was even regarded by its critics as the 'National Party at prayer' (Tutu 2017). Be that as it may, it can be adduced that despite Christian television having started

[1] The two are an oversimplification of the resistance in the party, especially J.F. Naudé (1950-1954), J.J. Serfontein (1954-1958), A. Hertzog (1958-1968) and M.C.G.J. (Basie) van Rensburg (1968-1970) (Bevan 2008:62-63).

[2] South Africa missed the live broadcast of the moon landing of Neil Armstrong; The less economically strong Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) had TV as early as 1961.

[3] In this article, unless specifically indicated, 'Church' is used as a multifarious entity with pluriform applications; that is, regardless of the notion that divided churches as mainline (official) churches, sects (Pentecostals, Charismatic and Pentecostals, African Independent (Initiated) Churches, etc.) and the current nomenclature of 'ministries'.

in the United States of America in the late 1950s, the Church in South Africa and the 1960s is not known to have supported the introduction of TV, including Christian broadcasting. This background is sketched so as to provide the backdrop against which the evaluation of the Church and its mission[4] in South Africa with regard to televangelism ministries is done.

It may be argued that the tardiness or reluctance of the mainline churches to embrace television as a means of spreading the gospel, then and now, can be seen from the fact that none of the traditional or mainline churches in South Africa owns a TV channel or has slots of their own across the public TV broadcasting networks. This can be said of all of the well-known mainline churches, including the Reformed Churches, the Anglicans, Methodists, and the Lutheran Churches, to name but a few. On the other hand, many Charismatic[5] and Pentecostal Churches, many of whom are comparatively less economically viable, own their own TV channels today. One may ask: Are the mainline churches perhaps suffering from the Verwoerdian fear of 'communism and immorality', or are they under the Hertzogian curse of the 'the little black box' or 'the devil's own box'? (*Sunday Times* 2007; Dickens 2018). The constraints this group of churches suffer from are a matter that needs to be fully explored, not least because the apparent lack of church growth and loss of membership might be good reason to utilise TV for the expansion and growth of the church. This is what happens due to the televangelist ministries, which are all growing and gaining popularity through the use of public electronic ministries. Other reasons for such a research focus would be to inquire after the doctrines and traditional notions that feed these churches' inability to embrace such a paradigm shift in theology and liturgy.

Against this brief political and historical background, the focus of this article is to study the existing phenomenon as located mostly among Charismatic-Pentecostal churches. The data generated may provide some information as to how this Christian movement that utilises TV, amongst other electronic media, might inform and challenge, or even transform, traditional ways of religious practices among the mainline churches in South Africa.

[4] I use Church and mission both as congenial and juxtaposed entities in the similar sense used by Saayman (1991:7).

[5] Wagner (1988) notes the historical development of the charismatic movement from around the 1980s to the neo-Charismatic movements around 2000 and beyond. In this article 'Charismatic' will encompass both movements.

Asking Pertinent Questions

In order to unpack the crux of this study about the influence of televangelism on the Church and mission in South Africa, we need to ask a few critical questions. Foremost among the research questions below is the need to appreciate the theological argument concerning the so-called 'God's move' in the history of missions, which has been divided into the 'first', 'second', and 'third' waves of the Holy Spirit. It is a treatise attributed to C. Peter Wagner (1988).

Theologically perceived, these waves, in Wagner's view, comprise the first wave, or the birth of the 'Pentecostal movement' occurring in the early 20th century with the well-known Azusa Street Revival taking centre stage. The second wave is associated with religious revivals in the 1960s and are generally referred to as the 'Charismatic movement'. The third wave, according to Wagner (in Bauder 2013) is labelled the 'Signs and wonders movement', occurring from the mid-1980s into the 1990s.

Goll (2012) makes a further observation, namely that these three historical developments are also present in the third wave, e.g. 'all three wings of the Pentecostal movement …: (1) Classical Pentecostals; (2) Protestant Charismatics; and (3) Catholic Charismatics' (Goll 2012)[6]. He goes further by proposing a 'Fourth Wave', which would impact the so-called seven 'Cultural Mountains' of 'Religion, Government, Education, Business, Family, Media, and the Arts and Entertainment' (Goll 2012). A correlational analysis of this fourth wave can also be drawn in respect of the radical growth of televangelism, the numerical explosion of Charismatic Pentecostal groupings, and the so-called Fourth Wave Feminism (Cochrane 2013) in which the media play such a central role, which started around 2012.

A boom in the numerical growth in the number of the mushrooming of Charismatic-Pentecostal churches can be noticed in the period towards the end of the 20th century. This also correlates with the period through which we find the introduction and growth of the Christian Channels (cf. White and Assimeng (2016)[7]. Thus, trends in the Church growth phenomenon and the proliferation

[6] The mention of Catholics is particularly interesting, as the Catholic Church is a mainline church that has embraced the air wave technology through Radio Veritas (in SA) (https://www.radioveritas.co.za) and Catholic TV (http://www.catholictv.org/ shows/the-catholictv-network).

[7] Compare a similar study on the influence of televangelism on church growth by White and Assimeng (2016).

of Charismatic churches can clearly be attributed, among others, to the influence of televangelism.

Another indicator is the stagnation in and the decline of membership numbers in the mainline churches in the same period. This trend is statistically affirmed by Goodhew (2000:365) when he states,

> The [numerical] decline accelerated in later years and mainline Protestantism is a much reduced force compared to the middle of the century. Roman Catholicism is the one mainline denomination to contradict this trend, growing strongly until the 1980s. By contrast African Independent Churches and 'other churches' saw a remarkable flowering in the thirty years since 1960. They moved from the margins to the centre in three decades.

In his analysis Goodhew proffers as reasons for the decline the church's 1) secularisation; 2) political fiddling; 3) socio-economic factors impacting the church; and 4) theological factors such as the lack of liturgical renewal, among others. However, this study does not mention the role of televangelism in these trends.

In order to inquire deeper into this matter, we need to ask a few guiding questions, as well as provide their hypotheses, namely,

1) What is the significance of televangelism?[8]
2) What are the results of Televangelism in the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, and do they challenge the mainline Churches and their mission today?
3) How does the Church disentangle herself from the resulting conflicts arising from the televangelistic era?

In my analysis it is critical to also include the present and future imperatives to think of, deconstructing and decolonising Church traditions, and the re-theologising and reconstruction of the Church, mission and training.

[8] Note that in several instances there is a correspondence between TV broadcasting, YouTube and Internet Live streaming, as well as with podcasts. While my focus is on TV, this does exclude the viewing of the same material on the internet, especially on YouTube and Facebook.

Methodology and Terminology

In order to tackle the research questions above, the next paragraphs shall establish appropriate methodologies that will facilitate this inquiry.

Televangelism is a phenomenon that requires our careful attention because of its vast and deep impact on the church and mission. Since it is a phenomenon, it makes sense to apply phenomenological tools of investigation, as well as related methodological research approaches in social science, for instance, ethnographical studies. To my knowledge, little has been written about televangelism in South Africa, such that a literature study of the phenomenon cannot be conducted without remaining superficial or rather imposing foreign experiences onto the South African contexts based on existing literature. Since South Africa finds itself in the brewing and seemingly escalating events of Christian television broadcasting, I have been following the phenomenon on channels on most of the major Christian networks keenly by observation. Furthermore, I have occasionally attended some of the worship services and gained first-hand experience on what these churches and their pastors are doing. Hence, I adopted an approach of a 'Complete observer'[9] (cf. Sauro). For better clarity and perspective, I discuss a few concepts of this approach in the next paragraph.

The word 'televangelism' is a composite noun formed by two words, 'television' and 'evangelism'. ('Tele' as meaning 'distant', portrays the wonderful effect use of television's ability to reach far and remote places.) It came into vocabulary use 'in the fall of 1958 by the Southern Baptist Convention as a name of a TV show' (Stewart 2015) in America. Preachers who became regular hosts and guests of this form of broadcasting earned themselves the title of 'televangelists'. As indicated above, televangelism seemingly took eminence in Charismatic-Pentecostal movement, making it its home, despite a few mainline churches, including the Roman Catholic Church, joining in. 'Touch the screen' is a catchphrase that speaks to the appeal some

[9] Sauro (2015) states, 'observation is a key data collection technique for Ux[9] (User Experience) research' and has four categories: 1) 'Complete observer', whose position is neither seen nor noticed by participants. The advantage of which is that the 'participants' are likely to behave in a natural manner when they are not aware they are subjects in an investigation (cf. Hawthorne effect), 2) 'Observer as participant', 3) 'Participant as observer' and 4) 'Complete participant').

of the televangelists make to their audience to exercise their faith and receive healing remotely by physically touching the 'screen' of the televisions[10].

Literature Review

Data Collection

As already indicated above, I have not found any South African scientific televangelistic writings. Therefore, the acquisition of information used for discussion has been a painstaking exercise. For purposes of information on how data collection was conducted, I have divided the sources according to the following categories: 1) Personal viewing of the programmes on Television networks; 2) Collection of available recorded DVDs of some of the Televangelists; 3) Search on Internet based platforms, including, YouTube and other social media, such as, WhatsApp and Facebook; and 4) Personal visits to the services and functions of some of the televangelists. The information gathered will provide a general observation of the workings of the televangelists and their churches. Where necessary, I will zoom onto specific incidents or queries to clarify or extrapolate information.

Discussing the Introduction and Modes of Televangelism

The introduction of Christian TV Channels happened in several stages. At it its infancy, Christian broadcasting appeared in the SABC channels, followed by e.TV and in later stages DSTv and Free-to-Air (FTA) networks followed. The discussion of these presentations will preferably be discussed from the aspect of their affinity. We will discuss the introduction of televangelism under the SABC and e.TV first.

The Inception of Televangelism through the SABC and e-Services

In this section we will focus on SABC Christian channels followed by e.TV. The broadcasting of Christian programmes started a short while after SABC

[10] In Emmanuel.TV, a demo shows how viewers touchscreens of TVs, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, etc. (2019).

had started its TV network[11]. These were daily brief episodes, mostly of a five-minute timespan, named 'Oordenkings' and 'Epilogues' at the beginning and close of each day's broadcasting at the time TV shows ran for 37 hours a week. (Bevan 2008:165). Later, as viewing time increased, and SABC2 and 3 were introduced, Christian programmes were substantially increased too. They then included, among others, talk shows, documentaries and Christian choir music. At this juncture, from 1981, African preachers were introduced. These were predominantly from mainline churches as preachers from AICs and Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, were referred to as 'sects' and not properly or theologically trained and inclined to heretical teachings (cf. Van Staden 1977:129-131; GKSA n.d.)

In the early 1980s, SABC ran some Trinity Broadcasting Network programmes for a few weeks. There was a slight twist when the privately owned e.TV came onto the scene in 1998 (Bevan 2008:175). They introduced preachers from other church traditions, especially the Universal Church of God. During these early days, the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement was still subdued, as the focus of research Kritzinger (1986) and interest was the African Initiated (Independent) Churches (AICs)[12], that were viewed as a threat to the growth and stability of mainline churches.

The Impact of DSTv and FTA on Televangelism

The arrival of satellite television, especially DSTv (alternatively, MultiChoice) in 1995, brought about a radical transformation in Christian television broadcasting. It is this era where a distinct explosion in Christian broadcasting in South Africa became noticeable, and the mainline churches were affected.

[11] In terms of its programmes, for the first few years, the SABC maintained a policy of using White people in White programmes. But during the 1980s, this racial policy became more relaxed. Already in 1979, the SABC started using Indian and Coloured Christian ministers as regular presenters on the religious broadcasts with which SABC-TV/TV1 closed every night.

[12] These included the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) with its headquarters in Moria, in Limpopo, the St John Apostolic Faith Mission of SA, at Katlehong, Gauteng and the Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe). Besides the AICs, 'Bazalwane', namely the AFM, Baptist, Full Gospel and Assemblies of God, etc. (cf. Anderson 1992) were viewed negatively.

Four electronic media housed were catalysts, namely DSTv under MultiChoice and Free-to-Air (FTA), which comprise Christian channels using their own exclusive decoders via the KU Band LNB (Net-life 2010), e.TV and the SABC, to a lesser extent. Never before were South Africans bombarded with such a vast number of Christian channels to choose from. Because of their great influence, MultiChoice and FTA television deserve special discussion next. Of significance were the following networks:

1) The first and largest of Christian programmes were on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (popularly called TBN). Initially, many televangelists were American-based, followed by Nigerians (see below). TBN evolved into several regional networks and South Africa fell under 'TBN in Africa'. Later, the Faith Broadcasting Network (Gateway News 2014)[13] was introduced under the management of Andre and Jenny Roebert, based in East London (SA). South African preachers and their ministries also increasingly began to buy their own slots.

2) The FTA Christian channels have gradually increased in number. At some stage the number of Christian Channels on the FTA was in excess of 70 (Net-life 2010). This number fluctuated, apparently because of the high broadcasting fees (Ric 2017)[14]. The advantage in this network is a '24/7' uninterrupted and, apparently, uncensored productions. On these programmes, many South Africans were exposed to diverse models and practices of the Christian faith and a few other religions, some viewed as repulsive or attractive by different viewers. Some noteworthy channels of the FTA stations include the Emmanuel TV of Bishop TB Joshua (2019), the pastor of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN)[15], in Lagos,

[13] This was a 'name change and branding strategy' of TBN Africa 'For Africa, by Africans'.

[14] A TV channel on IS20 Satellite then cost R90 000 or more per month (Ric 2017).

[15] The fame of Bishop Joshua continues to attract South Africans to Nigeria, despite the 12 September 2014 tragedy that saw a SCOAN six-storey building (guesthouse) collapse killing 116 victims, of whom 85 were South Africans, to what was alleged as 'scandalous' by observers and the bereaved families (Sifile & Mashaba 2020).

Nigeria, but with several branches around the world, the KICC (Kingsway International Christian Centre) of Pastor Matthew Ashimolowo, a Nigerian pastor who is senior pastor of several congregations across the United Kingdom (KICC 2019), the GNF-Tv (God-Never-Fails TV Channel) of Bishop ND Nhlapho — which allows several independent pastors and ministries to buy slots under their channel (GNF-Tv 2019), the Living Waters Ministries International of Archbishop Bafana Steven Zondo, a South African pastor based in Evaton, with several branches across South Africa (RLW 2019), and the Miracle TV (2019) of Prophet Uebert Angel, a Zimbabwean pastor now resident in the United Kingdom; the Ezekiel TV (2019) of Archbishop Ezekiel Guti, another Zimbabwean pastor based in Harare, with a comprehensive reach in Zimbabwe and South Africa. These channels, like several others not covered above, have made a great impact on South Africans. This has been noticed by their 'roadshows' and huge gatherings at their meetings at stadiums and other big venues.

My First-hand Experience at Evangelistic Meetings of Televangelists

In my adopted disposition as 'complete observer' (cf. Sauro 2015), I had the opportunity of visiting the worship meetings and miracle services of the hosts of some of the Televangelists, including, UBN[16], World Restoration Service (see below), Rabboni Centre Ministries, and Impact for Christ TV. The services are recorded, edited and submitted to preferred broadcasting networks for showing during the allocated time slots.

Broadcasts are modified versions of actual live recording, by the communication technical teams, sometimes because of ethical reasons. Prior to the recordings, some ministries, like Impact for Christ, would require people who intend standing in the 'prayer line' to be prayed for, to sign 'indemnity forms'. Should attendees feel uncomfortable with any footage on which they appear, they may approach the ministry to remove it. Another reason for editing is to focus only on select highlights of the service to fit an allocated

[16] This is Pastor Mukhuba's TV ministry, which has been broadcasting from 2006 to 2010 in different open-air TV channels, and then, according to her, 'Through the enablement of the Lord, in February 2011, I established my own TV channel, Unity Broadcasting Network (UBN)' (Mukhuba 2017).

channel slot. Herein also lies the possibility of sanitizing the broadcasting. Although some tele-broadcasts might indicate on the screen 'Live', like those of Prophet Bushiri, they are in fact recorded services[17].

An Overview of selected DVDs, Facebook pages and Video Clips of Televangelists

In most cases, the televised messages are excerpts from broadcasts from services that normally run for five to eight hours, especially in the case of Sunday services, or evangelistic campaigns often labelled as 'salvation, healing and miracle services'. These are normally daylight services. However, 'all-night services' run for about 10 hours or more. After the services, the technical teams of these ministries do a lot of editing on the recordings and then package the finished product into DVDs that they sell. The DVDs will, in addition, contain carefully crafted 'commercial' material that advertise the televangelist, his/her ministry and other products. Some content might be enhanced with fancy graphical designs. The DVD are available on sale immediately after the services or later elsewhere. Orders can also be made by phone for delivery by post or other arrangements. Moreover, most of these ministries have found a way of broadcasting through social media. Many audio and video material are made available on sale on Facebook and Twitter handles. As a consequence of the social media, the ministries' offerings are engaged by viewers who have the latitude to make their own critical comments and observations. Some of these observations are insightful, while some are dis-tasteful, as they merely slander the activities of the concerned televangelists or the content on the audio-visuals. By the audio-visual material and social media capabilities we are able to see how the Christian television broadcasting has become a business with multifaceted capabilities and overreach. Their advantage is that they have better longevity than the once-off broadcast on TV and can be distributed far and wide even to those without TV or Satellite technologies.

Print Media

Apart from these audio-visual materials, a few of the ministries have produced

[17] I was personally able to request a section of a filming in which I would have appeared to be removed, as one of the people I was in attendance with felt it would compromise her integrity.

magazines arranged in such a manner as to give an impression of what their ministries are all about. Many of them highlight the miracles and testimonies of those who have been helped by them. They also contain advertisements of the products they sell. There are also numerous news clips on public print media, especially *The Daily Sun*, followed by the *Sowetan*, that provide other perspectives to the many issues that have surrounded the televangelists, especially on the controversial side more than on the complimentary side of their work.

A Critique of Televangelists by Justin Peters in his DVD, 'A Call for Discernment on Televangelism'

In his DVD, Justin Peters (2013a)[18] has compiled messages and activities of several televangelists. The DVD contains several video clips which he analyses and critiques for what he sees and hears. In my view, like any recorded audio-visual material, the evidence presented in the DVD is susceptible distortion and the video should itself be viewed with a sense of 'discernment', as the possibility of distortion and misrepresentation cannot be discounted.

Furthermore, on YouTube, Peters confronts a 'member' of Word of Faith movement, Evangelist Todd Bentley during a 'miracle' service. He labels him 'a worker of iniquity' (YouTube 2014) after Bentley had apparently 'failed' to heal Peters. In 2013, Bentley had conducted a revival in Tongaat (KZN), South Africa, that was beamed live on God-TV, thus attracting scores of people to the venue, also claiming a viewership of 220 million homes (Viljoen 2013).

Televangelists Placed under Governmental Scrutiny

The recent spate of weird incidents in some of the Charismatic-Pentecostal churches caused a huge public outcry (cf. Mashau & Kgatle 2019). This prompted the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Cultural,

[18] Justin Peters, born with disabilities in his limbs, gives his testimony of a life of struggle with faith and belief from childhood because of his condition. This condition created a desire to understand faith and healing and the discovery of 'fake' miracles through the study of the Scriptures and a process of discernment. This established him as one of the chief critiques of the so-called 'Word of faith' movement, or 'Health and wealth or prosperity gospel' (Peters 2013b).

Religious and Linguistic Communities[19], popularly known as the CRL Commission, to conduct its own research. *The Report* (CRL 2017), as the title suggests, is a summation of a few media clips and interviews conducted by the commission with 85 heads or representatives of churches, African religions, Judaism, Hinduism and other religious institutions. Televangelists formed part of the 55% Charismatic-Pentecostal leaders and only 13% were from mainline churches. Some of the renowned televangelists arrived at a venue with hundreds of their supporters in buses and other modes of transport, marching and flanking their leaders, including holding placards with statements of support, and denouncing the Commission about what they regarded as interference with their faith and their leaders. Among them were Prophet Paseka 'Mboro' Motsoeneng who is aired on Incredible Happenings TV and Soweto TV (YouTube 2019), King Dr. Prophet Bishop Apostle Hamilton Q Nala of Rebirth Family Centre (Wopnews 2019), Pastor Lesego Daniel[20] of Rabboni Centre Ministries (Molobi 2018), Archbishop Zondo of the Rivers of Living Waters Ministries International (RLW 2019), and others. Banda (2019) and (Kgatle 2017) make critical observations on this report, especially on the merits of the Commission, to make rulings. Despite possible flaws by the CRL Commission in handling this matter, it does seem it had genuine concerns to address[21].

Observations on Broadcasted Church Services of Televangelists from a South African Perspective

Most televangelist run church services apart from mission outreach campaigns. These services are either televised live or recorded and then broadcasted in

[19] This is a South African Commission instituted under Chapter 9 of the Constitution.

[20] Pastor Lesego, dubbed 'the snake or grass pastor'. For more on his bizarre 'miracles' cf. Kgatle (2017), Punchng (2018) and Molobi (2018). The Trinity International Bible University has honoured 'Daniel Mokgethi Lesego Mosuoe' with the Degree Doctor of Ministry in Church Administration and Christian Therapy on 9/12/2017 (Facebook 2017.)

[21] This is the view of the majority attending the national summit of religious and church leaders convened by Pastor Ray McCauley (in his capacity as Chair of the National Religious Leaders Council) at Rhema on 13 February 2019, which I personally attended.

different channels of their choice. In order to have a better view of the praxis of televangelists let us obtain insight from these services, by looking generally at major elements of their worship services:

1) The *intercession* is purportedly a spiritual preparation for the major service. It serves to protect the service and the ministry from malicious attacks from demonic activities, witches, criminals and Satanists. It also seeks the blessing of the presence of the Holy Spirit and God's favour on pastors and the whole ministry.
2) *Praise and Worship* – this session sets the spiritual tone for the service and prepares for an atmosphere of divine intervention in the word and deed of the pastor and worshipers.
3) *Testimonies* – these are faith evidences of conversion, healing, blessing or any miraculous intervention in the life of worshippers. Often some tell how from simply 'touching the screen' they were healed or blessed in one way or another. Testimonies also serve as a marketing strategy.
4) The *Sermon*[22], is a 'teaching' ministry that constitutes the climax of the service. The dynamic exegesis of the biblical passage, sometimes with visual aids on large screens, is concluded with a 'challenge' to repentance and salvation to the viewers – this climax is called an 'Alter Call'.
5) An *Alter Call*, while it may be done any time during the course of the service, very often it happens after the sermon for purposes of confession of sin and declaration of forgiveness and prayers.
6) *Prayers for Healing, Deliverance and Blessings* are the 'miracle' moments of the service. Televangelists use this moment to pray for the bodily and spiritually afflicted. For some it is the time to 'demonstrate' power and anointing vested in them.

The above-mentioned components of the worship service do not always follow the same order. 'As the Spirit leads' pastors are 'led' to perform any of these elements on a tangent.

The Challenge to the Church

In the paragraphs above we have looked at various facets of televangelism.

[22] Often, sermons are interrupted by a word of prophecy or acts healing or deliverance.

These may tend to be merely a compilation of stories, unless one analyses them and presents an understanding of what they purport to be in missiology. In the next paragraph I present a critical discussion on televangelism and the type of challenges it presents to the church. In my critique I have chosen to use analogies that have missiological significance in as much as they relate to existing theological or biblical models. These models are merely prisms I use to analyse the televangelistic phenomena and are thus not an end in themselves. However, I have personally coined some models as an exploration of new tools or concepts in extending new knowledge and debate in missiological thinking; that is, unless proven otherwise.

The 'church without walls'

Until the coming of the Christian Television, Church practice was confined within the walls of each denomination. What happened in there only attendees knew. Modern Christian broadcasting has, proverbially, 'torn the temple curtain' and has exposed the Church to the outside world. This compares well with the image on Jonker's (1969) book cover, *Leve de Kerk*, on which two church buildings are depicted; one a medieval church building representing a closed, rigid and cold structure with no human movement into and out of it, and another a modern 'church' structure with broken walls and a crib of 'little Jesu' is visible from the outside. It is also accessible to the human traffic, apparently busy with their daily chores. This scenario, I suppose, suggests a 'window' whereby lovers and enemies of the church can have a view of internal affairs of the church. Jesus' ministry, generally, was a 'church without walls' (cf. Churchwwalls 2019 and Churchwithoutwalls 2019)[23]. Wherever he went, throngs of people followed and gathered around him (Matt. 4:25; Mark 3:7-9 Biblica, New International Version)[24]. These included his adversaries, the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Scribes who most of the time tried to find fault with him (Mark 8:11, Matt. 22:34ff, Mark 7:5). Without walls, Jesus was exposed

[23] This concept has taken ground locally (e.g. in Boksburg, https://web.facebook.com/churchwwalls/?_rdc=1&_rdr) and abroad (e.g. Houston, TX, https://churchwithoutwalls.org/)

[24] Please Note: Unless otherwise stated, all Biblical text references are sourced online using the Biblica, New International Version (NIV) at https://www.biblegateway.com/ (Accessed 19/5/2019 - 19/9/2019).

to 'touch Jesus' for healing urge (Mark 5:25ff). Even where walls existed, they were broken down. A patient was let down a dismantled roof (Luke 5:17ff). Similarly, televangelism has broken down church walls and has exposed the Jesus preached by televangelists. Notwithstanding the negativity it has generated, it has worked hugely to the advantage of televangelists who have drawn massive viewers to their meetings, unfortunately, to the detriment of mainline churches.

The Church has Come 'Home' to Stay

There is a traditional understanding of the 'house church' according to the New Testament church (Rom. 16:3, 5; Col. 4:15) and a recent phenomenon of Small Christian Communities (Kleissle, LeBert & McGuinness 2003) or Basic Christian Communities (Bissonnette 1976). Christian broadcasting has broken both modes and have come up with what I call the 'virtual church' (Roberts 2009)[25]. Participation in church worship, including offering, albeit remotely, is now become a reality for the 'church shy' or those incapacitated by ill health or any other reason. The 'home' has assumed a sacred space where believers can experience religious aura or church critics view disparagingly, in the comfort of their homes (cf. Mark 2:1ff).

Diversified Church

At the press of a button, viewers can 'move' from one form of church practice to another. Churches and preachers represent different forms of spirituality. They are modelled according to specific traditions and orientations, which have also evolved over time. Visual impressions created by televangelists have had a strong impact on viewers, thus attracting many according to their likings. Unfortunately, some footages are rehearsed stunts with the purpose to deceive[26]. Kgatle (2017) also critically engages these gimmicks by televangelists and calls for discernment. Jesus' ministry also experienced foreign

[25] This concept as argued by Roberts (2009) has mostly applied to the internet. This has become even more apparent with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown restrictions in SA.

[26] Prophet Bushiri has been accused of such gimmicks, e.g. 'calling fire from heaven' (2019a) and 'claiming the visual presence of angels' (2019b).

admiration and adversarial competition. His disciples once envied John the Baptist's ministry (Luke 11:1ff) but were incensed by another copycat ministry that invoked Jesus' name to cast out demons (Mark 9:38ff). Jesus' wise reply was, 'for whoever is not against us is for us' (Mark 9.40). Jesus' response is a call for discernment. When viewers are inundated with a plethora of televangelistic ministries they need to know the essence of their bearings and theological anchorage.

Spirituality of Churches Placed on the Judgement Scales

Religions, Christianity in particular, express different types of spirituality. Cannon (1994:321) has identified six types of spirituality that influence Christian faith and action, namely 1) sacred rite; 2) right action; 3) devotion; 4) shamanic meditation; 5) meditative contemplation; and 6) wisdom. For instance, ministries inclined to 'right action' may put heavy emphasis on 'holy life' or 'righteousness' and would openly condemn sinful life. This is evident in the preaching of Pastor Mukhuba cited above. In light of the above viewers are thus exposed to a range of spiritualities. This is enriching for faith and practice. It does not even require the viewer to desert his/her own church.

Participation in the 'Services of other Churches'

Televangelists are aware of the power and influence of the electronic media. They speak and act accordingly, looking beyond the audience in front of them. They intentionally address the viewers at home, even inviting them to 'touch the screen' as they pray, or to fetch a glass of water upon which they would pray[27]. This voluntary participation enables viewers to do those things that agree with their reason and faith of the moment, even if their churches might be opposed to them. This 'freedom of religion' is what restrictive churches cannot contain. Jesus' ministry created a similar context. In John 9.22f, the man who received sight from Jesus and his parents feared excommunication from synagogue leaders for participating in Jesus' ministry. Participation in televangelists' ministries goes further to include making offerings to them by electronic or other means, of which banking details are placed on the screen.

[27] This is especially the practice of the Universal Church of God televangelists (as seen on e.TV, 16/5/2017).

Church-planting Re-modelled

Christian TV Broadcasting has introduced new methods of Church planting.

The Virtual Church

As hinted above, the virtual church, also called 'internet church', is a very recent phenomenon. 'Virtual' means '(1) very close to being something without actually being it; (2) existing or occurring on computers or on the Internet (Anon 2019). Therefore, 'virtual' is viewed as something that exists, but in a hypothetical or unorthodox form. There is a great measure of fluidity, as opposed to something concrete and structural. In the same manner, many believers who have testified at the services of televangelists attest to committed attendance to their services. But some, like the late Pastor Tshifiwa Irene (Ramashia) of World Restoration Service, never opened a church with an address, as she herself claimed to belong to the church of Rev. Dr. Madzinge (Mzansistories 2019). Pastor Oyakhilome (popularly known as Pastor Chris) claims to have several church branches in many countries across the globe (Halon 2018) but has recently initiated the Christ Embassy Virtual Church, which is internet based (CEVirtualChurch 2019). Similarly, the Hillsong Church South Africa has an internet-based church, but this church model is a combination of Internet, TV and actual Church. For instance, its church that meets at the Sinoville branch[28], City of Tshwane, is often linked to the Cape Town branch by internet by means of a simulcast broadcast. Sometimes all the branches in South Africa are linked virtually to a live sermon of the Senior Pastor, Brian Houston, who is in Australia, by TV and Internet. This means that the 'virtual' members become real only when the televangelist holds church service close by. Jesus' virtuality became real when the Centurion sends the 'healing word' to his home to 'touch' the ailing servant (Luke 7:1-10). Not only that, but Jesus' virtuality during his earthly ministry was something difficult to contain by the disciples, because sometimes he was to them like a ghost (Matt. 14:26). This was even so with the post-resurrection Jesus (John 20:19, 27; Luke 24:40-43). Televangelists make Jesus more real and active in the life of the believers than perhaps some pastors in the mainline churches[29].

[28] My daughter and son-in-law are members and attend at this Sinoville branch.
[29] Cf. The debate of Geisler and Howe (1992) on the logic, possibilities or impossibilities of Jesus' 'supernatural' body.

The Drifting Church

This 'church construct' happens when viewers of Christian TV broadcasts continuously move between worship meetings of various televangelists without making them their home. This nomadic behaviour is prompted by a 'seeking spirit' whose needs are fulfilled at any of them. Often it is occasioned by the claims of testimonies of those who claim healing or attainment of their needs at the one or other televangelist. Jesus' ministry was a 'drifting church'; hence his response to an aspiring follower, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head' (Matt. 18:19f, NIV). It is a church with no address, shape, size or reliable description. Pastors dealing with this phenomenon are always in bewilderment like a person viewing a hologram or phantom. It is before your eyes, but is neither tangible, nor does it disappear someday like a mist (John 6:66, NIV). The benefits of such a church are often temporal and seasonal; seasonal, because they remain attracted to televangelists for as long as they benefit from their ministries. That is why televangelists are forever devising means and strategies to keep these 'members' hooked to them[30]. This often baffles other churches, because they are confronted with members who are intermittently present and not fully committed and functional.

The Lava Church

This phenomenon is a product of a process of fluidity and solidification. As viewers of the Christian channels are attracted to advertised evangelistic meetings, they get attracted to specific televangelistic ministries and follow these wherever they go and attend its meetings, wherever possible. This simulates hot lava that flows while still hot and naturally solidifies when it cools down. Then it finally sets into a permanent feature of its geographical destination. Many viewers who were enticed to televangelistic events have finally settled with then as new congregations or churches. For example, when Pastor Chris Oyakhilome started his Christ Embassy church in South Africa, many were attracted to his 'Night of Bliss' (Ngwenya 2011) meetings that started at the FNB Stadium in January 2011, and subsequent meetings at the

[30] Bishop Makamu of 'Rea Tsotella' fame stated in his 'I AM Bishop Makamu' advertisement that today church growth is about the business strategy you employ (2019).

Johannesburg Stadium. The stadiums were filled to capacity and many people were turned away. The precursor to these meetings were the amazing but controversial[31] 'miracles', which were televised on Christian channels. After these meetings, several Christ Embassy congregations were established in major cities of Gauteng. The lava effect has been evident with several televangelists who used their TV programmes as an effective 'church-planting' method. Biblically, when the Jewish temple authorities beset the newly-born church it was scattered far and wide. These refugees, once they arrived at places of safety, continued to exercise their faith forming new churches in diaspora (Acts 11:19ff, NIV). The 'lava syndrome' continues to deal a deadly blow to the existence of mainline churches as they bleed profusely to members who resettle in churches of televangelists.

'*The Church is dead, long live the Church*'[32]

Since the advent of Christian TV broadcasting there has been sustained outcries from the mainline churches because of their loss of members. Many churches have had to rationalise their services and church buildings, as services that were initially well attended became woefully reduced. This has become a death blow both to the life of the churches and their resources, which depended on affluent and numerically strong membership. Furthermore, young people who found the neo-Charismatic worship style of the churches run by televangelists very appealing, despite all controversies raised by their parents and critics, left their 'parental churches' to join the new-styled churches in

[31] 'Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa ruled that local television channel e.TV must withdraw all Christ Embassy Church advertisements claiming that Oyakhilome can faith-heal HIV. This was followed by the Treatment Action Campaign successfully lodging a complaint with Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) against Oyakhilome after a member whom he claimed had been healed by Oyakhilome died of HIV/Aids-related illness (Vena 2011).

[32] Borrowed from the 'the king is dead, long live the king': The old has gone, replaced by the new. The phrase originated on the death of Charles VI (Le Roi est mort. Vive le Roi!, 1422) and was repeated for a number of French kings, most dramatically at the death of Louis XIV. In English it dates only from the mid-1800s but was soon transferred to other events (Farlex, Inc. 2022).

droves[33]. Hence Vaters (2016) reprimands, 'Jesus told us to show the world we're his disciples. Not by putting on a better Sunday morning show, or by making higher quality movies. And certainly not by sticking with the old, stale Sunday morning show, either'. This explains why mainline churches have decried televangelism as killing the 'true' Church. If Jesus Christ's declaration that even the 'gates of hell shall not prevail over it' (Matt. 16:18). it stands to question how televangelists would then 'kill' the Church.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Rounding off the Hypotheses

I wish to affirm, *firstly*, my first hypothesis that televangelism can be directly attributed to Jesus' prophecy to the apostles. 'Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father' (John 14:12). The impact of the Christian TV broadcasting in all spheres of the society cannot be denied. The advent of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic era was one major source of power and explosion towards the mission of the Church in spreading the Gospel. The advent of television and its use in spreading the Gospel is another important landmark in the epochs of Jesus Christ's walk with the church throughout the ages (Matt. 28:20). It has achieved what Christ could not have achieved within the limitations of his bodily sojourn on earth. Christ certainly foresaw this electronic age and its benefits to the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, regarding the second hypothesis, it can be attested that over the years the harvest of Christian TV has been immense. The 'wheat' of the harvest has led to the spread of the Good News of God's Kingdom and the growth of the Church. It is equally true that the 'tares' are intertwined with the 'wheat' and continue to harm the credibility and the authenticity of the biblical message of salvation. Some televangelists undoubtedly harm the course of the Gospel; hence the CRL Commission's bid to curb the abuse and rot that has crept into televangelism. There are fears that the South African government may apply restrictions on the Church as in Rwanda (Woods 2008). Should that happen, it is well documented (cf. Workman 2009) that once the State suppresses or persecutes the Church, it often results in a backlash or then the

[33] Traditional outlook pastors criticize the neo-charismatic outlook of the church as just 'shows' or 'show-offs' (cf. Vaters 2016).

Church is pushed to operate underground, effectively evoking the 'subversive memory of Christ' (Arias 1984:67).

Thirdly, I have proposed above that one of the ways of addressing the glaring contradictions posed by televangelism is by 'Deconstructing and Decolonising church praxis, Retheologising and Reconstructing the Church'. The philosopher, Jacques Derrida (*Britannica* 2019), the originator of the 'Deconstruction' theory posits, 'deconstruction … consisted of conducting readings of texts looking for things that run counter to the intended meaning or structural unity of a particular text'. We certainly need to analyse what is happening in televangelistic 'church' and in the 'traditional' church, juxtaposetion our findings, in a process akin to decoloniality and get rid of the 'impurities'[34] (Tingini 2017). In fact, Niemandt (2017), in discussing the historical roots of theology of 'Prosperity Gospel', concludes that it is 'a spiritualisation of materiality and celebration of classic symbols of surplus/excess and consumerism'. If we agree with this definition, then many unsuspecting viewers and attendees of televangelists fall victim to this 'prey Gospel'. Viewers and members, I recommend, must be empowered to 'self-theologise'[35]; 'self', not as an exclusive privilege of the 'preacher', but as prerogative of the 'ordinary member' or 'viewer' in the sense applied by Gerald West (2015)[36] using necessary methods such as used in inculturation and contextualisation[37] (Biko, in Maluleke 2007). However, I caution that West's approach as a 'grassroots' activity functions ideally from a 'group-based' forum. However, television viewers under emotional enchantment of what they 'see' on the screen, might,

[34] Christianity flared up under Roman imperialism and it has always been riddled with imperfections, many of which differ from the teachings of Jesus Christ and thus raise the need to decolonize Christianity (cf. Tingini 2017).

[35] In addition to the 'Three-Selves principles of mission, namely, 'self-governance, self-support and self-propagation' first articulated by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, David Bosch (1991), among others, proposes that the (African) church need to do 'self-theologising'.

[36] West espouses 'Contextual Bible Study' (CBS) where the participant, preferentially, 'the 'poor, working-class, and marginalised' or the viewer (in the case of televangelism) through 'embodied theology' applies a 'see – **judge** [own emphasis] – act' response.

[37] Wendland (2002) states, 'Theologizing' speaks of an interplay of the need to 'de-theologize', 're-contextualize' and 're-theologize'.

on the spur of the moment, lack the instant 'judgement' (discernment) required to 'act' appropriately especially as regards a well-crafted deception. It is incumbent upon the 'Church' to provide ongoing empowerment of believers, especially from those of aggrieved mainline churches[38], through guided 'self-theologising' seminars[39].

Televangelism as a Wake-up call to Mainline Churches

Notwithstanding, mainline churches have done themselves a disservice by not discerning the times in which God is taking the Church into a new season (Luke 12:54ff). They 'should' long have discerned the move of the Holy Spirit, 'to stand where God stands', as Kritzinger (2014) and Mashau (2018) suggest, not on matters of justice only, but also to be actively involved in the universe through 'signs and wonders' in the laying of hands, healing and deliverance of God's people, breaking the power of Satan and demonic activities and witchcraft, stronghold of poverty and servitude to drugs. Therefore, the Church must open its 'ears' and 'eyes' to the workings of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:2 & 3) in the era of the Fourth Wave of the move of the Holy Spirit (cf. Pawson in Bond I.A.H and Bond J.C. n.d.). Those who regard themselves as well versed or trained in theology, should transcend the rigid walls of their institutions and churches and join Jesus Christ's salvific and transformative activism among the marginalized and downtrodden, as well as encounter territorial powers and principalities operating in politics, economy, education, religion and many other oppressed spheres of the society, through the same Spirit.

The Way Forward

This research has exposed numerous gaps and untapped areas of research. Possible future areas include how South African televangelism has affected missions locally and abroad. While we have discussed its effect on the Church

[38] In fact, Steve Biko, in his challenge to religion, raises ten points which African Christianity has to consider to redress the harm the 'religion of the White man has done'.

[39] For example, the homeless people of the City of Tshwane, with the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology at Unisa, have collaborated to publish two volumes using CBS (Mashau & Kritzinger 2014).

broadly, we have not touched on the type of believers or members it has produced. We certainly also need to check the quality of this evangelism in terms of the depth and breadth of its outreach. Lastly, we need to inquire further into the theology that feeds into the practices of televangelists, for instance, the source of their training and praxis methodologies they apply in dealing with the 'virtual' church and their 'tangible' church.

References

Anderson, A. 1992. *Bazalwane: African Pentecostals in South Africa*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

Angel, Prophet E. 2019. Miracle TV. www.miracletv.co (Accessed on 15 May 2019.)

Anon. 2019. 'Virtual'. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virtual (Accessed on 11 May 2019.)

Arias, M. 1984. *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Banda, C. 2019. Redefining Religion? A Critical Christian Reflection on CRL Rights Commission's Proposal to Regulate Religion in South Africa. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40,1. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1948

Bauder K.T. 2013. Charismatic? *Religious Affections Ministries*, 29 July. https://religiousaffections.org/featured/charismatic/ (Accessed on 29 July 2019).

Bevan, C. 2008. *Putting up Screens: A History of Television in South Africa.* Master's dissertation. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. Available at: 00front.pdf;sequence=1 (up.ac.za) (Accessed on 29 May 2019.)

Biblica 2011. New International Version. Bible Gateway, Online at: www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-International-Version-NIV-Bible/ (Accessed 19 May 2019 – 19 September 2019.)

Biko, S. 2007. In T. Maluleke: 'May the Black God stand, Please!' http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/ 10500/4329/Maluleke.pdf (Accessed on 18 July 2019.)

Bissonnette, T.G. 1976. Comunidades Eclesiales de Base: Contemporary Grass Roots Attempts to Build Ecclesial Koinonia. *Jurist* 36: 24 – 58.

Bond, I.A.H. & J.C. n.d. From Charismatic to Postcharismatic. https://www.free-online-bible-study.org/postcharismatic.html

(Accessed on 19 July 2019.)
Bosch, D.J. 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. https://doi.org/10.1177/009182969101900203
Bushiri, Prophet 2019a. 'Calling fire from heaven'. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEpPhavdj2Y (Accessed on 15 June 2019.)
Bushiri, Prophet 2019b. Claiming the Visual Presence of Angels. www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WeIgQxowjs (Accessed on 15 June 2019.)
Cannon, D.W. 1994. Different ways of Christian Prayer, Different Ways of Being Christian: A Rationale for Some of the Differences between Christians. *Mid-Stream – The Ecumenical Movement Today* 3,3: 309 – 334.
Catholic TV n.d. Homepage for Catholic TV Online. Available at: http://www.catholictv.org/shows/the-catholictv-network (Accessed on 19 December 2020.)
CEVirtualchurch 2019. Online Church of the Christ Embassy Ministries. VCP - Login (cevirtualchurch.org). (Accessed on 25 June 2019.)
Churchwwalls 2019. Facebook homepage of 'Church Without Walls'. Boksburg, Gauteng. Available at: https://web.facebook.com/churchwwalls/?_rdc=1&_rdr) (Accessed on 15 May 2019.)
Churchwithoutwalls 2019. Homepage of 'the Churchwithoutwalls', Houston, Texas. Available at: https://churchwithoutwalls.org/) (Accessed on 15 May 2019.)
Cochrane, K. 2013. The Fourth Wave of Feminism: Meet the Rebel Women. *The Guardian*, 10 December. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women (Accessed on 19/12/2020.)
Deconstruction 2019. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/topic/deconstruction (Accessed on 18/7/2019.)
Dickens, P. 2018. The Devil's Box. *The Observation Post* 2018. https://samilhistory.com/2018/01/11/the-devils-box/ (Accessed on 20.7.2019.)
Emmanuel TV 2019. A Live Channel. Available at: DSTV, Channel 390.

Facebook. 2017. Prof Lesego Daniel Receives Doctor of Ministry Degree. https://m.facebook.com/posts (Accessed on 17 July 2019.)

Farlex, Inc. 2022. 'king is dead, long live the king'. https://idioms.thefreedictionart.com/ The king is dead, long live the king (Accessed on 12 May 2022.)

Gateway news 2014. This a 'name change and branding strategy' of TBN Africa 'For Africa, by Africans'. 4 Nov. https://Gatewaynews.co.z/tbn-africa rebrands to Faith Broadcasting Network (Accessed on 17 July 2017.)

Geisler, N. & T. Howe 1992. *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties.* Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books. Excerpts. https://defendinginerrancy.com/bible-solutions/John_20.19.php 2014, (Accessed on 20/12/2020.]

GKSA. n.d. Waarheid en Dwaling. In Bogaards, A.H. (ed.): *Deur Christus Alleen.* http://enigstetroos.org/pdf/GKSA_WaarheidEnDwalingSektes.pdf (Accessed on 24 July 2019.)

GNF-Tv. 2019. A Christian Channel of God Never Fails Ministries at www.godneverfails.co.za (Accessed on 15/5/2019.)

Goll, J. 2012. The Start of the Fourth Wave. *God Encounters Ministries* [Online] https://godencounters.com/start-fourth-wave/ (Accessed on 17 December 2020.)

Goodhew, D. 2000. Growth and Decline in South Africa's Churches, 1960-91. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30,3 August: 344 – 369. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1581496 (Accessed on 20/12/2020.) https://doi.org/10.1163/157006600X00564

Guti, Archbishop E. 2019. Live Free-to-Air Channel, Ezekiel TV. Available at: https://ezekieltvcha-nnel.com (Accessed 15/5/2019).

Halon, E. 2018. Major Nigerian Evangelical Leader Emphasizes Christian Solidarity during Israel Visit. *Jerusalem Post*, May 19. Major Nigerian Evangelical leader emphasizes Christian solidarity during Israel visit - Israel News - The Jerusalem Post (jpost.com) (Accessed on 25 June 2019.)

Jonker, H. 1969. *Leve de Kerk. Over Hedendaags Kerkewerk.* Callenbach: Nijkerk.

Joshua, Bishop T.B. 2019. Bishop T.B. Joshua Profile. Available at: https://emmanuel.tv (Accessed 15 May 2019.)

Kgatle, M.S. 2017. The Unusual Practices within some Neo-Pentecostal

Churches in South Africa: Reflections and Recommendations. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73,3: *a4656.* https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656 (Accessed on 18/7/2019.)

KICC 2019. A Television Channel of Kingsway International Christian Centre Ministries. https://kicc.org.uk (TV & Radio | Kingsway International Christian Centre (kicc.org.uk) (Accessed on 15 May 2019.)

Kleissler T.A., M.A. LeBert & M.C. McGuinness. 2003. *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st Century.* New Jersey: Paulist.

Kritzinger, J.J. 1986. What the Statistics Tell us about the African Independent Churches in South Africa. In Oosthuizen, G.C. (ed.): *Religion Alive: Studies in the New Movements and Indigenous Churches in South 4frica.* Johannesburg: Hodder and Stoughton.

Kritzinger, J.N.J. 2014. Concrete Spirituality. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70,3: Art. #2782. http://dx.doiorg/10.4102/hts.v70i3.2782 (Accessed 18 June 2019.)

Makamu, Bishop 2019. Rea Tsotella. 'I AM Bishop Makamu'. A Live Broadcast on, DSTv Channel 157. (Accessed on 6/7/2019.) https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501741289-003 PMid:30543812

Mashau, T.D. 2018. *Standing Where God Stands: J.N.J. Kritzinger as an Encountering Missionary and Missiologist.* Pretoria: Mission Press. www.missionalia.journals.ac.za; http://dx.doi.org/10.7832/46-1-278 (Accessed on 18 July 2019.)

Mashau T.D. & M.S. Kgatle 2019. Prosperity Gospel and the Culture of Greed in Post-colonial Africa: Constructing an Alternative African Christian Theology of Ubuntu. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40,1: a1901. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1901 (Accessed on 18/7/2019.)

Mashau, T.D. & J.N.J. Kritzinger 2014. *Pavement Encounters for Justice.* Parow: AcadSA.

Molobi, S. 2018. Snake in House of the Lord! *Daily Sun* 8 June. https://www.dailysun.co.za/News/National/snake-in-house-of-the-lord-20180607 (Accessed on 14/5/2019.)

Mukhuba. 2010. Bringing the Gospel from Soweto to Zim. *The Herald.* www.herald.co.zw (Accessed 17 July 2017.)

Mzansistories. 2018. Pastor Irene Tshifiwa Dies – Leader of the World Restoration Service Church. *Mzansistories* 24 October. Pastor Irene Tshifhiwa dies - Leader of World Restoration Service church - Mzansi Stories (Accessed 25 June 2019.)

Net-life 2010. Free TV Channels in South Africa – FTA KU Band, 17 July. https://www.netlife.co.za/tag/ku-band-south-africa/ (Accessed on 14 June 2019.)

Niemandt, C.J.P. 2017. The Prosperity Gospel, the Decolonisation of Theology, and the Abduction of Missionary Imagination. *Missionalia* 45,3. www.missionalia.journals.ac.za; http://dx.doi.org/10.7832/45-3-199 (Accessed on 18 July 2019.)

Ngwenya K. 2011. We attend Pastor Chris' Night of Bliss. Online *Drum*, 01 April. http://www.drum.co.za/articles/News/We-attend-Pastor-Chris-Night-of-Bliss. (Accessed on 25 July 2019.)

Peters, J. 2013a. *A Call for Discernment: A Biblical Critique of the Word of Faith Movement (Health & Wealth or Prosperity Gospel)* Feb 2, DVD. Justin Peters Ministries.

Peters, J. 2013b. Personal Testimony. https://justinpeters.org/personal-testimony/ (Accessed on 12 June 2019.)

Punchng 2018. Pastor who Fed Grass to Worshippers, Bring Live Snake to Church. 7 June. https://punchng.com (Accessed on 17 July 2019.)

Radio Veritas. n.d. A Live Roman Catholic Radio Station. Available at: https://www.radioveritas.co.za/ (Accessed on 19 December 2020.)

Ric 2017. Starting a Satellite TV Channel: How Much does it Cost? 11 Jan. www.purpleturtle.co.za/articles/starting-satellite-tv-channel-how-much-does-it-cost (Accessed on 29 May 2019.)

RLW 2019. Personal Profile. Archbishop Zondo. Available at: https://rlw.org.za/archbishop-zondo/ (Accessed on 14/5/2019.)

Roberts, M.D. 2009. The Challenge and Opportunity of Virtual Church. http://www.markdroberts.com/htmfiles/resources/virtualchurch.htm (Accessed on 18 July 2019.)

Saayman, W. 1991. Christian Mission in South Africa: Political and Ecumenical, University of South Africa: Pretoria. http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/19536/Saayman_W_0869816977_Section1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed on 17 December 2020.)

Sauro, J. 2015. 4 Types of Observational Research. https://measuringu.com/observation-role/ (Accessed on 24 July 2019.)

Sunday Times 2007. From Devil's Box to Diversity: 30 Years of SABC Television. 7 January. https://mybroadband.co.za/nephp/5299.html

Sifile, L. & S. Mashaba. 2019. Long Wait for Justice: TB Joshua Building Collapse Victims. www.iol.co.za/thestar/news (Accessed on 17 July 2019.)

Stewart, T. 2015. *Televangelism.* Dictionary of Christianese. https://www.dictionaryofchristianese.com/televangelism/ (Accessed on 16/7/2019.)

The Report CRL 2017. Report on Commercialisation of Religion and the Abuse of People's Faith Systems. http://www.crlcommission.org.za/docs/Final%20redesigned%20for%20office%20print.pdf (Accessed on 11 June 2019.)

Time 1964. *The Other Vast Wasteland*, 20 November. http://content.time.com/time/magazine/ article/0,9171,830795,00.html (Accessed on 8/2/2019.)

Tingini, P. 2017. The Need to Decolonise Christianity. *The Standard*, 6 August. https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/08/06/need-decolonise-christianity/ (Accessed on 18 July 2019.)

Tutu, F. 2017. 'Kairos Moment' for Christian Community. *Mail and Guardian* 13 April. https://mg.co.za/article/2017-04-13-00-kairos-moment-for-christian-community (Accessed on 15 July 2019.)

Van Staden, A.J. 1977. *Die Ou-Apostelsekte is op die Dwaalweg.* HAUM: Pretoria.

Vaters, K. 2016. Tired of the Show: Why the Church Can't (and Shouldn't) Compete with Hollywood. https://www.christianitytoday.com/karl-vaters/2016/january/tired-of-show-church-cant-compete-with-hollywood.html?start=2 (Accessed on 25/6/2019.)

Vena, V. 2011. TAC, Church Face-off over Healing Claims. *Mail & Guardian* 7 Feb. Thttps://mg.co.za/article/2011-02-07/tac-church-faceoff-over-healing-claims/ (Accessed on 25 July 2019.)

Viljoen, A. 2013. Global TV Audience Captivated by Todd Bentley 'Healing Revival' in SA, April 18. https://gatewaynews.co.za/global-tv-audience-captivated-by-todd-bentley-healing-revival-in-sa (Accessed 18 July 2019.)

Wagner, C.P. 1988. *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today.* 4th Edition. Michigan: Servant Publications.

Wendland, E.R. 2002. 'Theologizing' in Bible Translation (with Special Reference to Study Notes in Chichewa) Speaks of an Interplay of the Need

to 'De-theologize', 'Re-contextualize' and 'Re-theologize'. *The Bible Translator* 53,3: 328 – 329. https://doi.org/10.1177/026009350205300304

West, G. 2015. Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading. Stellenbosch Theological Journal 1(2):235 – 261. https://www.academia.edu/12204480/Reading_the_Bible_with_the_marginalised_the_values_of_Contextual_Bible_Reading (Accessed on 19/7/2019.)

White, P. & A.A. Assimeng 2016. Televangelism: A Study of the 'Pentecost Hour' of the Church of Pentecost. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72,3. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i3.3337 (Accessed on 17 December 2020.)

Woods, M. 2008. Why has Rwanda Closed 8,000 Christian Churches? https://www.christiantoday.com/ article/why-has-rwanda-closed-8000-christian-churches/ 130243.htm (Accessed on 19 July 2019.)

Wopnews 2019. Apostle H.Q. Nala. www.wopnews.co.za/drhqnala.html (Accessed on 14/5/2019.)

Workman, H. 2009. *Persecution in the Early Church: A Chapter in the History of Renunciation.* Eugene, Orgon: Wipf & Stock Publishers. https://books.google.co.za/books?id=xSBMAwAAQBAJ (Accessed on 19 September 2019.)

YouTube 2014. Todd Bentley Service Gets Rebuked Preacher Justin Peters, 06 May. www.youtube.com/watch?v=854RV7r1Xxo (Accessed on 12 June 2019.)

YouTube. 2019. Moporo P.F.P. Motsoeneng. https://www.youtube.com/user/incrediblehapennings/ about (Accessed on 14 May 2019.)

Dr. Zuze J. Banda
Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology
School of Humanities
College of Human Sciences
University of South Africa
Bandazj@unisa.ac.za

Developing a Theology of Discernment in Response to the Abuse of Religion by Some Pentecostal Churches in Postcolonial South Africa

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9556-6597

Abstract

The focus of this article is on the current abuse of religion by some pastors of some Pentecostal churches in South Africa. These pastors have been involved in controversial, criminal and fake miracles practices that point to the abuse of religion. While these acts might be acceptable among some, in some contexts, the generic South African religious context perceive them as taboo. Thus, the main problem on this score is that many South Africans have become gullible to the abuse of religion, given their poor economic circumstances, gender injustices and, for many, their uninformed theological understandings, while, in some cases, there are psychological reasons. In response to these forms of gullibility, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (the CRL Rights Commission) has come up with a proposal that the government should regulate churches through an umbrella organization that will oversee the administration of churches, and the affiliation of churches to a mother church, which prescribes a minimum qualification for pastors, and addresses doctrinal issues and related matters. However, there are scholars and some sectors of society that argue against the regulation of religion. What then is the solution? This article argues that a theology of discernment, as found in the Bible in 1 John 4:1-3, can assist, 1) to deal with the abuse of religion; and 2) to deal with the gullibility of society in respect of the abuse of religion in South Africa.

Keywords: Pentecostal, Discernment, Religion, Theology, Post-colonialism

Introduction

The abuse of religion in South Africa is demonstrated by outrageous, criminal and fake miracle acts of some pastors of some Pentecostal churches. Kgatle (2017) mentions some of the acts, calling them 'unusual practices'. In 2014, Pastor Daniel Lesego fed his congregants with grass and made others to gulp petrol as symbols of accessing God. Lesego said that these symbols could be used in similar ways as bread and wine in the Holy Communion (Kgatle 2019:129). In 2016, a protégé of Lesego, Pastor Penuel Mnguni, fed his followers with snakes and walked on top of the bodies of others. In the same year, the so-called 'Doom pastor', Thabang Rabalago, sprayed Doom on his congregants. Rabalago said that 'he has been laying hands on the sick', but this time around, 'God told him to use Doom' (Kgatle 2019:131). He reiterated that prayer makes dangerous insect killers such as Doom to become harmless. Motsoeneng claimed to have gone to heaven and taken selfies with God. Lately, the trial of Tim Omotoso (2018), on allegations of rape, revealed that 'men of God' often wants to access power by sleeping with young girls (cf. Kobo 2019; Ramantswana 2019). Another outrageous act is a miracle of walking on air by Prophet Shepherd Bushiri. Bushiri, also known as 'Major one' was also accused of transporting R15 million to his home country (cf. Dube 2020). Most recently, Pastor Alph Lukau took the #resurrection challenge by claiming that he has resurrected a dead body (Banda 2020).

The surprising thing is that the society is gullible and unsuspecting of these outrageous acts. One congregant of Lesego's church, Rabonni Center Ministries, was quoted as saying, 'I believe in Pastor Lesego and everything he does' (cf. Kgatle 2017). The supporters of Rabalago wore T-shirts written 'Do not touch my anointed ones' (Psalms 105:15, New International Version 1978). This scripture is often quoted out of context to intimidate those who are critical of these outrageous acts in order for the followers to remain silent. Following the arrest of prophet Shepherd Bushiri, his supporters said 'No Bushiri, no vote' (Pijoos 2019). Utterances such as this demonstrate that not only are people gullible, but they are also ignorant; hence, the scripture, 'My people perish because they lack knowledge' (Hosea 4:6). During the #resurrection challenge week in South Africa, one listener, during a TT show on Power FM (26 February 2019), said that, 'As much as you believed that Jesus was resurrected more than 2000 years ago so you must believe that Alph Lukau can resurrect a dead body' (Tema 2019). These examples demonstrate

that people are susceptible to the abuse of religion in South Africa. At times congregants remain loyal, even when such practices pose danger to their health. They shout, 'I receive', even when a prophet says, 'You shall die'.

The reasons for this gullibility are well captured by Kgatle (2017) as socio-economic, psychological, theological and patriarchal; socio-economic, because many people in South Africa still have to endure the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality. Thus, religion, even when it is abusive, gives them some form of hope. The desperation of the people of South Africa makes them accept anything as long as it is done with the promise of a job, car, house, promotion, etc. However, socio-economic challenges cannot be the only reason for this gullibility, because even the rich attend these kinds of churches. Thus, it might be possible that some congregants are brainwashed, such that they cannot apply their minds. It is theological because of the failure of orthodox churches that remain traditional and not offer an alternative liturgy to solve the challenges that people are going through in postcolonial Africa; patriarchal, because when one observes the pastors involved in outrageous acts, most of them are male and the victims are female. Alternatively, it might be that society cannot make a distinction between what is true and false. In the words of Quayesi-Amakye (2011), 'people are gullible because they have not as yet learned to delineate what is spiritual from mundane'. One of the spiritual tools that society can use to make that distinction is the theology of discernment. Therefore, this paper proposes the theology of discernment in response to the gullibility of society regarding the abuse of religion.

Methodology

This article is located in missiology. Missiology as one of the disciplines of theology and as a scholarly or academic enterprise has an ability to do critical reflection on the practice of mission. In this context, this paper is a critical reflection on the abuse of religion in South Africa. In addition, missiology is the study of missions by a specific church in a specific context. Hence, this paper studies the way mission is practised by some Pentecostal churches in South Africa. The methodology for this paper is contextual Bible study. The Contextual Bible Study method, according to West (2007), is one Bible study method that is able to make the synergy between various disciplines in theology. This paper starts with the problem of the abuse of religion in some Pentecostal churches in South Africa and how such challenges can be solved

by 1 John 4:1-3. The paper is a contextual study of the theology of discernment in 1 John 4:1-3 applied to the context of the abuse of religion and the gullibility of society in South Africa.

The Definition of Discernment

The word, 'discern' comes from the Latin word *discernere*, which refers to separation or distinction (Evers-Hood 2016:179). It means to test in a crisis in order to make the difference between right or wrong and the difference between good and evil. Discernment works in difficult circumstances, especially where one is faced with uncertainty or indecision. In spiritual matters, discernment means to look at a situation with spiritual lenses. It means to look at a situation from a divine point of view. Discernment, according to Kiesel (2015:9), refers to looking at circumstances from the angle of God and beyond the imaginations of humanity. Discernment in simple terms is to see things the way God sees them (cf. Kiesel 2015:9). The activities of discernment include among others investigation, a vetting process, and probing through the process of sanctification. Consequently, discernment will involve the process of separation. This process ensures that the best decision or the right person is chosen or appointed. Discernment comes with the best in life and its probing results in authentication of the truth. Thus, discernment does not take truth as the obvious, but checks the significant part to ensure that indeed the truth is concrete. In the end, discernment does not deal with the surface or the abstract but it is contextual (Sciberras 2013:176).

Discernment should not be misconstrued as judgement, but as a means of making the correct decision. Discernment is the need for one to follow the correct direction in making choices in life. Therefore, discernment in spirituality, according to Waaijman (2013:3), should be 'placed within the context of spiritual direction, conscience, personal experience, choice and feelings'. Discernment is the connection between humanity and divinity in order to seek for divine will upon one's life. When a particular person is aligned to that divine will, he or she will be able to make the right decisions on key matters and other day-to-day important matters. Such decisions will ultimately play an important role in the life of an individual in much a bigger way in life. The individual's ability to make good personal choices will have an impact on the whole society (cf. Lombaard 2012:67). Hence, there is individual discern ment and group discernment. Group discernment is made up of the individuals

in that group who are able to discern their destiny and affect the group in a positive way (Waaijman 2013:4). In the end, both the individual and their group will be able to fulfil the vision of God for their lives through the Holy Spirt (Lavallee 2016:208). Therefore, discernment is the ability to make correct choices in relation to God's vision and direction so that the divine has an impact on the individual's life and their group.

The Development of the Theology of Discernment

Ignatius of Loyola

Reflection on the theology of discernment cannot ignore the prominent figure and place of Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius was a Spanish Basque Catholic priest and theologian, who co-founded the religious order called the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and became its first Superior General at Paris in 1541 (Idígoras & Ídigoras 1994). Ignatius taught that for discernment to take place, the participant should reflect on the real life each time they engage in prayer. The participant should in the time of comfort and discomfort be able to discern the will of God (cf. Barry 1989:137). Ignatius taught three levels of reflection that the participant must go through before making a decision in life. The first one is the inquisition of a contextual life, secondly, the hermeneutic of that context with the help of the Holy Spirit, and the last is the reflection on the mission that God has for his people that will inform the practices of religion (Lavallee 2016:210). Other figures that taught and reflected on discernment are Origen, Cassian, Benedict, Evagrius of Pontus, Bernard of Clairveaux, Clara of Assisi, Bridget of Sweden, Catharine of Siena, Gerson, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Jonathan Edward, Pierre Favre, and others. It is important to note Elisabeth Hensen, who discussed discernment in a wider range of early Christian texts in New Testament writings (Paul and the Synoptics), Elisabeth paid special attention to 1 John 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 (cf. Waaijman 2013:4).

Roman Catholic

The Roman Catholic Church, in relation to discernment, has a strict approach. The church seeks to enhance the work of Jesus Christ through the leadership of the Holy Spirit. In order for this goal to be possible, the church envisages to examine what is happening in this time and interpret every action with the lenses of the Good News. For example, De Villiers (2013:133) speaks of the

communal discernment which has been linked to,

> ... the actions of an individual who, in consultation with a spiritual companion and in line with his/her conscience, examines and tests the way forward in the light of deeper considerations, desires, motivations and drives.

The goal of their examination is to ensure that the work is orderly and represent the church in a good manner. The approach of the Roman Catholic Church has been consistent with what the scriptures are saying about discernment, i.e. examination of religious experiences in light of the gospel (Lavallee 2016: 210). In addition, discernment has been a practice of the Roman Catholic Church over a long period. In essence, to Catholics, discernment is a process that makes people to take proper decision in order for them to fulfil the will of God in their lives. An individual discernment is a personal endeavour that de-sires to align one's plans with the will and the divine calling of God. Therefore, no personal choice that one makes should be based on emotions and feelings but in keeping with the will of God, which will be able to affect society positively.

4.3 Protestantism

In Protestantism, the approach on discernment depends on the group within the movement. Some movements within Protestantism that perceive discernment as a distinction between right or wrong. Discernment among Protestants help them to judge between something that is correct and the other that is erroneous. The titles of their scholarly works say it all: *A call for discernment: Distinguishing truth from error in today's church* (Adams 1998); *Exposing witchcraft in the church* (Godwin 1997), and *God's trademarks: How to determine whether a message, ministry, or strategy is truly from God* (Otis 2000). In these studies, the goal is to make the difference between right and wrong. The main reason to seek discernment in these instances is that people are not sure about their decisions. In other instances, the goal of seeking discernment is based on the judgement upon other people's religious practices. In the latter, there exists some element of prejudice whereby people already know the results of their discernment. Discernment should be about helping the church to reflect on their past and present actions in order to prepare for the future (Waaijman 2013:8). In this paper, discernment is about helping the new Pentecostal

churches to make the right decision in order to avoid the abuse of religion.

The Context of 1 John 4:1-3

In the text, John teaches his Beloved not to believe every spirit that passes by; even if such a spirit seems like the Spirit of God, it should not be believed until such a time when it is tried and is proven the real spirit of God. The main reason for the trying of the spirits is that many false prophets exist in the world to mislead the people of God. In order for the testing of the spirits to be successful, believers ought to know the real Holy Spirit as the Spirit of God through discernment because without this knowledge they will mistake other spirits as the Holy Spirit. In other words, for John the Holy Spirit is a distinguishing factor, because without him other spirits cannot be identified in the spirit world. The function of the Holy Spirit is to assist an individual to make choices. In addition, the Spirit of God is the one that confirms the works of Jesus Christ in the believer. Any spirit that does not profess Jesus Christ as the incarnated image of God is not the Spirit of God. The spirit that does not make this confession is the spirit of the antichrist that has come into the world. The opposite is also true; every spirit that attests to Jesus coming to the flesh on earth is the Spirit of God.

The Theology of Discernment in 1 John 4:1-3

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has a role in actually revealing Himself to the believer. In this way, the believer will know who the Holy Spirit is and be able to manifest the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This is regarded as an inspiration in view and in function of the common good. The Holy Spirit gives the believer an ability to live a holy life, not in a legalistic way, but in the right standing with God. The Holy Spirit helps the believer not only to fulfil his or her life purpose but also to fulfil the will of God in his or her life (Sciberras 2013:176). While discernment seeks to evaluate life experiences with a critical mind, it cannot happen without the Holy Spirit. In addition, an endeavour to know God and serve him diligently is also not possible without the help of the Holy Spirit. The reason is that the desire to know God is not only informed by the study about God, but also about knowledge about the Holy Spirit. In the end, the Holy Spirit is the centre of Christian life, because in order for believers to know

God, they have to be in a relationship with the Holy Spirit (Lavallee 2016:208).

The Spirit of God that was present in the ministry of Jesus Christ is in action in the life of the believer. He is doing the same work in the believers as he has done when Christ was on earth. In this way, discernment is possible, because anyone who does not act as Christ has acted means that the Holy Spirit does not lead him or her. To know that someone is doing the work of the Holy Spirit is to compare such work with the work of Christ. Thus, the pastor who practises religion under Christianity is actually engaged in the continuation of the work of Christ while He was still on earth. Therefore, the real acts of the Holy Spirit are well understood through the Holy Spirit by the acts of Jesus Christ (Medina 2011:150). Moreover, the Holy Spirit has order and anyone who is led by the Holy Spirit is an orderly individual. Anything that causes disorder in the practice of religion is not of God and does not follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is, there is order and people are sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Although people are allowed to move in ecstasy, it must be done with order. Hence, spiritual ecstasy needs to be balanced with order and structure in Pentecostalism (Albrecht 1997:6).

The Role of the Bible

The Bible as the inspired word of God is important in discernment. This does not mean that certain texts of the Bible cannot be criticized as it is done in biblical criticism, but it means that the word of the modern prophet cannot exceed the word of the Bible. Hence, the Bible has a major role to play in discernment. It means that preachers cannot preach out of context, but need to select a relevant scripture in their presentation of the word. The role of the Bible also means that every believer should be open to the truth presented in the Bible, even when that truth makes one uncomfortable. Thus, prophets in Pentecostalism should not be economical with the truth, but embrace it even when it does not suit them. Although there some contradictions in the biblical texts, the Bible remains an unquestionable truth and answers to every life question that believers have in their lives (cf. Lombaard 2012:69). However, the same word in the Bible should be discussed among believers in order to find the essence of what the scriptures are saying to the believers. There is a need therefore for fellowship of the saints in the examination of the scriptures to find the real message in specific texts, so that they guard against the use of scriptures by their leader be used to drive a certain agenda.

Testing the Spirits

Testing the spirits in discernment involves the testing of the work of believers (Rom. 14:22; 1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4). In addition, it is testing all things that believers are engaged in their lives (1 Thess. 5:21). Testing the spirits is the discovery of the things that are pivotal in the eyes of God (Rom. 2:18; 12:2; Phil. 1:10; cf. also Eph. 5:10). Like discussed before, testing the spirits is the examination of the spirits (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 6:4; 1 Thess. 5:21). The result of such an examination is equally pivotal in the process of examination (Rom. 1:28; 14:22); hence both the examination of spirits and the results thereof are important in the process of discernment (Rom. 2:18; 12:2; Phil. 1:10). In addition, testing the spirit is an important tool available to test supernatural and spiritual entities. In Testing of Spirits, the types of spirits to be tested include the spirit of God, the spirit of a good angel, the spirit of an evil angel, and the human spirit. A list of questions that should be answered: Who has the revelation? What does the revelation mean? Why is it said to have taken place? To whom did the witness look for advice? What kind of life does the visionary lead? Whence does the revelation originate (Edwards 2015: 85)?

What matters in the process of testing is that God's gifts of perceiving differences, of discernment, of profound perception and insight into what is to be discerned, together with the ability to interpret what has been discerned, are used correctly. This testing takes place in this life, for God reveals God-self as the tester of hearts (1 Thess. 2:4). Although discernment is located in concrete situations, Paul also understands discernment from an eschatological perspective when he declares that people will be tested in the final judgement (1 Cor 3:13; cf. Jas. 1:12). Consequently, the whole of Christian life is subject to God's scrutiny. All depends on being 'approved in Christ' (Rom. 16:10). This requires a serious effort to know God's will, which is regarded as gift of the Spirit (Rom. 12:2; cf. Sciberras 2013:172). Of course, in the process of testing the spirits, many in Pentecostalism will quickly respond 'do not judge'. The only time one is not allowed to judge is when one is suffering the same weakness. As long as one does not have motes in his or her eyes, then is able to advise others about their motes in their eyes.

Identification of the anti-Christ

Discernment is a tool to identify the antichrist. In 1 John 4:3 anyone who does

not profess that Jesus is Lord is an antichrist. How we should also guard against those who profess the name of Jesus in vain or in pretence. But who is the antichrist? The antichrist will be disguised as someone who is very intelligent (Dan. 8:23). In addition, the antichrist will be known by amassing much wealth and material possessions (Dan. 11:43; Rev. 13:16-17). The antichrist will be known by its involved in war (Rev. 6:2), its speech (Dan. 11:36), and politics (Rev. 17:11-12). The antichrist has actually studied what Jesus Christ has done while on earth and copies everything as if he is Christ or better than Christ is. Christ did miracles (Matt. 9:32-33; Mark 6:2); the antichrist will mimic such miracles (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:9). Christ is crowned with many crowns (Rev.19:12); the antichrist is crowned with ten crowns (Rev. 13:1). Christ rides a white horse (Rev. 19:11), as does the antichrist (Rev. 6:2). Christ was resurrected (Matt. 28:6); the antichrist will appear to be resurrected (Rev. 13:3-14). Christ is a member of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14), but the antichrist is a member of an unholy trinity – Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet (Rev. 13). Other than copying what Christ has done, the antichrist will actually claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).

Theology of Discernment in the Context of Abuse of Religion

In the context of the abuse of religion in South Africa, discernment can assist to differentiate between the Spirit of God and other spirits. In the words of Yong (2000:185), 'the charismatic gift of discernment plays an important role to enable believers to determine where and when, or whether, the Holy Spirit (or other spirits) is present and active'. The Holy Spirit is not like other spirits in Africa or anywhere else in the world. He is the one sent by the Father to be the comforter, teacher, guider and leader. When one is baptised in the Holy Spirit, the person will be able to make a distinction between the Holy Spirit and other spirits. Through the gift of discernment, one will know if a spirit operating in a pastor is the Holy Spirit or other evil spirits. Not every spirit operating in a person is the Holy Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit, unlike other spirits, should be understood as the one sent by the Father through the son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit should be known as the divine agent that brings the total liberation of believers, as stated in 2 Corinthians 3:17, namely that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Since the Father sends the Holy Spirit, he is the one to fulfil the mission of Christ on earth, since Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father. Thus, any mission that is not Holy Spirit led is

from other spirits.

Discernment can assist to make a distinction between a real prophecy and divination. Divination, foretelling, forecasting or prediction is very common or rather popular in Africa. Diviners try their best to reveal one's future through foretelling. Some members of society in South Africa fail to make a distinction between biblical prophecy and divination that is normally done by *sangomas* in African traditional religions. Believers do not really care about the source of the word delivered by the prophets as long as the word makes sense about their real-life situation. The reality is that the word could be coming from an unreliable source or even be a word of deception. In the words of Chimuka (2016), 'some prophets claim to be used by the Holy Spirit of God, while they have the same pneumatological status as witchdoctors ministering under the influence of the ancestral spirit'. Consequently, someone can come to church and act as if he or she is prophesying but is actually being led by the spirit of divination. Discernment is an ability to differentiate the real word by the real prophet and divination by the diviner. Real prophecy does not only excite the one listening but is delivered according to the word of God.

Discernment distinguishes between a genuine prophet and a false prophet. In the words of Sciberras (2013:172), 'Truth and falsity are disentangled by the process of discernment so as to preserve what is true' (Sciberras 2013:172). The text in Matthew calls on believers to watch out for false prophets who come disguised like sheep but inside they wolves. They will be known by what they do because they cannot bear good fruit if they are not good trees (Matt. 7:15-20). If the prophecy does not represent what God is saying to His people, it cannot be true, because God cannot contradict himself. He cannot say one thing in His way and say the other through the mouth of the prophet (Albrecht 1997:10). However, some members of societies in South Africa failing to draw a distinction between what is true and what is false. Such society receives everything without examination of the source (Deke 2015:12). In order to make that distinction, discernment is required (Meyer 2010:7). In addition, when the prophecy is given, the leaders of the church should authenticate such a prophecy, especially if such involves a nation. The word should be established in the witness of two or three matured believers (Omenyo 2011).

The theology of discernment will assist to make a distinction between the antic-Christ preaching and the pro-Christ preaching. Many preachers in new Pentecostal Churches today will never mention the name of Christ from the beginning of their sermon until the end. Their preaching is mainly about

their own personal achievements. They will also highlight the fact that the reason others do not have what they have is because they are not as prayerful or they are not as anointed as they are. Is this not the sign of being an antichrist? Many churches have removed Christ out of the church and it is all about the church itself. A preacher or a pastor who is pro-Christ, according to Asemoah-Gyadu (2013), should be able to acknowledge (1) the authority of the Bible; the Bible is not just another book, but is the inspired word of God as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16, namely that 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'. (2) The centrality of the cross; the cross of Jesus is the main reason why Christianity is in existence; hence Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2, 'For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified'. (3) Regeneration as the way to Christian salvation; and (4) a call to holiness.

Theology of Discernment in the Context of Gullibility of Society

The society will not be gullible when the Holy Spirit leads them. Discernment in this context is more than personal choices, feelings and emotions. The work of the Holy Spirit guides the work of discernment. In Romans 8:16, the scripture says that the Spirit of God bears witness that we are the sons of God. Another scripture says that as many as are led by the Holy Spirit, are the sons of God (Romans 8:14). In other words, in the life of the believer the Holy Spirit will be able to bear witness if something goes in the right direction and even when it goes in the wrong direction. When an individual is properly guided, then the whole society will change for the better. When outrageous acts happen in our society an individual will be able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will help believers not to react to the outrageous acts of pastors, but rather to respond to them. Instead of supporting any man of God who pitches a tent to preach, believers will now have to sense in their spirit by the Holy Spirit if the one preaching is sent by God. In this way, pastors will have to think twice about feeding people with snakes, dog meat, etc. Hence the importance of discernment.

A society will not be gullible when they know the will of God in their lives. One of the goals of discernment is to seek the will of God in one's life. This means that an individual does not have to follow everything in life but to

discern the will of God. The urgent thing in a person's life is not a job, car, house or promotion, but to know the will and the purpose of God that can be discerned; to be someone who always yearns to please God instead of pleasing men. It is the desire of God to see individuals and the whole community of believers walking in the will and purposes of God. However, it starts with an individual who can sense the will of God in his or her life. If congregants can walk in discernment, they will save themselves from pastors. some of whom do not even have the calling of God in their lives, but only take chances to rob people of God of their possessions. Discernment will let the society guard against the work of the enemy who is out there to destroy the authentic work of God (cf. Kiesel 2015:12).

The Theology of Discernment in the Context of the Regulation of Religion

CRL commission does not have to regulate religion. Such a regulation will have a negative impact on the religious practice and the society. Banda (2019) cites three reasons why religion should not be regulated: disempowering of the poor and the powerlessness; creating conditions for religious persecution; and forcing religious movements to operate underground. All these reasons shared by Banda are valid, especially the first reason, because many in South Africa rely on religion for survival. They may not have bread on their dinner table, but as long as they have faith life goes on. Therefore, there is nothing wrong with religion but for the bad practices of religion; hence a need to be aware of such bad practices. Many South Africans do not willingly support wrong acts, but do so because they have hope that a 'man of God' will bring about change in their lives. To some, religion is their last hope, given the failure of neo-liberal policies and capitalism that define the postcolonial Africa. However, the question remains; what is the solution or alternative to the regulation of religion? What can be done to solve the abuse of religion and the gullibility of society? This paper suggests the theology of discernment as a tool that will go a long way towards helping every member of society to choose for themselves which religion is on the right track and which is swaying to the negative.

Conclusion

The current abuses of religion by some pastors of some Pentecostal Churches

in South Africa pose a danger not only to the practitioners of religion but also to society as a whole. The reason of this assertion is that society has become gullible regarding the abuse of religion, given their economic reasons, gender injustices reasons, theological reasons, and psychological reasons. The regulation of religion is not a solution to the challenge of the abuse of religion and the gullibility of society thereof. On the contrary, it reverses the much-fought freedom of South Africa that ensured freedom of religion and association. This paper suggests that instead of regulating religion, the theology of discernment can assist individual believers to make the right decisions about which religion to follow in their lives. No matter what a government does, it remains the prerogative of individuals to make such choices. Therefore, in embracing the theology of discernment, believers will be able, 1) to differentiate between the Spirit of God and other spirits; 2) to make a distinction between a real prophecy and divination; 3) To differentiate between a genuine prophet and a false prophet; and 4) to identify the antichrist. Believers can do so when they read and understand the Bible on their own without relying much on the interpretation of the prophet. In addition, believers should organise themselves into Bible study groups for an in-depth biblical exposition and discussions. Lastly, the work of the Holy Spirit is pivotal in helping the believer to discern wrong or evil spirits and even discerning the antichrist and the false prophets.

References

Adams, J.E. 1987. *A Call for Discernment: Distinguishing Truth from Error in Today's Church*. North Carolina: Timeless Texts.

Asamoah-Gyadu, J.K. 2013. *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddcp37

Albrecht, D.E. 1997. Pentecostal Spirituality: Ecumenical Potential and Challenge. *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research*, 2,1: 1 – 52. http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj2/albrecht.html

Banda, C. 2019. Redefining Religion? A Critical Christian Reflection on CRL Rights Commission's Proposal to Regulate Religion in South Africa. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40,1: a1948. https://doi. org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1948

Banda, C. 2020. Unsafe Spaces? An Ecclesiological Evaluation and Response to Recent Controversial Practices in Some South African Neo-Pentecostal

Churches. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 4,1: 10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v41i1.2108

Banze, M.N. 2015. *The Spirit of God and the Spirit of Africa: A Dogmatological Study from the Vantage Point of Pneumatology*. North-West University, Doctoral dissertation. https://repository.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/16485

Barry, W. 1989. Toward a Theology of Discernment. *The Way Supplement* 64, Spring 129 - 140. https://www.theway.org.uk/back/s064Barry.pdf

Chimuka, T.A. 2016. Afro-Pentecostalism and Contested Holiness in Southern Africa. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42,1: 124 – 141. https://doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2016/307

Dube, B. 2020. 'Go and Prophesy in Your Own Land': Foreign Prophets and Popularism in South Africa. Evoking the Need of Jonathanic Theology for Peaceful Resolution of Difference. *Religions* 11,1: 42. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010042

Deke, A. 2015. The Politics of Prophets and Profits in African Christianity. *Politics* 12,1: 11 – 24. https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JPCR/article/view/26430

De Villiers, P.G. 2013. Communal Discernment in the Early Church. *Acta Theologica* Supplementum 17: 132 – 155. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i2S.8

Edwards, K. 2015. How to Deal with the Restless Dead? Discernment of Spirits and the Response to Ghosts in Fifteenth-Century Europe. *Collegium: Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 19,1: 82 – 99 https://www.medievalists.net/2016/08/how-to-deal-with-the-restless-dead-discernment-of-spirits-and-the-response-to-ghosts-in-fifteenth-century-europe/

Evers-Hood, K. 2016. *The Irrational Jesus: Leading the Fully Human Church*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Godwin, R. 2014. *Exposing Witchcraft in the Church*. Johannesburg: Charisma Media.

Idígoras, J.I.T. & J.I. Ídigoras 1994. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Pilgrim Saint*. Chicago, Illinois: Loyola Press.

Kgatle, M.S. 2017. The Unusual Practices within Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in South Africa: Reflections and Recommendations. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73,3: a4656.

https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656

Kgatle, S. 2019. *The Fourth Pentecostal Wave in South Africa: A Critical Engagement*. Abingdon: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429343902

Kiesel, S.L. 2015. *Lost and Found: Spiritual Discernment for a Struggling Church.* Doctoral dissertation, Methodist Theological School in Ohio. https://docplayer.net/87329277-Lost-and-found-spiritual-discernment-for-a-struggling-church.html

Kobo, F.A. 2019. Spirituality Trapped in Androcentric Celebrity Cults in South Africa Post-1994. *HTS Theological Studies* 75,3: 1 – 7. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5593

Lavallee, M.H. 2016. Practical Theology from the Perspective of Catholic Spirituality: A Hermeneutic of Discernment. *International Journal of Practical Theology* 20,2: 203 – 221. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijpt-2014-0055

Lombaard, C. 2012. Biblical Spirituality Thematically Approached: Methodological Considerations around 'Discernment'. *NGTT| Neder-duitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 53, Supplementum 2. https://doi.org/10.5952/53-0-222

Medina, N. 2011. Discerning the Spirit in Culture: Toward Pentecostal Interculturality. *Canadian Journal of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity* 2,1: 131 – 165. https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cjpcc/02-1_131.pdf

Meyer, B. 2010. Pentecostalism and Globalization. In Anderson, A., M. Bergunder, A. Droogers & C. van der Laan (eds): *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Method*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Omenyo, C.N. 2011. Man of God Prophesy unto Me: The Prophetic Phenomenon in African Christianity. *Studies in World Christianity* 17,1: 30 – 49. https://www.euppublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/swc.2011.0004

New International Version, 1978. New York: Biblica. https://doi.org/10.3366/swc.2011.0004

Otis, G. 2000. *God's Trademarks: How to Determine whether a Message, Ministry, or Strategy is Truly from God*. Grand Rapids: Chosen Books Publishing Company.

Pijoos, I. 2019. 'Let him go or we boycott elections', Threatens Prophet Bushiri Fans. https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-02-04-let-him-go-or-we-boycott-elections-threaten-prophet-bushiri-fans/

Quayesi-Amakye, J. 2011. Prosperity and Prophecy in African Pentecostalism. *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 20: 291 – 305. https://doi.org/10.1163/174552511X597161

Ramantswana, H. 2019. Wathint'Umfazi, Wathint'Imbokodo, Uzakufa [You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock, You Will Die]: Dinah and Tamar as Rape Protestors. *HTS Theological Studies* 75,1: 1 – 8. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5413

Sciberras, P. 2013. Discernment in 1 Thessalonians. *Acta Theologica* 32,2S: 172 – 188. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i2S.9

Tema, TT. 2019. Pastor Alph Lukau Insists Resurrected Man was Alive. 27 February 2019. https://power987.co.za/news/listen-pastor-alph-lukau-insists-resurrected-man-was-alive/

Waaijman, K. 2013. Discernment and Biblical Spirituality: An Overview and Evaluation of Recent Research. *Acta Theologica* 32,2S): 1 – 12. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/actat.v32i2S.1

West, G.O. 2007. *Doing Contextual Bible Study: A Resource Manual.* Pietermaritzburg: Ujamaa Center.

Yong, A. 2000. *Discerning the Spirits: A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions.* London: A & C Black.

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle
Professor of Missiology
Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology University of South Africa
UNISA
kgatls@unisa.ac.za

Perceptions on the Relevance of Black African Faith-based Structures in Democratic South Africa

Ntokozo Mthembu[1]

Abstract

This chapter dissects the rationale behind *abefundisi*, pastors and their churches who adopt a specific rite, such as water baptism, the use of detergents such as Jik and other related cleaning agents and artefacts to perform their 'perceived' function of healing and praying for sick individuals. This scenario has led the government to intervene, by considering the formulation of a policy to regulate the faith-based sector. However, reality reveals that although a democratic era is highly celebrated for its high hope of removing the limitations of past narrow cultural perspectives, in the development of interventions aligned with indigenous African knowledge systems, when it comes to Afrikan faith-related institutions, such as *izinyanga*, its marginality remains observable. In this context, and despite the commitments to democratic procedures and systems, some constituents of society, specifically in Black African faith-based structures remain 'caught up within the trappings' of colonialism. For instance, various dominations tend to propagate and advance consumerist tendencies when dealing with vulnerable individuals. It is envisaged that the findings emanate from this study will contribute to providing relevant information to policy-makers, related government agencies, ordinary members of the South African community and other stakeholders, especially when it comes to formulating relevant interventions related to faith-based structures.

Keywords: religion, faith, *abefundisi*, order, relevance

[1] The well-known and excellent sociologist, Prof. Ntokozo Methembu, passed away before he could attend to the language editing of this article. The editorial team finalised it on his behalf, and wish to convey our heartfelt condolences to his wife and family.

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a19

Introduction

Since the ushering in of the democratic era in South Africa in the 1990s, the transformation discourse has become the cornerstone of all developmental programmes in the country. Normally transformation is known to relate to issues that focus on redressing past injustices or issues that are viewed as unacceptable behaviour in the social structure, including faith-based institutions and the church in the country. The concerns about the rise of 'prosperity gospel' and their application of related rites, such as 'abnormal' baptism and healing practices, have raised the need for government intervention to do away with abnormality in the church (Diale 2018:17). In other words, the experience of the so-called prosperity gospel and miracle cult has been perceived in other quarters as nothing more than a misrepresentation of the gospel, since Christ and the Christian name have become a commodity of enrichment (Diale 2018:17). However, Diale (2018:7) argues that there are various reasons behind the emergence of such churches – prosperity gospel and miracle cult, but economic disempowerment is central, and there is a fine line between prosperity gospel and cults characterised by leader-centredness. In addition, the South African Council of Churches, Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, summed it as the 'get-rich-quick preaching's criminals' as 'Anybody can wake up any day and call himself a prophet, apostle or bishop, accountable to nobody, without a structure of accountability and governance. The messaging has nothing to do with salvation and Christ' (Diale 2018:17).

This scenario suggests a need for a thorough scrutiny of a wide range of issues that must be considered when dealing with issues related to changes and attempts to gain a better understanding of perceptions that surround the relevance of Black African faith-based structures in a democratic South Africa. However, in some academic quarters they argue that notions of colonialism and related order cannot be divorced, especially when trying to gain a better understanding of the realities and related ethical guidelines that govern the contemporary churches and present democratic state. In other words, the current preaching practices dubbed prosperity gospel have summoned relevant structure to intervene, as it clouds the objective of the faith. The objective of this article is to contribute to existing knowledge by revealing the moral standards governing current religious structures in relation to their practices on preaching gospel to humans, especially in the churches in South Africa and to document related issues and constraints in this regard.

More specifically, although there are various related issues that can be discussed, in this instance it will deliberate on this topic, but for the feasibility of this article it will present a summary of the conceptual and methodological framework that guides this article by focusing on the constraints and possibilities of the realities caused by Western religion in the lives of human beings, especially those of women and children. It will also explore the exegesis for religious rite in relation to nexus and praxis in the contemporary faith-based structures. It focuses on the sociological interpretations that expose experiences that are associated with the advent and impact of Western religion on the church environment. There is a discussion on the implications of Western church settings on human lives with a view to highlighting some issues to consider specifically the context and guarantee of equal access to various church traditions, such as African faith, when formulating related policy or a development programme. This article concludes that it is significant to understand the rationale behind the current demands for change or transformation, specifically in Christianity and other religious circles that are perceived as indirectly reinforcing the aspirations of the Western Enlightenment agenda – an intellectual and philosophical movement that guided the world of ideas in Europe from the mid-17th century (Lahouel 1986:681). For instance, the Western colonial front usurped Afrikan deity of wisdom and learning, Tehuti, and dedicated it to their cult god Thoth, including their imposition of narratives for creation and related Bible interpretation. In other words, the colonising agenda dubbed 'civilising mission' tended to reveal its realities that reflect the pauperisation process of the indigenous people under the tutelage of the 'civilising mission'. This scenario suggests the one-size-fit-all setting that that tends to ignore the Afrikan context and related space of the individual, specifically African faith and related deities, such as *uNkulunkulu,* which means Ancestor of the Ancestors Ptah, Amen-Ra, Maat, Tehuti and u*Nomkhubulwana,* and Medusa.

Novelty of Religion

For a better understanding of the current social setting, specifically in church circles, we can define South Africa as a 'contact zone', a space where people of various races and ethnicities who had previously been isolated geographically and historically came into contact with one another, where the development of continuous relations is facilitated and reconciled by conditions of

coercion and inequality that augment inflexible differences and violence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:140). Connell (2014:214) argues that the current social situation in southern nations such as South Africa, tend to present a form of colonial violence through reproducing African subjectivities in a situation of the neo-apartheid era where they are damned and denied humanity, referred to as 'fascism of social apartheid' through the recreation of religion, 'black townships and informal settlements as crouching villages of violence, civil tension and social strife'. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:142) summarises the current social settings as follows, 'As social fascism coexists with liberal democracy, the state of exception coexists with constitutional normalcy, civil society coexists with the state of nature, and indirect rule coexists with the rule of law'. In addition, the ''colonization' of the imagination of the dominated' remains the worst form as it dealt with and shaped people's consciousness and identity and the manifestation of 'coloniality' rather than 'colonialism''. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:38) define these concepts – coloniality and colonialism – as,

> Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of people, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day.

The universally practised prosperity gospel that emanated from colonialism to the current global information era operates on the divide-and-rule principle. This was made possible by the fact that all the processes that were designed to depict the liberation of the indigenous Africans on the rationality of belief and justification of deprivation were based on democratic values (Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:38). To further illustrate this situation, Rotich, Ilieva and Walunywa (2015:137) argue that Africa is still caught up in the traps of the colonial milieu that is identified by five interlinked strands: control of religion; control of

means of production; control of power; control of gender and sexuality, and control of partisanship and intellectual sphere. When looking at the missionary discourse perspective, which argues that the Black Africans' royal theocratic reign system was destroyed and replaced with a proletarisation process that led to their limitation, especially when it comes to worshiping their deities, such as the ancestors, and access the natural capital, then this clearly forms part of a social strategy to limit their livelihoods and self-regeneration (Rotich et al. 2015:137). However, there are different understandings of the historical role played by the missionary project in relation to the impact on the indigenous African cultural implications. Comaroff and Comaroff (1986:1) summarise this scenario by emphasizing that,

> Christian evangelists were intimately involved in the colonial process in Southern Africa. This essay distinguishes two dimensions of their historical role, each associated with a different form of power. In the domain of formal political processes, of the concrete exercise of power, the effect of the nonconformist mission to the Tswana, as elsewhere in Africa, was inherently ambiguous. However, in the domain of implicit signs and practices, of the diffuse control over every-day meaning, it instilled the authoritative imprint of Western capitalist culture. But there was a contradiction between these dimensions: while the mission introduced a new world view, it could not deliver the world to go with it. And this contradiction, in turn, gave rise to various discourses of protest and resistance. [South Africa, Tswana, colonialism, Christianity, missionaries, power, domination and resistance, historical agency and cultural discourse].

Although sociologist religion has debated and concurred that the phenomenon of religious activities in various societies worldwide will decline, the reality in South Africa tends to differ from this assertion (Pillay 2015:1). The missionary reflections argue that the market model reveals that religion and modernity are incompatible, as the question of demand and supply is the determining factor, since the demand side is viewed as stable, whereas the supply side experiences change (Pillay 2015:57). Again, the missiological reflection argues that there is a need to focus on new forms of Christian experience that seem to be aligned with the aspiration of exploring their respective religious lives (Pillay 2015: 57). Nevertheless, the challenge with this scenario is to find the relevant forms

of Christian practice that vary from the ordinary congregations that tend to preserve Christian doctrine and ethics.

Perhaps for a better understanding of the issue under discussion, the relevance of Black African faith-based structures in democratic South Africa, it is imperative to revisit the etymology of the two terms, 'ethics' and 'morality', since they are fundamental in this discussion. Kunhiyop (2008:3) argues that these terms are closely interrelated, because they both refer to the arrangement of ethical standards that guide the relevant conduct of a person/persons. Furthermore, Kunhiyop (2008:4) emphasises that,

> Morals and morality come from the Latin word, *mos*, meaning custom or usage, while ethics comes from the Greek word, *ethos,* whose meaning is roughly the same. So it is hardly surprising that today, as earlier, these two words are often used interchangeably. When a distinction is made, 'morals' nowadays refers to actual human conduct viewed with regard to right and wrong, good and evil, 'ethics' refers to a theoretical overview of morality, a theory or system or code. In this sense, our morality is the concrete human reality that we live out from day to day, while ethics is an academic view gained by taking a step back and analyzing or theorizing about (any) morality.

In trying to understand the concept of missional church, it is argued that the emergence of missional churches has been a significant development in Christianity since the Reformation. In other words, the missional renaissance deals with the changing manner in which people perceive the Creator and think about the Creator and the world in relation to the Creator's plan, which requires a shift in the manner how people think. This scenario has led the *Abefundisi* and related church leaderships to formulate schemata to establish missional congregations (Pillay 2015:2). This new approach towards church development tends to be motivated by a wide range of factors that can be linked to financial constraints to sustain the congregation, declining membership and not necessarily *missional* (spreading of gospel0, but more focused on *attractional,* which means the manner of increasing church membership that requires a paradigm shift (Pillay 2015:2). In other words, contemporary experiences in Christianity cannot be fully understood without its disreputable colonising agenda of civilisation that remains as something unattainable by its adherents.

Conversely, the effects of colonialism continue to be reflected in social structural settings that uphold the Aristotelian parameters notorious for marginalising 'other' nations' knowledge systems, including faith, specifically in the 'global south' (Mthembu 2018:28). In other words, the purpose of the mission entails saving souls, services (*ukuqonda ngensindiso yokuphila*/ *diakononia*), worship (*ukudumisa*/ *leiturgia*), transformation of the society, community and world, humanisation, community development, and planting of churches. It is worth mentioning that, although this chapter cannot exhaust all phases of Western colonialism instance, a brief summary will be provided for a better understanding of what is discussed in this instance (Duncan 2015:198). For example, the role played by Augustine who was schooled in the Tehuti's teachings and later became the adherent of the gnostic world religion of Manichaeism persons, wrote in considerable detail about this type of Christian belief. However, his in writings on Manichaeans he corrupted and doctored the writing of Tehuti and dedicated it to Hermes Trismegistus as a prophet whom they claimed announced the Christ. Again, he drafted the manner of presenting Manichaeism as a fully Christian religion, at the centre of which stands Christ as the teacher of wisdom. The Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and the Council of Chalcedon (08 October to 01 November 451 CE), distinguished between the divine and human natures of Christ. The monophysite view was 'that the divine and human nature of Christ are united'. The Chalcedonian group recognised the humanity and divinity of Christ as two different natures (Duncan 2015:5). In other words, the Ethiopian Church maintained that *mia*, as opposed to *mono,* represents a composite unity and not simply an elemental unity as attested to by the Council. In the variations between *monophysis* and *miaphysis*, the Ethiopian Church defined itself as Tewahedo (ተዋሀዶ), which means 'made one' and 'which reflected the ethical code for the church, for its inseparable unity of the Godhead and manhood in the person of Christ'. This scenario was exacerbated by the alteration of the original complete Ethiopian Bible, which consists of 81 books, as opposed to the Protestant Bible that comprises 66 books (Lahouel 1986:681).

The emergence of the notion of Ethiopianism during the 'high' imperial and missionary era (1880 – 1920) was perceived as a message of African protests against all forms of racial discrimination as practised by Europeans who tended to strip the indigenes of their identity, and the negation of their institutions which was viewed as the imposition of foreign religion (Duncan 2015:198). The indigenous people responded by establishing their

churches that kept the Christian liturgy that incorporated traditional healing rites, including the use of drums and dance (Lahouel 1986:682). In other words, Ethiopianism became the resistance front in Africa against Western imperialism (Duncan 2015:198). Ethiopianism became the expression of African 'faith' based on the text of Psalms 68:31 – 'Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God'. In short, African people encapsulated a sense of cultural and political identity among themselves and affirmed their Great Creator Ancestor's salvific power of salvation, or redemption schemata in accordance with Acts 8:26-40. In addition, Ethiopianism and Zionism created platforms for developing modern forms of African nationalism in the political or ecclesiastical realm and ensured the current debates on inculturation and vernacularisation in African theology (Duncan 2015:215).

Conceptual and Methodological Framework

Conceivably, a clear understanding of the concept of transformation becomes imperative, especially when one endeavours to gain a better understanding of the rationale behind *abefundisi* adopting or applying church rites that seem to pose a threat to human life, especially the survival of women and children. In doing so, firstly, it is worth highlighting the manner in which the discourse is used by the government and ruling strata to construct identity and mould the ideology to examine organisational control in various social settings (Della 2017:1). In other words, the discursive means are used to exert influence on the particular societal structure through investigating the discursive processes where affiliated members are enjoined or influenced to define themselves; think and act or adopt certain rites that are deemed congruent with government-defined objectives and facilitate the processes that constitute organisational change. Secondly, the discursive approaches enable the governing structure to legitimatise the introduction of change through adopting notions such as increasing efficiency, sustainability and an innovative organisation. In other words, this management approach tends to develop relevant identities of organisational structures subtly, a process referred to as identity regulation (Della 2017:1). In addition, it is a preferred approach to constitute ideological control or social engineering as the way of fashioning relevant members.

Furthermore, organisational control forms part of management control; in this instance, government control remains the post-modern organisation setting. In other words, this scenario suggests that the means and methods used

to manage control processes that have changed are used to manage the ''insides' – the hopes, fears and aspirations' of members, not their behaviour in this instance. Furthermore, Della (2017:1) argues that this exercise is intended to win over the 'heart and minds' of the church members and direct the roles and activities towards the fulfilment of organisational objectives. Thus, the government tends to dictate reality through established structures and related exhorted leadership that adopt this form of reality (Della 2017:1). In other words, the organisation participates in various discourses to impart the 'reality' or ideology that they subscribe to in order to ensure compliance with general membership to it. In summary, the discourse of imperative denotes the use of verbs to instruct or direct an individual to engage in a particular activity and encompass the discourse of transformation (Blythe et al. 2017:1209).

When contrasting transformation to resilience or adaptation, it is perceived as vital reordering, an alteration of the existing social structure to produce something innovative. In addition, the concept of transformation adds to the developing body of research and practices that focus on changing the normal practice to foster systematic reform and establish an alternative tomorrow. Although the notion of transformation remains under-studied and characterised by various interpretations, Blythe et al. (2017:1216) argue that four general framings have emerged and need to be considered:

(a) *Transition approaches* – Referring to transformational approaches that are mostly multi-scale, which means they can operate across different levels and socio-technological changes towards low-carbon futures, such as engineering innovations.

(b) *Socio-ecological transformations* – A socio-ecological perspective argues that socio-ecological transformation leads to originality, the development of system properties, changes in critical system feedback, and the rearrangement of socio-ecological connections. In other words, it recognises that any transformation involves unexpected consequences that can exacerbate the situation.

(c) *Sustainability approaches* – It emphasises the need for balance between human development objectives, justice and ecological sustainability, specifically the dynamics of power and politics of institutional change.

(d) *Transformative adaptation* – it focuses on the shift in the analytical focus of transformation research from accommodating change to contesting the underlying social, political and economic structures that reproduce marginalisation and inequality.

Exegesis for Religious Rite: *Nexus and Praxis*

Maybe there is a need to be familiar with the roots of the moral standards that they invoke or inform their practice in order to gain a broader understanding of contemporary religious community challenges and related activities, the gospel and related rites; thus the consideration of historical social developments that affected ancient African-centred religious zeal systems negatively, along with related multidimensional aspects when investigating the rationale behind the current practices in the church, specifically the prosperity gospel. Conversely, the effects of coloniality continue to be reflected in social structural settings that uphold the Aristotelian limits notorious for marginalising the knowledge of the 'other', specifically the nations of the 'global south' and women in general (Mthembu 2018:28). Examples include the use of the Bible and its translation that tends to promote a specific research ethos that in turn promotes European values that are foreign to Black African scholars, pastors and learners – church members.

The modern-day interpretations and analyses of faith by African people, phenomena, and milieus continue to reflect a narrow cultural perspective that serves to marginalise indigenous knowledge systems, specifically religion, entrenches false consciousness of the understanding of social inequality among citizens, in particular African people (Do Vale 2016:600). Colonial moral standards do not adapt well to African-centred milieus, in that they alter traditions and influence various parts of the community in various ways, culminating in social crises on the environmental political, social and economic fronts, undermining African wisdom and morals (Awajiusuk 2015:308). This scenario tends to be demonstrated by the emergence of numbers of religious groups or churches and related preaching practices that tend to raise concerns, specifically the preaching and rendering of rites; that is, baptism, for instance, the emergence of the notion of Ethiopianism that failed to reinstate the traditions of the ancient Ethiopian faith. This limitation can be witnessed by the fact that most Ethiopian and Zion church structures and practices tended to simulate the practices of the Western church, the

personification of the church – Wesleyan versus 'Shembites' and the current experiences of the prosperity gospel (Duncan 2015:215).

Possibly, for a better understanding of the agency and related guidelines of various faith-based practices – European or Western and African centred – the notion of order is more relevant. Agency can be material, ideational or normative – something denied the non-Western actors in this country who were violently forced to accept Western principles and approaches to religion, sovereignty and security (Acharya 2018:4). Although there are multiple ways of defining order, with some focusing on the situational or the descriptive, others are normative and conflate the two. Again, terms such as 'international order', 'world order' and 'global order' are often conflated. For the purposes of this chapter, a distinction between 'international order' and 'world order' implies the relationship between states, with 'global order' applying to 'social life among mankind as a whole' (Acharya 2018:4). Order serves to guide the knowledge that a specific community or society reveres, which it gained through thinking, the senses, feeling, intuition, physical movement, or relationships with others and among members of that community in general (Nabudere 2011:83). Thus, faith-based knowledges differ when it comes to narrating their varied conceptions and worshipping their ancient deities (divine nature). For instance, on the one hand, the Western new world order traces the origins of its knowledge to the teachings of Aristotle, Thoth and worshipping of the sun god Helios by virtue of respect of present religious rite – Sunday (Kunhiyop 2008:7). On the other hand, African people revere the Ancient Natural Order (or Royal Theocratic Order) from their conception and their knowledge towards worshipping *uMdali uMkhulu-womkhulu* (the Great Ancestor Creator Ptah or Ra) and veneration of the Sabbath. According to African mythology, Tehuti (the twin brother of Maat, the deity of truth, order, law and justice) was instructed, through Ptah's voice or Word, to reveal the required moral standards through the art of holy writing (hieroglyphs) (Kunhiyop 2008:7). Thus, indigenous African faith is grounded in the aspirations of the Ancient World Order, the Order of Creation that respects the tidings of the Great Great Ancestor Creator Ptah. This is the reason why indigenous Africans have a common and traceable historical background and are referred as the *amaNgoni* or keepers of the laws or the order of creation. Imperial

Likewise, the Order of Creation or the Order of Priest guides indigenous African people's way of life on earth in dealing with social issues, such as conception, human relations and the afterlife. Different knowledges

trace their origins from different locales: for instance, Western knowledge, including religion, views Greece as its origin, while African knowledge and related faith practices revere the ancient Khemet [known today as Egypt], specifically *Thebes/Wosè/No-Amen/No,* the abode of Amen (cf. Nahum 3:8; Jeremiah 46:25) This ancient city, also known as the University City, is the City of a Hundred Gates, the Eternal City of the ancient imperial Ethiopian Empire and the citadel of the Golden sceptre [with feathers on top], representing the unsurpassed ancient civilisation of the Ethiopian Empire (Nabudere 2011:86).

Consequently, the emergence of the existing religious system was aimed at differentiating various academic disciplines and related knowledge, which tarnished the monophonic ancient indigenous knowledge systems and related systems negatively as unscientific (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:4). In addition, faith in Africa encompassed every social setting that cannot be divorced, and the education system was under the tutelage of priests. In other words, African communities adhered to moral standards by employing cardinal virtues such as a monarchic communal system, temperance, forthrightness, honesty, truth telling and integrity, and valuing the sanctity of human life (Anyansi-Archibong 2015:252). For instance, Nabudere (2011:111) and Asante (2015:27) argue that the medieval Greeks, in their attempt to justify their enlightenment agenda, confiscated most of the works of Djehowtey and ascribed it to their god, Hermes, also known as Hermes Trismegistus, to develop an interpretive approach known as Hermeticism. In this regard, Pfeffer (2012:24) emphasises that modern churches and universities are tasked with the production of new knowledge, based on the abovementioned principles, since they are directly associated with scholarship and the representation of Western rationalism – the belief that emphasises the understanding of the universe through reason.

According to African mythology, the creative power of speech, or *Word*, referred to Ptah, created the Universe and everything in it, including humankind including; that is, Djehowtey, at a time when writing was unknown (Asante & Abarry 1996:11). Djehowtey is also known or referred to as DHwtj, Djhuty, Djehuty, Dhouti, Djehuti, Tehuty, the ruler of Khemenu, and many more names (Asante & Abarry 1996:11). In addition, ancient universities had a systematic selection of knowledge that was not restricted by approaches of application, or to a place, structure or restricted contexts of locus (Parker & Van Belle 2017:16). In summary, the basic parameters of knowledge at the

ancient universities were grounded in three forms of knowledge that were more relevant to societal values: law focuses on human co-existence; faith focuses on human souls and medicine focuses on human bodies (Pfeffer 2012:23). In addition, universities were also responsible for teaching philosophical and artistic knowledge such as grammar, rhetoric, logic, geometry and arithmetic, which were regarded as common education (Pfeffer 2012:23).

Thus, the religious structures and universities in the contemporary society are viewed as unique institutions and 'perhaps the most important structural component of modern society', since they tend to shy away from the traditional faith-related education system (Pfeffer 2012:24). For instance, churches and universities are not concerned with the preservation of the past, because they are selective when it comes to preserving the past and setting parameters between remembering and forgetting, self-conditioning and reflexive development of memory, especially of indigenous knowledge and related value systems, including African knowledge systems.

When comparing these two faith systems, the ancient and modern approach, it is noted that the systems tend to share a common background, which is the origins of faith, namely tracing its origins from the teachings of ancient Africa, Khemet, but they differ when it comes to the application of these traits. For instance, both ancient and modern education systems use binary codes, such as knowing/not-knowing and bad/good, and they use script and the archiving of documents to achieve societal goals. Again, when it comes to writing, ancient centres of education – the universities – often collected handwritten scripts such as papyrus and engraved or painted in stones, which were kept in archives. Priests facilitated learning through interaction – communication between the educator, priest and learner – the initiate. In short, they made use of the oral approach, such as lectures and exposure to stocks of knowledge traditions that encouraged unsurpassed creativity and innovation, for instance, structures such as a pyramid and a hut (*rondavel*) architecture (Mthembu 2018:29). The emergence of technology for printing, the use of papyrus, and archiving of documents and texts changed the oral tradition. This ancient innovation led to the dissemination of information and communication to a wider range of people; thus, the creation of mass media. Therefore, technology, even in ancient times, was regarded as 'the mechanical re-production of communicative artefacts', a necessity for facilitating interaction between the sender – priest (educator) and the receiver – initiate (learner) through self-organisation (Guilhermina 2007:40). Subsequently, these divergent knowledges

– Western and African – vary regarding their conceptions of how thought is perceived. The role of the heart in conceptualising thought in the African world of knowledge is fundamental. For the African it is the most crucial aspect of the human body, while for Westerners the mind is crucial in determining what action to take. Thus, for Westerners, thought tends to dictate to the agenda their specific community/society has to adhere to in order to achieve its social mandate (the manner in which society is structured – rulers, military, and slaves/ workers). In addition, Western order promotes inequality, individualism, working-class perspectives, private property, neoliberalism and death as the fundamental step towards development, while African order reveres matriarchy, egalitarianism and collectivism, brotherhood, royalty and immortality.

Sociological Interpretations: *Reflections*

One cannot begin to comprehend the current practices or rites that are applied in Christian churches in South Africa, unless the purpose of the Christian missionary is dissected. This becomes imperative in view of the overwhelming bulk of literature in this instance, which tends to be a curious mixture of nongraphic, fiction and fable, raising the question of what governs the *abefundisi*, the friar's perception and representation of 'reality' (Reff 1994:53). In establishing the role of the missionary, it is worth mentioning that missionary texts concur with the modern ethnographies in various interrelated aspects such as them being (a) contextual; (b) generic/ rhetorical – since pastors use special models and expressive conventions from the Bible; and c) political in that the missionary's audience, usually came from the upper echelons and elite classes of a society (Reff 1994:53). Furthermore, besides the mystifying factual variation and a lack of theoretical convergence,

> literature on missions in Africa is very large, many having commented on the relative lack of systematic analyses of the evangelical encounter; analyses that go beyond detailed, if often sensitive, chronicles of events and actions (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:1).

In summary, literature still remains a peculiarity of the general historiography of early Mission Christianity that exaggerates the manifesting political and economic aspects that understated the cultural and religious factors, especially when it comes to their African catechists on the cultural imagination of Africa.

For instance, the missionaries opposed cultural rites such as the rain-making ritual conducted by specialist rainmakers (*baroka*), who incorporate 'dance' in the royal court, and which was recognised only as significant to the fabric of the indigenous people and power to the African rulers. This scenario is illustrated in the symbolism of political ceremonies, and the rulers always greeted the people '*ka pula/wena wemvula'*, in conjunction with the reverence of rain – *imvula/pula* – for prosperity and as wellbeing of the nation (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:1). In other words, the missionaries perceived rain as a critical stumbling block in spreading the gospel and acted against such rituals. Subsequently, the emergence of cleavages between community members as the emergence of *amakholwa* – 'people of the word' – and the rulers and non-Christianised populace – *amaqaba* – came into being. The rejection of indigenous cultural rituals was viewed as commitment to the complementary relations of the church, and the state, or of divine and worldly power. This model was perceived as the liberation of people of the word, or converts, for experiencing the teaching of individual self-determination.

In retrospect, the ethnographers, *abefundisi* and Christianity in general simultaneously define the current milieu in accordance with the Aristotlean notion of the 16th and 17th centuries. This notion advocated the idea that only urban communities had *pulicia* – science and mode of governing the city, or 'required' socio-political organisation. In other words, these forces endorsed a capitalist world system that facilitated Europe's self-righteous, self-defining mission of 'civilising' and Christianising' non-European nations worldwide (Reff 1994:54). In addition, Reff (1994) argues that the religious front joined the ranks of the New World Order to fulfil the mandate as commanded and was not interest in documenting alternative beliefs, except their illustration or facilitation of the destruction of indigenous African value systems. This scenario led to a discourse between the philanthropic role of missionaries versus the imperialism of which raised the question of focus of the agenda that missionaries advocate and the results they aspire (Mthembu 2020:152); in other words, the issues pertaining to the translation of multifaceted historical challenges in relation to a basic balance of cause and effects.

In an attempt to respond to the above-mentioned possible questions, perhaps the examination of the cultural implications of the mission also related to the sphere of evident political processes. It is worth highlighting that Christian evangelism in Africa raises concerns for their limitation when it comes to reflecting on the relationship between power and meaning (Comaroff

& Comaroff 1986:2). There are two distinguished dimensions of the historical roles in this instance that are linked to various types of power; the domain of formal political developments and the tangible application of power. This domain entrenches the unspoken signs and practices that exercise control over daily experiences; it inculcates the authoritative imprint of Western capitalist culture (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:2). However, the contradiction between these dimensions tend to reveal that the mission introduced a new world (order) view and promise of a civilization that remains something 'still to come'; subsequently, the emergence of various discourses of protest and resistance in Africa. The protests were against the construction of a subject that rarely acts on overt persuasions, but rather requires the internalisation of a set of values; a non-verbalised manner of seeing and being.

The contemporary social structural changes in South Africa have led to a need for considering a multi-faith perspective in relation to the sphere of religion. Religious practices that fail to encompass and acknowledge other faiths, specifically the indigenous African churches', are at risk of being perceived as discriminatory, oppressive and opposed by individuals who still view their circumstances as disadvantageous (Mthembu 2018:30). However, the failure to respond to a series of calls for change of the present religion regarding the ethos, theory and practice of the present 'post-colonial' religion remains of concern and this chapter acts as a response to this call. Cajetas-Saranza (2015:39) cites four historically constructed reasons that can be linked to this incongruity in moral change in church circles, specifically Christianity are that:

- they satisfy the demands of the market, demand and supply, determinants of the individual status of livelihood in terms of their way of living (dependence) and the selling of labour power;
- they sustain the status quo in terms of neoliberal capitalist values;
- denial of indigenous Africans to inculcate self-reliance on their local culture and use indigenous knowledge systems as a form of pedagogy; and
- they dehumanise the self-discovery of the indigenous people's own social and cultural value systems.

According to Garriott, Reiter and Brownfield (2016:158), various studies reflect that multicultural religious education is very important, since there has been a decline in modern expressions of racism, including a colour-blind racial

belief in other quarters. Furthermore, a multicultural approach provides an opportunity to initiate learners to achieve equitable education and social results, and thereby proficient participation in the culturally varied society (Cajetas-Saranza 2015:39). The lack of use of the available literature on various ethical guidelines enforces the multicultural faith specifically to indigenous-related African moral codes, including related structural arrangements (Vittrup 2016:37). Garriott et al. (2016:159) argue that studies related to the proficiency of shared approaches to multicultural education are limited. Nevertheless, by testing three approaches to multicultural religious education, Blincoe and Harris (2009, as cited in Garriott et al. 2016:159) discovered a noticeable reduction in their self-negation attitude towards other race groups. Garriott et al. (2016:159) propose four levels of multicultural integration, as suggested by Banks (2008) concerning curriculum change:

- The *contributions approach,* which encompasses cultural texts or artefacts featuring in the curriculum
- The *additive approach,* which includes adding content or themes to the existing curriculum
- The *transformative approach,* which involves changing the structure and content of the curriculum to facilitate the exposure of learners to concepts and issues from a cultural perspective
- The *social action approach,* which focuses on inculcating and endowing learners with skills to effectively participate in social criticism and become agents for change.

Garriott *et al.* (2016) argue that the first two approaches are not effective in changing the prevailing racial prejudice in the curriculum and that they may contribute to entrenching stereotypes and delusion. Thus, it is significant that educators are familiar with different approaches to dealing with multicultural issues that encompass racial dynamics and the obstacles they might encounter in this regard. In order to address the incongruity effectively, the formulation of policies and strategies that satisfy different goals has to acknowledge the limitations and challenges related to the improvement of opportunity, success, quality and diversity. In view of the wide range of challenges and responsibilities, methods of worshipping, teaching and learning need to be aligned with contextual and milieu realities, conceptualisations and scholarships (Higher Education South Africa 2014:4).

When attempting to outline the future of the church or faith in South Africa, it is fundamental to acknowledge the ethical differences between the European/ Western secular (the state of being separate from religion, or not being exclusively allied with or against any particular religion) and African, non-secular contexts specifically interpretations (Mthembu 2020). For example, understanding the notion of '*Christ*' and the day of worshipping the God of Sunday, and Sabbath worship remain viewed differently. In addition, the Western religious approach segments and separates religion from all social structures and everyday life, while the African approach tends to incorporate faith in every part of human life. The secularised societies tend to foster the privatisation of social activities characterised by consumerist tendencies and different lifestyles in the same society. The segmentation based on different tastes, ages, professions, and lifestyles has become the norm (Wrogemann 2014:64). These experiences in the present religious setting in this country can be summed up through observable church practices that are performed by what Jamal (2017) defines as 'inventive pastors' in executing their healing and can be categorised into five 'deliverance' rites:

a) *Grass Pastor* – the members of the church in this category are known for dropping to the floor to eat the grass as the means to link them to their God.
b) *Snake and petrol Pastor* – the congregants are observed eating snakes and related pastor claims to have powers that grant him to 'turn rocks into bread and snakes into chocolate', which he feeds to his congregation.
c) *Doom Pastor* – this category uses the open posting of photographs on social media such as Facebook and spraying of congregants with disinfectant such as Doom Super Multi Insect Killer to heal various ailments.
d) *Engine cleaner Pastor* – the church members are known for drinking dubious fluids and consume contents linked to Formula A, an engine cleaning fluid oil product.
e) *Rattex Pastor* – in this category the clergy uses various, weird and bizarre methods of healing rites that include the application of infamous mixtures such as *nyaope* or, *whunga/whoonga,* and a mixture of Rattex, rodent poison that is sipped with water, as the concoction offering it to his congregants.

Thus, this scenario can be linked to the Book of Life narratives as it is illustrated in the book of Ezekiel 30:14, 16. However, both faith centres use the same Bible, but their interpretation and meanings vary. For example, the Bible views a mission as 'the expansion of the power and the Glory God', but the observable reality raises the concern of whose God the Christian hail (Mthembu 2020). This concern arises in view of the Christianity missionaries that were at the forefront of the colonising spree, which resulted in a situation where indigenous nations became paupers, and the entrenchment and establishment of European colonial expatriates in the colonised territories, in this instance, Africa.

Discussion

Normally, when dissecting challenges and related issues pertaining to the present religions or churches, we tend to focus specifically on a specific denomination. By stepping away from this tendency in this chapter, the discussion on the significance of moral standards that determine current congregations that experience challenges in this instance, were explored. Although various social structures, specifically government structures, advocate the notion of change, such calls remain questionable, since they tend to fail to deal critically with the historical development of the religious missionaries in countries such as South Africa. In view of the constraints and challenges related to the nature of the present religions in this country, this chapter attempted to reveal some limitations that inhibit true transformation and that enable the indigenous African faith to emerge again, since the social policies remain captured by the Aristotelian scheme of things (Ascione 2016:319). Challenges surrounding the prosperity gospel in relation to the aspired change cannot be separated from the prevailing neoliberal societal dynamics, especially patriarchal structural reality (Pillay 2015:6). Based on the South African experience, it is suggested that a pluralist approach be considered as a guiding principle in formulating a transformative agenda.

Perhaps the realisation of a pluralist community, acknowledgement of diverse cultural background, concept of *oikumenical* doxology, and a new agenda of religion become relevant. This concept emphasises that,

> the triune God wants to be glorified among a broad variety of tongues, people and cultures, since He is the ultimate source of all creativity. A

> multitude of praise corresponds to the vividness of *UNkululunkulu, UMdali, Modimu* or God as the Creator and sustainer, redeemer and sanctifier (Wrogemann 2014:64).

Thus, there is a need for respect of diverse cultural value systems to assist the promulgation of relevant policy in guaranteeing a pluralistic and multicultural community. However, such arrangement can only become possible in a situation where the previously dominant religious cults become open and willing to accept other forms of worship, another emphasis on ethics and other doctrinal teachings (Wrogemann 2014:64). This perspective is suggested as the appropriate approach to diverse faiths in the South African context to enhance the experience of individuals and satisfy academic and societal aspirations. However, some constraints relate to structural inequalities that hamper access to African faith and the successful realisation of a transformed religious system in the country. Both provide some insights into the possibilities of a pluralist/multicultural approach that is likely to be the mainstay of the faith system in the forthcoming years. Specifically, the *oikumenical* doxology approach and pluralist development depend on an authentic cultural environment to nurture and guarantee basic, technical and practical skills. Guidelines and policies must be developed to function as a guide for multicultural faiths in their endeavour to deliver a transformed church. Lastly, the successful incorporation of the pluralist approach in a transformed religious system will be possible when government structures consider the historical development of the church and diversity in a society to ensure equality and respect for other people's cultural values.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to reveal some issues that remain a concern when exploring the possibilities of transforming religious structures and the prospects of approaches that can be used to bridge this quagmire in a changing society in South Africa; challenges that include the fact that etymological shortcomings in the realisation of the aspired change in the religious sector cannot be divorced from the prevailing societal dynamics' ethical arrangement. Based on the notion of *oikumenical* doxology, it is suggested that it should be considered when formulating a transformative agenda. This perspective is

viewed as the appropriate approach to religion in the South African context to enhance believers' experience and to satisfy societal aspirations. Furthermore, transformative components such as psychological and belief systems and behavioural aspects are well-suited to enhance believers' participation in devotion. Some limitations relate to the challenges that believers are exposed to in order to guarantee a transformed religion. Both provide some insights into ethical challenges for a multicultural perspective that is likely to be the cornerstone of the religious system in the forthcoming years.

Specifically, the multicultural religious ethos in the development of the transformed church depends on authentic knowledge and attitude to nurture basic, technical and practical skills in this instance (Mthembu 2020). By guaranteeing the success of the transformed church, multicultural knowledge ethos provides various approaches to ensure the improvement of knowledge for believers, academics, societal needs satisfaction, and most social equity and related knowledges. The preparation of the guidelines and policies must be carried out to function as a guide for *abefundisi* in their endeavours to develop a transformed church. In addition, the holistic approach is recommended for the development of a transformed religious system. Lastly, the success of the transformed church and the relevant government support for *abefundisi* and believers should be a characteristic facet of the multicultural moral arrangements in the religious system. In closing, the question that can be posed in this instance is: Will the present social structures centred on the Western moral standards that are notorious for breeding domination enable the application or introduction of the previously rejected ethical codes and indigenous African values in the social structures?

References

Acharya, A. 2018. *Constructing Global Order Agency and Change in World Politics*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316756768

Anyansi-Archibong, C.B. 2015. Challenges in Ethics Education: A Process and Content Analysis. In Anyansi-Archibong, C.B. (ed.): *Contemporary Issues Surrounding Ethical Research Methods and Practice*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8562-8.ch011

Asante, M.K. 2015. *The History of Africa: The Quest for Eternal Harmony*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge.

Asante, M.K. & A.S. Abarry 1996. *African Intellectual Heritage: A Book of Sources*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University.

Ascione, G. 2016. Decolonizing the 'Global': The Coloniality of Method and the Problem of the Unit of Analysis. *Cultural Sociology* 10,3: 317 – 334. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975516644843

Awajiusuk, F.J. 2015. Prospects and Challenges of Teaching Religious Ethics. In Anyansi-Archibong, C.B. (ed.): *Contemporary Issues Surrounding Ethical Research Methods and Practice*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8562-8.ch013

Banks, J.A. [1999] 2008. *An Introduction to Multicultural Education.* 2nd Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Blythe J., J. Silver, L. Evans, D. Armitage, N.J. Bennett, M-L. Moore & K. Brown 2017. The Dark Side of Transformation: Latent Risks in Contemporary Sustainability Discourse. *Antipode* 50,5: 1206 – 1223. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12405

Cajetas-Saranza, R. 2015. Approaches to Integrating Multicultural Perspectives in PNU-Mindanao: Basis for Multicultural Education Program. *International Peer Reviewed Journal* 16: 37 - 55. https://doi.org/10.7718/iamure.ije.v16i1.1122

Comaroff J. & J.J. Comaroff 1986. Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa. *American Ethnologist* 13,1: 1 – 22. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1986.13.1.02a00010

Della C. 2017. Discourse of Transformation in Organizational Change Management, SHS Web of Conferences 33, 00039. https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20173300039

Diale, L. 2018. Concern about the Rise in 'Prosperity Gospel' Churches. *Sunday Independent* 13: 7.

Do Vale, H.F. 2016. Explaining Education Reforms and Decentralization in Brazil, South Africa, South Korea, and Spain. *Lex Localis*: *Journal of Local Self-Government* 4,3: 591 - 612. https://doi.org/10.4335/14.3.591-612(2016)

Duncan, G.A. 2015. Ethiopianism in Pan-African Perspective, 1880 – 1920. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 41,2: 198 – 218. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2412-4265/2015/85

Duthely, M.L., S.G. Nunn & J.T. Avella 2019. Spirituality and Religion as Cultural Influences in Andragogy. In Peltz, D.P. & A.C. Clemons (eds.): *Multicultural Andragogy for Transformative Learning*. Hershey, PA: IGI

Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-3474-7.ch004

Garriott, P.O., S. Reiter & J. Brownfield 2016. Testing the Efficacy of Brief Multicultural Education Interventions in White College Students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 9,2: 158 - 169. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039547

Guilhermina, M.L. 2007. The Limits and Possibilities of ICT in Education. *Sísifo: Educational Sciences Journal* 3: 39 – 48. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26473799_The_Limits_and_Possibilities_of_ICT_in_Education

Higher Education South African 2014. *South African Higher Education in the 20th Year of Democracy: Context, Achievements and Key Challenges HESA presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training.* Cape Town. https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/17037/

Jamal, S. 2017. IN PICTURES: From Doom to Ratex – 5 Pastors Turning Communion Wine into Noxious Substances. https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-02-07-in-pictures-from-doom-to-rattex---5-pastors-turning-communion-wine-into-noxious-substances/

Kunhiyop, S.W. 2008. *African Christian Ethics*. Nairobi, Kenya: WordAlive.

Lahouel, B. 1986. Ethiopianism and African Nationalism in South Africa before 1937. *Cahiers d'études africaines* 26,104: 681 – 688. https://doi.org/10.3406/cea.1986.1689

Mthembu, N. 2018. Ushering Transformative Change: Infusing De-colonized Cultural Changes into South African Curriculum and Andragogical Practices. In Peltz, D.P. & A.C. Clemons (eds.): *Multicultural Andragogy for Transformative Learning*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-3474-7.ch011

Mthembu, N. 2020. *Basics for Indigenous Afrikan Knowledge Systems (IAKS). Tehuti Analytical Framework for Black Afrikan Scholarship Self-discovery*. Moldova: Eliva.

Nabudere, D.W. 2011. *Afrikology, Philosophy and Wholeness: An Epistemology*. Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. 2013. *Coloniality of Power in Postcolonial Africa: Myths of Decolonization*. Dakar: CODESRIA.

Parker, A. & J. van Belle 2017. The iGeneneration as Students: Exploring the Relative Access, Use of, and Perceptions of IT in Higher Education. In Liebenberg, J. & S. Gruner (eds.): *ICT Education: 46th Annual Conference*

of the Southern African Computer Lecturers' Association, SACLA Magaliesburg, South Africa, July 3–5. Switzerland: Springer.

Pfeffer, T. 2012. *Virtualization of Universities: Digital Media and the Organization of Higher Education Institutions, Innovation, Technology, and Knowledge Management.* New York, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London: Springer Science and Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2065-1_3

Pillay, J. 2015. The Missional Renaissance: Its Impact on Churches in South Africa, Ecumenical Organisations, and the Development of Local Congregations. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71,3: 1 – 6. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.3065

Reff, D.T. 1994. Contextualizing Missionary Discourse: The Benavides 'Memorials' of 1630 and 1634. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 50,1: 51 – 67. https://doi.org/10.1086/jar.50.1.3630477

Rotich, R., E.V. Ilieva & J. Walunywa 2015. The Social Formation of Post-Apartheid South Africa. *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 8,9:132 – 155.

Smit, D. 2008. Challenges for Reformed Churches in Africa: A Contemporary Narrative. *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 8,4: 319 – 336. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742250802347018

Van Oort, J. 2016. Augustine and Hermes Trismegistus: An Inquiry into the Spirituality of Augustine's 'Hidden Years'. *Journal of Early Christian History* 6,2: 55 – 76. https://doi.org/10.1080/2222582X.2016.1218998

Vittrup, B. 2016. Early Childhood Teachers' Approaches to Multicultural Education and Perceived Barriers to Disseminating Anti-Bias Messages. *Multicultural Education* 37,1: 54 – 67.

Wrogemann, H. 2014. Mission as Oikumenical Doxology – Secularized Europe and the Quest for a New Paradigm of Mission. *Empirical Data and Missiological Reflections - Missionalia* 42,1-2: 55 – 71. https://doi.org/10.7832/42-1-2-48

Ntokozo Mthembu
Department of Sociology
University of South Africa
mthemnc@unisa.ac.za

‘Touch not mine anointed! …’: An Enchanted Worldview within the Millennium African Pentecostal Churches (MAPCs)

Phillip Musoni
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4597-8526

Abstract

This article examines the enchanted worldview within the Millennium African Pentecostal churches (MAPCs) in Zimbabwe and South Africa. This enchanted worldview is examined to interrogate the extent to which this mindset has enabled an environment conducive to abuses of religious offices within the MAPCs. The article reflects on the contemporary discourse on the abuse of religious offices by the said church’s founders. Perhaps, it is because of these abuses of religious offices that the Zimbabwean and South African governments proposed that churches be regulated. In 2014, a proposal was made through the Zimbabwean Parliament that suggests that regulation of churches would help to minimise the abuse of church offices. Following this, in 2015, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission), submitted a document to the South African Parliament, proposing the regulation of churches and highlighting the abuse of church offices. These proposals occurred subsequent to several cases where congregants were instructed to eat grass and snakes and drink petrol. Thus, while other scholars argue that socio-economic factors are the main reason to explain the rise of abuses of religious offices, this article proposes that Africans’ enchanted worldview is the fertile ground enabling the environment conducive to the perpetual abuses of religious offices within the Millennium African Pentecostal Churches today. This enchanted worldview is drawn both from the MAPCs’ literal interpretation of Biblical texts and the pre-Christian religious traditions that exonerate religious leaders as spiritual brokers. I argue therefore that this enchanted worldview has necessitated the propagation of what this article refers to as the ‘gap theology’ within the MAPCs today. Accordingly, this article concludes

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a20

by highlighting that it is the propagation of 'gap theology' that has sustained the unremitting abuses of religious offices within the MAPCs today.

Keywords: Abuse, enchanted worldview, gap theology, MAPCs, religious offices, uncritical spiritual connectors.

Introduction

The abuse of religious offices by the Millennium African Pentecostal Church (MAPC) leaders re-emerges, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa. While the concept of MAPCs is adopted in this article, other scholars simply use the term African Pentecostalism (Anderson 2005; Kalu 2008; Togarasei 2016; Machingura 2018), just to mention a few. However, the challenge with this umbrella term is that it does not separate the older Pentecostal churches from the newer ones. The term 'Millennium African Pentecostal Churches' (MAPCs) is used in this study to describe Pentecostal churches which emerged in Africa from 2000 upwards. Besides, unlike the older Zimbabwean Pentecostal churches that propagate a worldview of priesthood for all through the Holy Spirit baptism (Machingura 2018:7), these Pentecostal churches shared a common worldview – a worldview that places church founders to be the focal point, as spiritual connectors, standing in the gap between congregants and God (Banda 2018). This has seen Prophet Walter Magaya of the PHD ministries instructing his followers to write their spiritual needs on pieces of paper which he collected and carried in two satchels to Israel for prayer (Mahohoma 2017). Prophet Talent Madungwe of the Exile Desire of All Nations Ministries(E.D.N.M) is also recorded telling his congregants that God invited him to heaven three times to talk about the plight of his congregants (Goba 2019). Thus, the two cited church founders, as representing more to be discussed in this article, are indicators that MAP church founders have propagated a theology referred to as 'gap theology', a theology that has sustained the unremitting abuses of religious offices.

Methodology

The article utilised a qualitative research approach. Within the qualitative research dimension, the study selected five millennium African Pentecostal

churches as a case study. These churches are: The United Family International Church (UFIC) of Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa; the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministry (PHD) of Prophet Walter Magaya; the Mount Zion General Assembly (MZGA) of Prophet Lethebo Rabalogo; the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) of Prophet Shephard Bushiri; and the Exile Desire of all Nations Ministries (A.D.N.M) founded by Prophet Talent Madungwe. The five churches were selected on the basis that they were founded from 2000 onwards, hence qualifying as 'Millennium' African Pentecostal churches. Following the selection of these churches, the study utilised the snowball sampling method to select participants for the study. Snowball sampling is useful because it investigated a sensitive topic that explored personal issues such as faith and beliefs (Monette *et al.* 2014). The interview processes were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule that comprised open-ended questions. The use of open-ended questions was employed to allow flexibility and further probing of the responses of participants (Dube, Nkomo & Khosa 2017:4). To avoid harm, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity were some of the ethical considerations that were adhered to in the study (Dube *et al.* 2017:5) on which this article is based. The participants' information was treated with the utmost confidentiality, regardless of their beliefs, faith and closeness to the church founders. Ten members from each church were randomly selected during participant observations. Also, relevant articles and books on African Pentecostalism were consulted. Such materials were consulted to evaluate the gravity of the abuse of religious offices within Pentecostal and Spirit-type churches.

Within the qualitative research methodology, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to understand the phenomenon studied. According to Biri, IPA is primarily concerned with analysing the experiences that people have in life (Biri 2012:1). Thus, IPA helped this researcher to decipher the extent to which the enchanted worldview become a fertile ground for the propagation of a gap theology that has necessitated the unremitting abuse of religious offices by the MAPC founders in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Utilising this method, this study sampled a number of biblical texts that are commonly referred to by MAPCs as they propagate this gap theology. The study also discussed the traditional African worldview on diviners as spiritual brokers; a religious concept also necessitating the development of a gap theology; a theology that depicts church founders as spiritual connectors [without which ordinary members of the church cannot have access to the divine].

Enchanted Worldview Theory

In this article, Paul Gifford's enchanted worldview theory is used as a social scientific model to underpin the theology propagated by the millennium African Pentecostals church founders in Zimbabwe and South Africa. An enchanted worldview refers to a mindset that evolves around the spirit world that permeates all spheres of human endeavour and the real power and spiritual power reside where life is played out between good and evil (Gifford 2016:29). For Gifford, enchanted worldview is a mind-set that sees the world full of spirits and demons, witches and wizards, wonders and miracles as well as the most dreaded curses (Gifford 2016:29). Accordingly, in such a worldview, it is quite common for adherents in search of a breakthrough to turn to enchanted solutions such as miracles that will lead them to prosperity, victory and glory (Gifford 2016:29). Closely related to that, the enchanted worldview model is also substantiated by beliefs in hierarchy of power and the idea that ordinary life is infused in the divine through the mediatorship of religious leaders (Adeyepo 2000:10). Therefore, according to this worldview, any person who dares to demine the authority of the religious leaders invites the curse upon his/her life (Shoko 2007:19). The reason for this submission is that supernatural powers are believed to be divinely imputed to religious leaders to bless or curse. As such, some Millennium African Pentecostal Church founders are perceived as bearers of God's power. According to Adeyepo (2000:10),

> Pentecostal church founders' verdicts are divine verdicts; they are heavenly verdicts. They are God's commands given expressions through mortals' lips …. Every time the prophet says, 'Thus saith the Lord!!!', it is actually the Lord Himself speaking. God is only using the prophet's vocal system as a microphone …. Prophetic verdicts will cause your daystar to rise. It will always bring change of position, as mountains and hopeless situation bow to it. It gives life to any dead situation and turns worthlessness to exceeding greatness.

Relatedly, I argue that since the enchanted worldview has positioned church founders as spiritual conveyor belts, it gave birth to 'gap theology'.

Gap Theology within MAPCs

Gap theology is used to depict a paradox where ordinary church members are

portrayed as unfit to go to God for their problems. Thus, church members in these congregations are made to believe that they are too 'unholy' – sinful – or too inferior to connect personally with God without the aid of their church founders (Banda 2018:11). Accordingly, this article argues that such a theology is sustained by two main factors: the literal interpretation of the Bible (Bishau 2010) and the pre-Christian worldviews on religious leaders as spiritual brokers (Kiernan 1995). Based on these factors, this article argues that the Millennium African Pentecostal founders are placed on an untouchable base, thereby allowing an enabling environment conducive to the abuse of religious offices within MAPCs, to develop. Although the abuse of religious offices was also prevalent among 20th-century Zimbabwean and South African Pentecostal churches, this study focuses on the abuse of religious offices at African Pentecostal churches founded from 2000 onwards.

The Literal Interpretation of Biblical Texts and Gap Theology among MAPCs

Millennium African Pentecostal Churches believe that the Bible is a sacred book containing the sacred message from God, because it was written by men directed by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the MAP church founders, who happen to be all men, claim to be full of the Holy Spirit and therefore mandated to interpret scriptures and set up the theological tone of these churches (Gabaitse 2015:10). It is in this regard that what the founder understands the scripture to mean becomes the standard rule and the dogma unquestioningly accepted by the whole church. Accordingly, this study posits that the literal interpretation of the Bible is the most dominant model used by Millennium African Pentecostal Churches, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A literal reading of the Bible is where the Bible is taken at face value without a critical analysis of the text. According to Gabaitse (2015:9), a literal understanding of the Bible is when a believer claims that the 'Bible says it and therefore it is so'. Consequently, the danger of the literal reading of the Bible is that it does not take the historical context of the text seriously (Gabaitse 2015:6). For MAPCs, the Bible is read in the present time and taken to mean literally what it meant when it was written. Accordingly, the effects of literalism become harmful, especially when church founders use the Bible to their own advantage. This study therefore stresses the point that the stratagem by MAP church founders to interpret Biblical texts literally is a well-calculated move to silence their congregants.

In 2016, a South African MAPC founder, Lethebo Rabalago, sprayed a pesticide (Doom) on innocent congregants, claiming that it has a healing effect (Kgatle 2017). This practice was received with mixed reactions, with some defending his action while others described it as a desperate move to amass popularity. While media criticised the practice, Bright Light Prophetic Deliverance Ministries (BLPDM) founder, Bright Chikomo, defended the 'Doom prophet', stating the act demonstrated God's power (Chaya 2016).

> When a poison comes to the hand of the man of God, it ceases to be toxic as it has the blessing from above. I confirm the act was a total demonstration of God's power, I don't see error but the manifestation of God's word. We are not pastors who will join the world and fight against the mystery of God. Criticism is not our portion, as long we are here we will stand for this mystery, no one will stop it because we hear from God not from any religious acts. So, the main purpose of a miracle is to prove something but not the miracle itself since there is no guideline anywhere as to what kind of miracle should be performed. Moses turned a rod into a snake (Exodus 7:10), Elisha made bitter water sweet by pouring salt (2 Kings 2:19) also made an iron head float (2 Kings 6:1-7; Chaya 2016:13).

Even though this was happening, the members in these churches still feared to question their *Papa* or their prophets, because a literal understanding of the biblical texts seems to condemn such doings – 'touch not God's anointed'. Commenting on the issue, a church member of the Shephard Bushiri Church, the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG), who was not comfortable with his name be published made the following remark,

> God can give diverse orders to diverse 'prophets'. And who are we to question the Man of God? The Bible has forbidden us from challenging and interrogating the directions the Man of God takes. Even scripture says, 'Touch not mine anointed, and do mine prophets no harm' (Personal interview 07/04/2019).

In these MAPCs, the Bible does not contain the word of God; rather, the Bible is the word of God. This is the reason why MAP church preachers repeatedly use the phrase 'the Bible says!!', a caution that what they do is supported by

the Holy Scriptures. In other words, the phrase 'the Bible says' is frequently used to mean that what the Bible says is the final authority. This verbatim understanding of the text creates a fertile ground for MAP church leaders to abuse innocent congregants. Even if the congregants can see that the church founder is wrong, their literal understanding of scriptures seems to prevent them from criticising their spiritual leaders, thereby putting them (church founders) on a pedestal where they are untouchable. In an interview, one member of Makandiwa's church echoed the same sentiments shared by a member of (ECG) church. Responding to the same question – why church members seem to uncritically support their church founders even though what they do seems to be unorthodox, he quoted the following text,

> David said to Abishai, destroy him (Saul) not; for who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and can be guiltless? (1 Samuel 26:9) (AMS) (Personal interview 14/04/2019).

Thus, the above text is understood by the MAPC congregants to literally mean that though the church founders might be found guilty and should be held accountable for their misdeeds, the congregants were not supposed to criticise them since they were the anointed ones of God.

Another Biblical text cited by another church member of PHD ministries in an interview in response to the same question raised above was 2 Kings 2:23-24,

> From there Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Get out of here, baldy!' they said. 'Get out of here, baldy!' He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys' (Personal interview 03/03/2019).

A critical analysis of these responses given during interviews, one from Prophet Bright of BLPD ministries and three sampled interviews from three different MPC congregants indicated two different perspectives. While Prophet Bright Chikomo supported the phenomena as authentic with Biblical backing, the church members believed the opposite. The response from church members indicated that they felt that the spraying of Doom on miracle seekers

was unorthodox. They could not criticise these founders though, based on some African perceptions that position religious leaders as spiritual brokers and their literal understanding of Biblical texts. For these church members, criticising the church leader would invite a curse from God.

This study also discovered that members of MAPCs advocate a literal understanding of Biblical texts over other methods, because for them, other methods invite a punishment from God who is the author of the Bible. An interesting conversation took place while I was collecting data in Zimbabwe. Asking why members of Exile Desire of all Nations Ministries (E.D.N.M) interpret scripture literally, the response I got was,

> Read!!!! 2 Timothy 3:16 – The Bible is an inspired word of God for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness (Personal interview 26/05/2019).

What the above text meant for MAPCs is that the Bible is inspired word for word, comma for comma (verbal inspiration); hence the Bible must be taken as is. During one event where the author engaged in participant observation, Prophet Magaya sharply rebuked the volunteer Bible reader during the service for not observing a comma as she was reading. He shouted, '*Hey, there is a comma there!!!*' as if the comma was also inspired. Because MAP church founders literally interpret Biblical texts, this study also noted with concern that all the members who were randomly sampled for interviews have a literal understanding of the Bible. One anonymous congregant of PHD ministries argued in an interview that a literal understanding of the text is the best way to escape God's punishment because of taking away words written in the Holy Scripture. Quoting Revelation 22:19, an anonymous member of PHD ministries said the following during an interview,

> If anyone takes away words from this book … [holding the Bible], God will take away from him any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this book (Personal interview, 07/04/2019).

The above quoted text was used to demonstrate that the reader of the Bible must just take what is written without question. For Gabaitse, this line of reading and interpreting the Bible among African Pentecostals validates the

view that a verbatim interpretation simply means engaging in selective hermeneutics (Gabaitse 2015). This is so because it appears that these church founders are searching scriptures with a torch to identify Biblical texts that seem to support their unusual practices. Another misplaced text frequently quoted verbatim is Luke 6:38 which says, 'Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom ...' (KJV). For MAPCs, in Luke 6:38, Jesus talks about giving money in church. Each time when the church secretary stands up to collect money in church, he/she will read Luke 6:38 to show that giving money in church is supported by the Bible and that the more money one gives, the more blessings one will receive. Unfortunately, this is a misinterpretation of the scripture. The text is used to teach and promote a non-existent message simply because the text seems to support their hidden agenda of amassing wealth from their congregants. In actual fact, here Jesus is not teaching about giving money in church, but about not judging others because if one judges others one will also be judged. Consequently, this article suggests that using other interpretation methods such as contextual criticism, will help to understand the text in its context. One cannot just randomly pick a verse here and there and make it mean what one intends it to mean. This article argues that using contextual criticism would be the best way to interpret Luke 6:38. For instance, contextual criticism deals with questions like: What was at stake when Jesus said, 'give and it shall be given to you'? Thus, this study posits that what emerges in the cited example of Luke 6:38 and other texts is a clear lack of contextual or historical analysis of the text by MAPCs. My interaction with MAPCs demonstrates that MAP church founders are willing to read and interpret texts literally, particularly those texts which seem to support the welfare of a 'Man of God'. Another example is an audio clip that went viral on social media, where Prophet Makandiwa of the UFIC admonishes his members to give generously to pastors, since pastors are understood to be God's representatives on earth. Using his own interpretation of Malachi 3:10, Prophet Makandiwa had the following to say,

> *Unzai zvinhu kumba kwangu*, (Bring things into my house)
> *Unzai zvinhu kumba kwangu, iyo Bhuku ya Malachi 3 inodaro*
> (Bring things into my house, thus says Malachi Chapter 3)
> *Unzai zvinhu kumba kwangu zvekudya*/ (Bring things (food) into my house)

> *Munoriverenga sei Bhaibheri. Kune here one day yawakamboona zino ra Mwari rakadhinda pa domasi?* (How do you read the Bible, is there any day you have seen God in physical self, eating food?)
> *Kunzi Mwari nhasi adya* (Or hearing people saying look!!! the plate which was full of food is now empty because God has eaten)
> *Kwaari kuti unzai chikafu kune delegation yake* (Where God said bring into the store house, its where his Prophets are)
> *Mwari ane marepresentative ano mudyira zvinhu panyika* (God has his earthly representatives who eat food on his behalf)
> *Saka kana Mwari anzwa no kuda pizza anoti, 'Mwanangu Makandiwa ndidyirewo* Pizza'/If God has craved for Pizza he will say, 'My Son, Prophet Mkandiwa, eat pizza for me, then you must bring Pizza that I eat on God's behalf).
> *Ndichitsenga pizza Mwari anengenge achinakirwa kudenga* (As I will be chewing pizza God in heaven will be enjoying the delicious pizza)
> *Saka isu vafundisi taka authoriswa kukudyira mari* yako (Therefore, we Pastors have been authorised by God to spend your money). (Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa Preaching - Audio recording on social media 01/05/2019).

MAP church founders enforce literal and uncritical interpretations of texts, especially texts that seemingly talk about exonerating the anointed ones of God and texts that seem to be in support of church congregants taking good care of their 'Man of God'. The rigidity of MAPCs' hermeneutics in relation to texts that seem to support church founders' dominance and spiritual control status over other church members, pose hermeneutical problems and tensions within Christian organisations (Resane 2017:15). A consistent literal interpretation and preaching from such scripture as Hebrews 13:17, 'Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have an account' (ESV) by church founders inject fear and pacify congregants. Literalism create a fertile base for the abuse of religious offices. This text is habitually read by church founders to mean that church members must do whatever the spiritual leader [church founder] instructs them to do, since church founders are the gatekeepers of heaven. Gatekeeping is the process by which a selection is made whether or not to admit a particular person to pass through the 'gate' into heaven. Accordingly, a literal understanding of the text

cited above exonerates church founders, for it presents a picture where church founders will stand side by side with God at the gate into heaven to monitor and permit or forbid candidates to enter heaven. This suggests that God will only depend on the testimony the church founder will give upon judgement. It follows then that church members will treat church founders with respect to receive a favour or positive recommendation on the Day of Judgement. Accordingly, a verbatim understanding of Hebrews 13:17 implies that if one is not in good rapport with one's church founder or the 'Man of God', the 'Man of God', in turn, will not give a positive report of the follower or believer, to God on judgement day. Besides a literal understanding of certain selected biblical texts, this study posits that the traditional religious worldview of diviners, as spiritual brokers, sustains the propagation of a gap theology within the MAPCs, thereby enabling an environment conducive for abuses of religious offices, to develop.

Church Founders as 'Spiritual Brokers' and the Gap Theology among MAPCs

The second evidence of an enchanted worldview within the MAPCs is the propagation of a theology that places church founders as spiritual brokers. I argue that this enchanted worldview, besides substantiated by the literal interpretation of the Biblical texts, is also substantiated by Africans' pre-Christian traditional worldview were religious leaders were/are perceived as spiritual mediators between the living and the divine. Though these churches might not agree with this fact that African traditional values and spirituality has played a role in the formation of their theology, I argue in this article that unconsciously most African Pentecostal churches have taken African cultures, beliefs and norms as an additional scripture. The reason for this submission is that a careful analysis of divine calling of most MAP churches founders, which subsequently led them to start churches, resonates well with how African traditional diviners were called into divination offices. Thus, the following section compares the similarities between MAPCs and African religious leaders' calling into religious offices. The comparison is made to examine the extent to which an African traditional religious worldview on diviners as spiritual brokers informs the development of a gap theology that perceives MAPC founders as untouchable, thereby creating room for abuse of religious offices within these African Pentecostal Churches.

Calling into Spiritual Offices among ATRs and MAPCs

The processes leading to the call of an individual into ATR divination are of great significance, particularly in understanding the formation of a gap theology in MAPCs today. This is so because previous scholars have drawn some similarities between the calling of ATR priests to that of an African Pentecostal church founder. Firstly, for one to become a diviner in ATR, some mysterious happenings surrounding the whole life of the prospective candidate should have been witnessed by his/her community (Mbiti 1980). These mysterious happenings are signs to convince the followers that the person has indeed been called into divine office. Among the signs that prove that one has been called to be a diviner is one's capacity to have visions and dreams; hear extraordinary voices; receive the power of healing and foretelling, and so forth (Oborji 2005:147). Based on these manifestations, the diviners' instructions become authentic, because the followers believe that the Supreme Being speaks through him. In other words, based on these indicators, the community believes that the said person has the ability to manifest these supernormal signs (Oborji 2005:147).

Secondly, the calling into ATR spiritual office involves the seizure of the personality by the deity who alights on the candidate to call him or her into its service (Asamoah-Gyadu 2012). What happens is that a person can only be a diviner after the gods have selected him/her (Azongo & Yidana 2015:8). Consequently, the relationship between the deity and the diviner is considered very intimate because of the initial religious experience of one being selected and set apart by the gods for a holy use (Turaki 2000:11). This relationship is sometimes equated to a marriage where diviners are treated as the wives of the deity, irrespective of gender (Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:24). It is because of this relationship that the adherents of ATR respect the diviners, because anyone who raises his/her hand against the diviner invites calamities from the gods. In this way diviners are depicted as weaker vessels, passive recipients of a call that they may not refuse or choose to become, hence the gods guard them jealously (Kiernan 1995:202).

Similarly, the narratives surrounding the call of MAPCs founders into prophet-hood resonate with the calling of ATR diviners. Listening to stories about the call of Emmanuel Makandiwa and Walter Magaya implies similar mysterious narratives about the call of individuals into ATR divination office. For Biri, members of UFIC profess that Makandiwa was called to be a prophet from childhood (Biri, 2012). The congregants of UFIC claim that Prophet

Makandiwa had divine visitations from childhood. Some stories claim that at a tender age when he was staying with his grandmother at his rural home in Muzarabani, the grandmother went out into the fields one day, leaving the boy in the shade. Mysteriously, the shady place where the boy was left caught fire, but the fire could not reach the boy (Biri 2012:2). Accordingly, members of this church argue that these mysterious narratives serve as indicators to show that Makandiwa had a divine call from childhood.

On the same note, overseer Mango of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Church founded by Walter Magaya in 2012 said the following during an interview, '*All the wonders people are experiencing in PHD started when Prophet Magaya was at his mother's cottage at House No. 18642 in the dusty streets of the township of Chitungwiza*' (*Bulawayo News*24 2018).

Overseer Mango reported that because Magaya at [sic] his teens used to see visions while asleep at his mother's cottage no.18642 *'... today people from all walks of life come just to either sit or temporarily sleep on the bed and receive instant healing* (*Bulawayo News*24 2018).

Overseer Mango stated that all sick people who got the chance to sit or sleep on that bed were healed and some who were tormented by evil spirits would manifest while sitting or temporarily sleeping on the bed (*Bulawayo News*24 2018). The purpose behind this narrative is to showcase that Magaya had a long walk with God, a relationship that started way back during his teens.

Overseer Mango adds that the old property was but one of several anointed assets that belong to prophet Magaya. He said some would just visit the house to collect soil or anything , putting their faith in those things and they would later testify great things (*Bulawayo News*24 2018). As if this was not enough, prophet Magaya reinforced Overseer Mango's sentiments, saying that people gave testimonies of the anointing they received when sitting on the bed (*Bulawayo News*24 2018). Magaya testified that whenever he visited his old home he makes sure that he sleeps on the 'anointed' bed, *I am still using the bed and whenever I visit the house I sleep on it. I will also not change the old furniture in the house or paint it until such a time when God tells me to do so* (*Bulawayo News* 24 2018).

In this study I argue that the claimed mysterious happenings surrounding these two MAPC founders are indicators that they were both called by God even before they accepted the call to be Christians. This resonates well with the process surrounding individuals' calling into ATR

divination. Arguably, the model used in ATR for one to become a diviner; being mystically chosen and imbued with mystical powers, seems to be the same model we find among MAPCs, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Among ATRs, diviners are believed to go into trances – a state of dissociation in which they are implicitly caught in the grip of forces beyond themselves so that they neither act nor speak of their own volition, but become the unconscious mouthpieces of spirit voices (Kiernan 1995:13), This also applies to the two MAP church founders mentioned. Both claim to have seen visions and have experienced being in a trance at some point and hearing strange voices and having dreams well before they accepted the call to become church founders.

It is because this enchanted worldview [the world of mysterious happenings] that MAPCs congregants are convinced that Makandiwa and Magaya are truly prophets from God. As in ATR, because they are regarded as having been called by God, anyone who speaks against the prophets of God will be punished. Hence, I argue that this enchanted worldview positioned MAPC founders as sacred cows, thereby propagating a gap theology. MAPC founders are seen as God's representatives here on earth. Borrowing from the Shona tradition of *vana vane mazita evakuru havatukwe* (those who bears the names of the elders/ ancestors should not be insulted), MAPC founders are regarded as 'untouchables'. Thus, I argue that the unremitting abuses of religious offices emanate from such a mindset. Subsequently, members of these churches continue to suffer silently and cannot raise their voices, even when evident that their church founders engage in unusual practices.

Therefore, it is imperative to note that the above raised observation suggests that both congregants and the African Pentecostal church founders understand that African culture is an additional scripture that cannot be ignored. Echoing this sentiment, Ezekiel Guti of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God wrote,

> We must learn how to talk. Just as our elders of long ago used to do. They could understand the language of animals, birds. They would be told that there is honey over there, over there, there is fruit, because they learned manners … That is why they would see God, which is why they would see Angels. These days you cannot see them. This is why they were people who were respectful and dignified. Sometimes, they would find *sadza* (Zimbabwean staple food) under a tree; do you

> think you will find it with your behaviour? They would not say when they see a baboon, 'Hey baboon, ha, ha, ha', and laugh. They would not do that. They were people who had values. Now these modern ways of yours. You will never become a White person; you are an African. You are learning the ways and culture of other people who are having problems with that culture (Guti 2003:17–18).

Accordingly, I argued throughout this study that enchanted worldview constitutes the lens through which most MAPCs view and interpret the world around them (Gundani 2004:87). Whereas the naturalist Western worldview ascribes to the notion of the pattern of events being mere coincidence, luck or chance, the African worldview sees spiritual causations to everything that takes place (Gehman 1989:178). For an African, life is filled with mysteries and strange events that beg for an explanation. In this regard, there is a need for an explanation, such as why, for instance, Cyclone Idai killed hundreds of people in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe; there is a need to explain why one's wife is barren; there is a need to explain why many are perishing through road accidents and so forth – the list is endless. It is against this background that a worldview that places church founders as spiritual brokers prevails. This worldview prevails, particularly among MAPCs, because the emergence of these churches was among other things to address the causes of misfortune and to determine what steps should be taken to chart the future or seek ways to avoid danger (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013:2). Under these circumstances, church founders become important agents from God (Manganyi & Buitendag 2013:3). Accordingly, it is this African religious worldview that demands answers as to why my neighbour prospers while I fail, as we mostly see happening during MPAC services. This is so because for MAPCs nothing happens by chance.

Therefore, my contention in this article was that MAPCs congregants' enchanted worldview has enabled a conducive environment for the development of a gap theology – a catalyst for the unremitting abuses of religious offices today. For Musoni, African spirit-type church members are so attached to their church founders, to such an extent that when facing life-threatening situations, they rush to them (Musoni 2018:37). This is so because AICs' enchanted worldview sees church founders as spiritual hosts (Spirit mediums) of the Supreme Being. The term 'spirit medium' is an African traditional religious term which positions church founders as spiritual connectors. Ac-

cording to Gehman, a diviner in a community setting is looked upon with so much respect, if not feared, because of mystical powers enabling him to divine the unknown (Gehman 1989:104). Gehman further argues that diviners in ATR play the role of counsellors, judges, comforters, suppliers of assurance and confidence during people's crises (Gehman 1989:104). Broadly speaking, a diviner is understood to be a 'go-between', one who mediates between God and man (Ikenga Metuh 1987:213). What it entails is that in the Africans' enchanted worldview, ordinary people cannot approach the Divine directly . It is in this context that a church founder, a human being who, because of the office, plays the role of a go-between in man's relationships with the spiritual world (Ikenga Metuh 1987:213). Therefore it is the spiritual church leader who provides confidence and certainty in a world of anxiety and doubt.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this paper was not to proffer solutions to this unremitting abuse of religious offices among Zimbabwean and South African MAPCs. Rather, it sought to discuss further on factors that seem to provide an enabling environment conducive to the unrelenting abuse of religious offices within MAPCs. In this regard, the enchanted worldview, a model which substantiates a belief in hierarchy of power and the idea that ordinary life is infused in the divine through the mediatorship of religious leaders was singled out as a major player for the propagation of a gap theology. Gap theology was understood by the author to denote a paradox where ordinary church members are portrayed as unfit to go to God for their problems, thereby placing church founders as spiritual connectors. It is this placement of church founders at the centre and church members on the receiving end that has enabled the environment conducive to the abuse of religious office to thrive within MAPCs. Accordingly, congregants are made to believe that they are too inferior to connect personally with God without the aid of their church founders. This article has shown that the enchanted worldview that depicts the world as a place full of spirits and demons, witches and wizards, wonders and miracles, as well as the most dreaded curses, has necessitated the propagation of an gap theology that places church founders as spiritual conveyor belts for spiritual and material solutions. Thus, while other scholars argue that socio-economic factors are the main reason to explain the rise of unremitting abuses of religious offices, this article argued that the enchanted worldview which

gave birth to gap theology has enabled the environment conducive for this unremitting abuse of religious offices within the millennium African Pentecostal Churches today.

References

Adeyepo, D. 2000. *Riding on Prophetic Wings*. Logos: Dominion.

Anderson, A. 2005. New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 01 January. https://doi.org/10.1163/1570066052995843

Asamoah-Gyadu, K. 2012. Mediating Power and Salvation: Pentecostalism and Religious Mediation in an African Context. *The Journal of World Christianity* 5,1: 43 – 61. https://doi.org/10.5325/jworlchri.5.1.0043

Azongo, T.B. & A. Yidana 2015. Spiritual Diagnostic Laboratory : The Role of Diviners in the Management and Resolution of Life Crises. American Journal of Sociological Research 5,1 7 – 13. https://doi.org/10.5923/j.sociology.20150501.02

Banda, C. 2018. Not Anointing, but Justice? A Critical Reflection on the Anointing of Pentecostal Prophets in a Context of Economic Injustice. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39,1: 1 – 1 1. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v39i1.1870

Biri, K. 2012. The Silent Echoing Voice : Aspects of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism and the Quest for Power, Healing and Miracles. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae: Journal of the Church History Society of Southern Africa* 38: 1 – 12.

Bishau, D. 2010. *Reign with Him for Thousand Years (Rev 20:60): A Socio-hermeneutical Expositition of Biblical and Contemporary Millenarian Movements in Zimbabwe as Radical Responses to Deprivation.* 2nd Edition. Sereis Editors: Kugler, J., L. Togarasei & M. Gunda. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press.

*Bulawayo News*24 2018. *Prophet Magaya's Humble Beginnings.* Available at: https://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-national-byo-148719.html (Accessed on 15 May 2019.)

Chaya, V. 2016. *Touch not my Anointed.* https://doi.org/10.1063/1.351465

Dube, N., T.S. Nkomo & P. Khosa 2017. Condom Usage Negotiation among Customarily Married Women in Katlehong, Johannesburg. *SAGE* 1,7. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016687345

Gabaitse, R.M. 2015. Pentecostal Hermeneutics and the Marginalisation of

Women. *Scriptura* 114,1: 1 – 12. https://doi.org/10.7833/114-0-1043

Gehman, R. 1989. *Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Gifford, P. 2016. *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa*. New York: Oxford Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190495732.001.0001

Goba, C. 2019. Prophet Talent Madungwe who Went to Heaven, had Braai with God and Arrested Satan, at it AGAIN! *Herald Newspaper*. https://www.myzimbabwe.co.zw/news/44943-prophet-talent-madungwe-who-went-to-heaven-had-braai-with-god-and-arrested-satan-at-it-again.html (Accessed on 28 September 2019.)

Gundani, P. 2004. Continuity and Change in Zimbabwean Religio-cultural Landscape in the Era of HIV/ AIDS. In Barry, D. (ed.): *Zimbabwe: The Past is the Future*. Harare: Weaver.

Guti, E. 2003. *Respect that Brings Godliness*. Harare: EGEA Publication.

Ikenga Metuh, E. 1987. *Comparative Studies of African Traditional Religions.* Onitsha: IMICO publishers.

Kalu, O. 2008. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195340006.001.0001

Kgatle, M.S. 2017. The Unusual Practices within Some Neo-Pentecostal Churches in South Africa: Reflections and Recommendations. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73,3: 1 – 8. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656

Kiernan, J. 1995. The Truth Revealed or the Truth Assembled: Reconsidering the Role of the African Diviner in Religion and Society. *Journal for the Study of Religion* 8,2: 3 – 21.

Machingura, F. 2018. 'All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues' (Acts 2:4): Glossolalia as a Defining Characteristic of Zimbabwean Pentecostalism. In Togarasei, L. (ed.): *Aspects of Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe*. Gewerbestrasse, Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78565-3 (Accessed on 20 may 2019)

Mahohoma, T.C. 2017. A Theological Evaluation of God Business: A Case Study of the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministries of Zimbabwe. *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 73,2: 1 – 11. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.4529

Manganyi, J.S. & J. Buitendag 2013. A Critical Analysis on African Traditional Religion and the Trinity. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69,1: 1 – 13. 10.4102/hts.v69i1.1934.

Mbiti, J. 1980. The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion. *Christian Century* 27 August: 1 – 7. www.christiancentury.org

Monette, D.R.., T. Sullivan, T.J. DeJong, C.R. Hilton 2014. *Applied Social Research: A Tool for the Human Services*. 9th Edition. Belmont, Massachusetts: CA: Brooks/Cole, Cengage Learning.

Musoni, P. 2018. Re-visiting Christology from an Indigenous Perspective: A Study of the New Images of Jesus in African Christianity in the Zimbabwean Context. In Dube, Z., L. Maseno & E. Mligo (eds.): *The Bible and Sociological Contours: Some African Perspectives*. New York: Peter Lang.

Oborji, A. 2005. *Towards Christian Theology of African Religion: Issues of Interpretation and Mission*. Nairobi: AMECEA Gaba Publications.

Resane, K.T. 2017. Miracles in the Neo-charismatic Movement: Historical and Theological Critique. *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38,1: 1 – 8. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i1.1736

Shoko, T. 2007. *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing House.

Togarasei, L. 2016. Historicising Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 42,2: 1 – 13. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/103

Turaki, Y. 2000. *Africa Traditional Religious System as Basis of Understanding Christian Spiritual Warfare*. Florida, USA: Lausanne Movement. https://doi/org/10.1063/1.351465 (Accessed on 15 May 2018.)

Personal interview List

1. Anonymous 1. 55 years (Male). Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) member, 07 April 2019, Pretoria ground, Tshwane, South Africa.
2. Anonymous 2. 55 years (Male). United Family International Church (UFIC) member, 14 April 2019, at Clovely Business Park, 342 Old Pretoria Main Road Halfway House, Midrand, Johannesburg.
3. Anonymous 3. 33 years (Female). Prophetic Healing and Deliverance Ministry (PHD), 03 March 2019, at Zindoga Waterfalls, Harare, Zimbabwe.

4. Anonymous 4. 35 years (Male). Exile Desire of All Nations Ministries (E.D.N.M), member, 26 May 2019, at Sunningdale, Harare, Zimbabwe.
5. Anonymous 5. 45 years (Female). Prophet Healing and Deliverance (PHD) Ministries, 07 April 2019 at, Zindoga, Waterfalls, Harare, Zimbabwe.
6. Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa Preaching – Audio recording on social media, 01 May 2019.

Dr. Phillip Musoni (Research fellow)
Department of Christian Spirituality
College of Humanities
University of South Africa
mphil2020@gmail.com

A Critical Appraisal of the Silence and Apathy of the Church Regarding Land Reform with Special Reference to the Lutheran Church as a Case Study: Towards Making the Church a Caring and Humanising Institution

Olehile A. Buffel
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2895-1997

Abstract

While the country is grappling with events and unusual practices that are shocking and bringing churches into disrepute, following dramatic and 'miraculous' events in some of the Charismatic and Pentecostal church traditions, society must not turn a blind eye to challenges faced by so-called mainline churches. They are also engaged in actions and behaviours that are scandalous and bring the churches into disrepute. That is particularly the case with the disturbing silence of churches regarding the raging debates in South Africa, about land, land reform and expropriation of land without compensation. While the debates are ongoing, there is the big scandal of not only silence, but the disposal of church land that sabotages land reform and pre-empts expropriation of land without compensation. An example comes from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), which, like other churches, is a significant landowner that has received many of its portions of land during the colonial period during which indigenous peoples were dispossessed, impoverished and dehumanised. By disposing of land without any consultation with groups of claimants, the church has missed an opportunity to be relevant and to be a catalyst in the creation of a more humane society in which the injustices of the past are redressed and the human rights and dignity of the landless, land-hungry and dispossessed are respected and not violated. The church has missed an opportunity to be true to its nature as a caring and compassionate institution that has the responsibility to create a more humane society.

Keywords: land reform, restitution, humanizing institution, Lutheran church, Pentecostal/ charismatic churches, Rustenburg declaration, pariahs

Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN: 2519-5476; DOI https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2021/sp38a21

Introduction

In recent years, the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have come to be associated with controversial practices that are common in some of the churches. These practices are tarnishing the reputation of the church and bringing the church into disrepute. The strange, unusual practices must be debated, condemned and possibly rooted out. The main argument of this article is that it is not only the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches that are tarnishing the image of the church and its reputation. The mainline churches also have tendencies that bring the churches into disrepute and society often turns a blind eye to what they are doing, including to the injustices they engage in actions that cause suffering to God's people. One area in which the mainline churches bring the church into disrepute is that of church land ownership in which the churches fail to contribute to land reform or fail to contribute to social and economic justice. At the time of the conference of Rustenburg, which led to the Rustenburg Declaration (1990), churches confessed and committed themselves to audit their land and to play a meaningful role in restitution and redistribution. Part of the Rustenburg Declaration states,

> Confession and forgiveness require restitution. Without it, a confession of guilt is incomplete. As a first step towards restitution, the Church must examine its land ownership and work for the return of expropriated land from relocated communities to its original owners (Alberts & Chikane 1991:284).

The Lutheran church was one of the 80 denominations and 40 parachurch organisations represented by 230 Church leaders.

However, since 1994, churches have not only been disturbingly silent about the land question, but apathetic. Even amidst the current debate about land reform and expropriation of land without compensation, churches are very quiet. As if that is not enough, the Lutheran church has been disposing of church land, even in cases where there are historical claims and where there are occupants, as they have done with Bethany, Kopanong, Xhariep district, Free State. This article therefore argues that while there are unusual practices in the new Pentecostal churches that warrant condemnation, equally there are some scandalous practices such as selling land on which there are historical claims by various groups, namely The Griqua, the Khoisan, and the Beddie family. There are also claimants who successfully claimed 5 337 hectares of

the over 18 000 hectares of the land. In terms of methodology, the article uses the Lutheran church (ELCSA) in respect of Bethany as a case study of such events that are scandalous. The main source of the information are primary documents and literature related to the land and the history and broader context of dispossession, historical acquisition of the land, forced removals and the original claims, the successful claim and the documents related to the sale and the protests of the communities regarding the sale. The article concludes that there are scandalous practices in the mainline churches that equally need to be condemned and uprooted. Furthermore, the article makes a case for the churches to re-examine themselves and play a meaningful role in land reform, particularly restitution and return of land to original owners and their descendants.

Background

Lest we think that challenges that bring the churches into disrepute and cause a stumbling block (scandal) to the believers are only found in the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches, there are also scandalous actions in the so-called mainline churches or mission-established churches. This is particularly the case with churches that Anderson refers to as 'new Pentecostal churches' (Anderson 2005:66). In recent years, some of these churches have faced a lot of criticism for unusual practices, which range from making people drink petrol, eat rats and grass, staging the resurrection of the dead[1], sexual assault and rape of women and girls[2], human trafficking, money laundering[3], and many other strange, unconventional practices (Mapadimeng 2020:1; Kgatle 2017:2). Many of these acts have caused alarm and controversies in churches and in the country. These are scandalous actions and events that are tainting the image and reputation of the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. Does it mean that

[1] Recently there was the video clip that went viral of the Congolese-born pastor Alph Lukau, in which he claimed to have just prayed and managed to bring a dead man lying in the coffin back to life.

[2] Timothy Omotoso, the Jesus Dominion International (JDI) church, is charged with allegations of sexual assault, human trafficking and racketeering.

[3] The Malawian-born multimillionaire pastor of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) church, Shepherd Bushiri, and his wife are facing charges of fraud and money laundering. They were granted bail and they have since skipped bail and returned to Malawi.

the mainline churches do not have scandals of their own that equally affect their image and reputation negatively? This article does not focus on the new Pentecostal (neo-Pentecostal) and charismatic churches, but the mainline churches, using the Lutheran church as a case study. As a case study, it is not focused on a church within the context of worship services but outside the church. The Lutheran Church is not the only church that failed to deal with the issue of land (church land) in such a way that benefits the communities residing on church land or those who were previously dispossessed through forced removals and other forms of dispossession. Other than actively contributing to dispossession, the Lutheran church and other churches have been silent regarding the controversial issue of land and its redistribution and restitution. The ongoing debate in South Africa regarding expropriation of land without compensation has not yet pricked the collective conscience of churches, as they remain silent regarding land owned by churches which should also be considered for redistribution to the poor and landless communities.

The silence of the church regarding the debate on land reform and expropriation of land without compensation is a serious challenge. It is not only a challenge, but scandalous that other than being disturbingly silent, a Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), has initiated a process that has ultimately dispossessed communities and made land reform difficult, if not impossible.

As the big debate continues about land, land reform and expropriation of land without compensation, the focus is on land belonging to commercial farmers, state land (trust land) and tribal land. There is land that belongs to different churches and that is ignored. Some church land may have been bought in the open market. However, there is some church land that was obtained fraudulently by missionaries. The landless communities who could not own land in white South Africa requested some missionaries to acquire land on their behalf and missionaries later refused to hand the land back. There are missionaries who were faithful, who returned the land or facilitated the return of land to the rightful owners. According to Van Donk (1994:18), the church acquired land in the following ways:

- In some cases, missionaries purchased land.
- Or, land was donated to missions such as Bethany, which was donated by Adam Kok II, the leader of the Griekwas (Schoeman 1985).
- In other cases, indigenous leaders (often erroneously referred to as

chiefs) donated land for specific purposes, mostly 'for the benefit of indigenous people, for the propagation of the gospel and for the purpose of education and building churches' (Buffel 2001:1).

- In other instances, Black people paid missionaries to purchase land on their behalf, as legislation prohibited them from purchasing land (Van Donk 1994:18). In those cases where missionaries held the title deed, the indigenous people still felt that the land belonged to them.
- In other cases, the missionaries received land as grants from the colonial administration which had participated in the dispossession of indigenous people, often for missionary purposes (Van Donk 1994: 18). This was also to clear Blacks from so-called White land.
- Many missions were given permission to establish mission stations on tribal land, in efforts to prevent complete deprivation of tribal land by colonial powers (Van Donk 1994:19).

Some land was given to Mission Societies 'for the benefit of the indigenous communities' such as Bethany in the Free State, which was given as grant to the Berlin Mission Society. Bethany, which was originally referred to as Brandewynfontein, was given to the Berlin Mission Society by Adam Kok II (Schoeman 1985:11–12; Twala 2018:1; Buffel 2015:1; cf. Van Aswegen 1993:22). However, later communities were removed in various ways because of racist legislation such as the Native Land Act of 1913 and the Native Act of 1936. These are the pieces of legislation that, in the words of Sol Plaatje, turned indigenous people into 'pariahs in the land of their birth' (Plaatje 2007:21).

History is now repeating itself as dispossession is not perpetuated by the colonial powers and the apartheid regime, but by a predominantly Black church, ELCSA, as they sold land claimed by various communities. These are dispossessed communities that were forcefully removed before 1913 and that are not covered by the Restitution Act of 1994 (as amended). Since the Lutheran Church, ELCSA, a successor of the Berlin Mission Society benefited from the long process of dispossession of Africans from their land, the church and many other churches that possess massive tracts of land should be championing the return of land to indigenous communities. These dispossessed communities include those who were forcefully removed before 1913 and who are not covered by the Restitution Act of 1994. A church that was part of the South African Council of the Churches (SACC) and was part of the vanguard againstoppression and injustice, has engaged in the process of dispossessing

the community and thereby rendering them landless. A church that is supposed to support the call for expropriation of land without compensation is now pre-empting expropriation of land without compensation. It is a stumbling block to restoration of justice. Any institution or person who dispossesses people is violating their human rights, human dignity, and impoverishing and dehumanising God's people. The article critically reflects on church land that has conveniently been removed from the agenda since 1990 at the Rustenburg Conference where churches committed themselves to facilitating the restoration of church land (Albert & Chikane 1990:21). The Black Lutheran Church is a classical case study of a church that is insensitive to the plight of the poor and oppressed. A case study of a church that was part of the prophetic voice against apartheid, which has now deserted the poorest of the poor and instead of contribution to transformation and humanisation, it is now involved in a process of dispossession and dehumanisation. The church is supposed to being missionary and human, as Prof. Saayman argues in his book, *Being Missionary, Being Human* (2007). The church has an important role to play in caring for all its members, including the dispossessed communities, the poorest of the poor, many of whom are members of the church (cf. Buffel 2018:119). The last thing that we expect from a church is to play an active role in further dispossessing and impoverishing the landless and the poor and oppressed.

Blacks[4] still Pariahs in the Land of their Birth

It was a scandal when indigenous peoples were systematically dispossessed through the Native Acts of 1913 and 1936. It was a scandalous process that turned Africans into 'pariahs' in the country of their birth. When Sol Plaatje wrote the words 'Awakening on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African native found *himself*, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of *his* birth' (Plaatje 2007:21), he was referring to Africans who were impoverished and rendered landless. The words of Plaatje are the opening

[4] Black here is used in the sense of the Black consciousness definition of Blacks as generic and includes Black Africans, Coloureds, who are also African, and Indians who are equally African. One concedes that the word 'coloured' is regarded as unpalatable and as very condescending. Black includes all the peoples who were regarded as so-called 'Non-white' (as if non-beings) in the old, apartheid South Africa.

words of the first chapter of his book, *Native Life in South Africa*, which was published in 1916, just a mere three years after the promulgation of the Native Land Act of 1913. The late and former Minister of Education, Prof. Kader Asmal, described these words as 'the most powerful and memorable first paragraphs in literature' (Asmal in Sol Plaatje 2007: xi)[5]. According to Asmal, these words vividly capture the pain, humiliation and distress of millions of our people who suffered through the exercise of power by the white parliament that created a landless and destitute people (Asmal in Plaatje 2007: xi). Plaatje was referring to Africans who were impoverished and rendered landless. They were not only impoverished and rendered landless, but dehumanised. These are the words that describe the reality of millions of black people. This reality is not at all ancient and outdated. This is the reality experienced by millions of Black South Africans who have no access to land and continue to live in poverty. This is the reality that was also acknowledged by the Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs (DLA)[6] in a discussion document released by the Ministry in 2005:

> Our country's entire history was shaped by the fact that land ownership was dictated by race. Dispossession and systematic destruction of the then highly successful black agricultural sector condemned the black population to near slavery; to being 'pariahs' in the land of our birth- as Mr Sol Plaatje expressed it (Walker 2008:41; DLA 2005).

Nothing is more scandalous than that. What is even more scandalous is that one important category of beneficiaries of this dispossession and impoverishment, in addition to Whites, includes mission societies and subsequently churches that inherited huge tracts of land that were gained as a result of colonialism and associated dispossession and impoverishment. It is scandalous that White Christians and missionaries allowed that to happen with little or no resistance. It continues to be scandalous that former mission churches that used to be led by white missionaries but are now being led by black continue to be owners of huge tracts of land that were bequeathed to them because of systematic dispossession and dehumanisation of Black people. Now

[5] That was in a foreword to Plaatje's book republished in 2007.

[6] The Department has since been renamed the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) in June 2019.

that apartheid is gone and colonialism is also being tackled by waves of anti-colonialism and discourses of decoloniality, local institutions, organisations and religious organisations that benefited from colonialism, dispossession and dehumanisation must return what was stolen or taken away and join the struggle to restore what was taken away from indigenous peoples.

The History and Context of Dispossession in South Africa

The history of South Africa and the associated process of dispossession, impoverishment and dehumanization are part of the scandalous history in a country that is supposedly predominantly Christian. In a publication commissioned by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1994, the editors of the series, Rev. Bennie Witbooi and Rev. Shaun Govender, stated, 'Land has been a site of trouble throughout history. In the South African struggle for liberation and democracy, it is a crucial component, if not the most important' (in Van Donk 1994).

Even by standards of other religions it is scandalous that the indigenous peoples were dispossessed, impoverished and dehumanized by their Christian leaders. What is a scandal? A scandal is an outrageous action or behaviour that is morally wrong and causes public outrage. In the bible, scandal means a stumbling block. It is a metaphor for behaviour, attitude and action that leads to sin or to destructive behaviour. In the case of the scandal regarding the silence and the failure of the Church, the Church is causing serious reputational damage to its name and moral standing in society.

South African history is marked by a long history of colonization, racial domination and land dispossession that has left majority of the black population landless, homeless and poor. It is no secret that the legacy of colonialism and dispossession of land remains in South Africa 'with the bulk of the agricultural land being owned by a white minority' (Rugege 2004:1). This process of dispossession and impoverishment started right at the beginning of the colonial era upon arrival of the white person and reached the worst level in 1913 and 1936 with the instruction and implementation of the Native Land Acts (of 1913 and later 1936) and later the Urban Areas Act of 1923 and the Group Areas Act of 1950. The Acts merely consolidated a deliberate and systematic process of dispossession that started much earlier (Buffel 2015:138; cf. Twala 2018:1). It was the same Acts that turned black South Africans into 'pariahs' in the country of their birth, as stated above (Plaatje 2007:21). These infamous Acts did not usher in dispossession and impoverishment but were

rather a continuation and consolidation of a long process of oppression, dispossession and impoverishment which started with colonialism that started with the arrival of Europeans in South Africa. That process 'alienated the original inhabitants from their land' (Hebinck 2013:30).

According to Ntsebeza (2007:108) this process of dispossession and impoverishment,

> ... started from the 17th century when white settlers in South Africa, through a complex process of colonialism and land dispossession, ended up legally appropriating more than 90 percent of the land, a process that was formalised with the passing of the notorious Native Land Act of 1913. The Act confined the indigenous people to reserves in the remaining marginal portions of land … As a result, the indigenous people were gradually converted from once successful farmers prior to the discovery of minerals, particularly gold in the 1860s, to poorly paid labourers (cf. Buffel 2015:137).

This process of dispossession and impoverishment which was ushered in by colonialism and perfected by apartheid, systematically undermined and destroyed African agriculture, while strengthening Whites who benefited from state subsidies (Ntsebeza 2007:109; cf. Buffel 2015:137).

Bundy (1990) outlines the complex process of dispossession and impoverishment by categorizing that into three forms:

- Firstly, forced dispossession by colonial conquest that predate the period of forced removals in the 1960s. For instance, the Khoi and the San lost their grazing and hunting lands to the Dutch settlers who used force of arms (Bundy 1990:4). They also predate the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, as well as policies of the National party that came into power in 1948.
- Secondly, New Economic forces and pressures. These forces severed people from their land. Peasant producers became involved in new economic obligations such as paying rents and taxes. They fell into debts and were put off by creditors. According to Bundy (1990:5), the introduction and imposition of a cash economy provided new goods and introduced new pitfalls. It must be pointed out that these economic

pressures were not neutral but favoured Whites against indigenous peoples of South Africa. The pressures were not necessarily dependent on market forces but on the protection of the interests of Whites vis-à-vis those of the Black population.

- Thirdly, the role of law (legislation). The White person's law was accompanied by State intervention. Bundy (1990:5) correctly points out that the law of that time was not neutral. It reflected the existing interests and the distribution of power in the society of that time and in any society. The law of earlier centuries of dispossession favoured property owners and white employers. It favoured Whites and was prejudicial against indigenous peoples of South Africa. According to Bundy (1990:5), there was nothing neutral about the Masters' and Servants Act, the Vagrancy laws, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, the Urban Areas Act or the Group Areas Act (cf. Buffel 2015:137).

This process of dispossession which was supported by White Christians and even given religious justification is responsible for the suffering of millions of Black Christians and people of other religions, and this is therefore scandalous. It is even more scandalous when a predominantly Black church such as ELCSA, that used to fight on the side of the poor and oppressed, participates in, and even initiate a process that continues with 'the original sin' of land dispossession, impoverishment and dehumanization.

The Role of Missionaries and Mission Societies in the Dispossession and Dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples

The debate on missionary activity in South Africa is as complex as the South African land question. According to Vila Vicencio (1980:43),

> There are those who would argue that missionaries (and mission societies) were among worthy and honourable pioneers who contributed to the quest for social justice in the development of the subcontinent. At worst, the argument goes, they were well-meaning, even if naïve and misguided. Others contend that missionaries were tacit, and on occasion conscious agents of colonial subjugation and apologists for white domination.

Whereas missionaries were servants of God, they were equally representatives of the imperialists and they joined colonialists in condemning and sometimes insulting Africans. According to Vila-Vicencio (1988:43), African traditional society was condemned by both missionaries and colonialists and dismissed as lazy and indolent and were to be taught the dignity of labour. In addition, Africans were not regarded as equal with Europeans, and thereof as less human. Even those missionaries who are reputed to have done a lot for Africans and who have worked hard for the welfare of Africans were still trapped in the ideology of imperialism just like their colonial administrators. Vila-Vicencio (1988:44) concludes that 'such is the power of colonial or state structures that even the most, worthy of people become its obedient servants'. John Phillip argues like all fellow missionaries and colonialists that 'the missionaries were, by the most exceptional means, extending British interests, British influence and the British empire' (in Vila-Vicencio 1988:44). He also contends that,

> The task of the missionary was to teach Africans industrious habits and create a demand for British manufactures … and the mission stations were the cheapest and best military posts that a government can employ to defend its frontiers against the predatory incursions of savage tribes (Vila-Vicencio 1988:44).

It is no wonder when Africans were subjected to dispossession, impoverishment and dehumanisation, there was little or no resistance on the part of missionaries and mission societies, which was indeed very scandalous.

It is an unfortunate fact of life that the gospel that the missionaries were propagating was so closely linked to British ideology and colonialism (Vila-Vicencio 1988:44). As custodians of Christian religion, they inevitably, consciously and unconsciously served the prevailing ideology of imperial expansion, domination and land dispossession even though this caused the untold suffering of the indigenous peoples (cf. 1988:44). The indigenous peoples lost their land, their wealth, social structure and political identity and social cohesion, without much protest from missionaries and their mission societies (Vila-Vicencio 1988:49). Although Blacks were to be Christianised in view of civilising them, they were still subjected to grave conditions of oppression and dispossession. They were also subjected to 'systematic exclusion from the benefits of the industrialised capitalist system' (Vila-Vicen-

cio 1988:48). That also involved the breakdown of traditional African social customs, subsistence farming and loss of land and loss political power by the Chiefs (Vila-Vicencio 1988:48). As a result of the acts of dispossession the indigenous peoples were then accommodated on mission stations. Some were turned into tenants on White-owned farms and others were turned into cheap labour. That is what happened to indigenous people whom the Berlin Mission Society found at Bethany in the Free State, who were turned into workers and squatters and later were forcefully removed.

Colonialism and mission were entangled and this entanglement, according to Saayman, had a lasting influence on the church and on society (Saayman 1991:22). He goes on to point out that in the South African context, the situation was part of the worldwide phenomenon of both the missionary and colonialist outreach (Saayman 1991:22). This entanglement of mission and colonialism had and still has consequences that are still much alive in the minds of those who were at the receiving end of both mission and colonialism, that is, in the minds of black 'objects' of mission (Saayman 1991:23). Colonialism is still a reality for the majority of Christians in South Africa (Saayman 1991:23). That is still a reality even more than twenty-six years after liberation. The consequences of this entanglement have many dimensions, and one of the important dimensions led to the cooperation and conspiracy between missionaries and colonialists in the process of dispossession of the land of the indigenous peoples of South Africa. This also includes institutional racism which originated as part of the economic exploitation inherent in colonialism (Saayman 1991:23). It is against that background of the history of dispossession that the Lutheran church came to own land on which the indigenous people were dispossessed.

The Disturbing Silence of the Church regarding Land and Expropriation of Land without Compensation

While the processes of dispossession, impoverishment dehumanisation were on their own very scandalous, there is a big scandal that is currently underway in South Africa. That relates to the disturbing silence of churches as individual denominations and collectively as the ecumenical Church with regards to the current debate on land reform and particularly the debate around expropriation of land without compensation.

An even worse scandal is the case of a church, the Evangelical Luthe-

ran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), which quickly placed a portion of land, Bethany farm 610 in the Free State, on auction, despite the facts that various groups[7] have submitted land claims and despite the facts that one group successfully claimed a portion of land (5 337 ha) and settled on only part of the bigger farm in 1998. When the community stumbled upon the advert of the auction of the farm in February 2018, they wrote an email to the Auctioneer company of Mr A. Noordman objecting to the sale. Noordman wrote a responding email to them with an offer to purchase the farm for R17 million, which the community had to raise in seven days (email correspondence from Mr Noordman dated 27 February 2018). Ironically, the offer to purchase was from AAA Boerdery PTY Ltd, a farming company co-owned by Mr Anton Noordman[8], whose law firm was selling the farm on behalf of the Lutheran Church (ELCSA). This was a clear conflict of interest. The farm size is about 6 429 hectares (Offer to Purchase 2018). The representatives of the community led by Mr K.L. Sebeela[9] objected to both the church and Mr Anton Noordman (letter of the community dated 22 February 2018). The community, most of whom are members of ELCSA, requested a meeting with the leadership of the church, who refused to meet the community. They then requested the author,

[7] The Khoisan and Griekwa communities have submitted claims which according to the Land Claims Commission are not covered by the Restitution Act of 1994, as the Act only covers land that has been lost since 1913. The Bethany Communal Property Association has also submitted a claim, and according to them they only received back 5 337 hectares out of over 18 000 hectares. The Land Claims Commission states that, as far as they are concerned, the claim that was gazetteed and partially restored in 1998 is now closed and will not be entertained. The other stakeholder that has also submitted a claim is the Beddie family members, who also have historical connections to Bethanie.

[8] According to the offer to purchase dated 20 September 2018 the farming company belonged to Mr Anton Noordman, Ms Johannes Wilhelmus Noordman and Johannes Lodewikus Bekker. The legal firm communicating the offer to purchase is Noordmans Attorney at Law t/a Noordmans, with Mr Noorman as the main partner (owner).

[9] Mr K.L. Sebeela is the chairperson of Bethany Communal Property Association (BCPA) and an elder and preacher of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa, St Johannes Congregation in Bloemfontein.

who was then a member and a minister of ELCSA, to intervene on their behalf. Only after months and several letters from the author did the leadership agree to meet with the community. They still arrogantly insisted that they would go ahead with the sale, promising that the area covering the sites of the church building, parsonages and the school would not be sold. The community then wrote a letter requesting the intervention of the Chief Land Claims Commissioner, who also did not respond to their request. In a letter to Ms Nomfundo Gobodo, they wrote,

> Request to the Chief Land Claims Commissioner to help the community to stop the sale of Bethany farm 610 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa until the church has consulted the community which has successfully claimed only a portion of the farm in 1998. The sale will prejudice the community and deprive them of their rights. Initially the community claimed the whole farm but was only given a portion of the farm. The whole farm that the community claimed was 11 917, 6416 ha, and only 5339 ha was restored in 1998. The sale of the farm will also prejudice other claims being investigated such as the Korannas, the Tswanas and the Griekwas (Letter from Mr K.L. Sebela 02 July 2018).

That request was also in vain as the Chief Land Claims Commissioner never responded.

The farm has since been sold, notwithstanding the request of the community of Bethany and its leadership. Even worse, a church building, which is a heritage site, was also sold to Mr Anton Noorman's family company by Mr Anton Noordman, the attorney acting on behalf of the church. The ELCSA Church Council minutes of July 2019 states, 'The sale of Bethany farm was completed, however the proceeds from the sale received was not as agreed and as per previous Church Council resolution' (ELCSA Church Council Minutes 2019:10).

The sale went ahead, despite the current debate which was initiated and continues to be highlighted by the EFF and only later with some variations accepted by the ANC and other parties, which supported a motion tabled by the EFF in Parliament. The targeted land is that which belongs to commercial farmers, state land and tribal land. Very little is said about land belonging to churches or church-related agencies and institutions (ecumenical and indivi-

dual denominations). The church is also a very significant landowning institution (Van Donk 1994:1; cf. Madjera 1992:1). Other than the Church being a significant land-owning institution, the landowners, the landless, the land-hungry, land claimants and all the dispossessed are members of the Church (members of various churches). Inevitably, the church has a pastoral duty to its members and to society in general. While the church may not be homogenous, it has obligations and responsibilities over its members and over society. The Church is the Church only when it exists for others. Ironically, during the struggle for liberation, shortly before the establishment of the new South Africa in 1990, various churches met in Rustenburg, where more than 230 leaders representing 80 denominations and 40 parachurch organisations came together and came out with the Rustenburg Declaration. An outcome of the conference was publication of a book, with the title, *The Road to Rustenburg: The Church looking forward to a new South Africa* (Alberts & Chikane 1991). In that declaration the Church conceded that the Church is a significant landowner and admitted to its complicity in colonialism, apartheid and in land dispossession (Alberts & Chikane 1991). It is strange that after 1994 the Church went back to sleep and became silent about many socio-economic and political issues, including the land debate. That is a continuation of the journey of the Church on a scandalous road, in contrast to the progressive and prophetic road to Rustenburg in 1990. The Church seems to have made a U-turn, and ELCSA is a classical case study of that anomaly and insensitivity.

Intervention by the Author as a Pastor of the Lutheran Church

When the community's efforts at engaging the church in view of stopping sale from going through before any consultation with the different stakeholders, they approached the author and requested some intervention. Several letters, e-mails and telephone conversations ensued. All these were in vain. In one of the letters[10] to the leadership of the church, author of this article, wrote,

[10] At the time (2018) of writing the letter the author was still a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). The author and five other pastors have since withdrawn their membership and ministry from ELCSA. The author and many other pastors and lay leaders have been trying

> It continues to be shocking that ELCSA is now in the process of quickly disposing of the property without any reference to and consultation with the community of Bethany. When the community, through its chairperson, Mr K.L. Sebeela tried to engage the church or its representatives they received the most insensitive, patronising and legalistic response from Mr Anton Noordman (Buffel 2017).

The letter continues to state,

> The completion of the transaction has the potential to tarnish the image of the Church, ELCSA. ELCSA is one of the churches that over the years correctly claimed to be 'a church of the poor' especially during the time of Bishop Dr Manas Buthelezi. ELCSA was part of the ecumenical movement that opposed apartheid and made one statement after the other condemning apartheid and its policies. It will become ironic that such a church with struggle credentials ignores the plea from the community of Bethany, who are victims of colonialism and dispossession. ELCSA as one of the churches under the auspices of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) committed itself to the Rustenburg declaration related to church land in 1990 and ways of dealing with church land. It will in fact be scandalous if the transaction could be finalised. It is for that reason that on behalf of the community, I plead with the leadership of the church to suspend the process of disposing of Bethany and to afford the community an opportunity for a meeting to amicably discuss the matter (Buffel 2017).

The representatives of the community of Bethany had threatened the following should the church endorse the response of Mr Noordman and proceed with the sale, inter alia:

1. approach the court to interdict the process.

to reform the church from within since the 1980s up to 30 March 2019, when a new church was established with the name: Liberated Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (LELCSA) on 19 January 2019. The Church, which started with only five pastors, has since grown to 13 congregations, with 15 pastors and 2 deacons/deaconesses.

2. approach the media to make the members and the South African population aware of the injustices that are now being perpetuated by a supposedly Black church that used to be on the side of the poor and that ignores the pleas of the community; and
3. approaching the Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Protector and the Human Rights Commission, as land rights are human rights.

The community could not raise the funds required for legal action. They also received no assistance from government Departments and from the Chapter 9 institutions. The community also approached the Legal Clinic of the Free State University, all in vain. The response was a deafening silence to the request. Even the media did not see the plight of the poor and community as news-worthy. That is part of the bigger scandal that the cry of an impoverished community was ignored.

The Church's Commitment to the Struggle for Liberation and Land Reform in Particular

As indicated earlier, in 1990, the Church came together at the ecumenical at Rustenburg and reflected on a variety of socio-economic and political realities of South Africa, as they looked forward to a new South Africa (Alberts & Chikane 1990). Those individual denominations and ecumenical bodies that were involved in the struggle for liberation were vindicated and those that were not involved and that justified apartheid and its draconian policies asked for forgiveness. They came up with *The Rustenburg Declaration* (1990), in which the church ecumenical conceded that the church is a significant landowner that should set an example for society and for the government that was anticipated to take leadership in the new South Africa.

At a later stage, the Dutch Reformed Church commissioned several con-ferences and publications, referred to as Relevant Church series and one of the series dealt with the issue of land, namely: *Land and the Church: The Case of the Dutch Reformed Churches*, no 1, which was written by Mirjan Van Donk (1994) and published by the Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches. In that publication, Van Donk (1994:1) raises two very important issues related to land:

1. Land is indeed problematic in South Africa and political and social

institutions, including churches must address the land question. In my view it is also a source of conflict that the church cannot ignore.

2. The church as a social institution and as the embodiment of Christian values, has the responsibility regarding social concern, including land restitution and redistribution.

In 1992, the stakeholders, including academics, non-governmental organisations and representatives of churches and others, met again and produced another publication, namely, *Church and Land: Working documents on the post-apartheid Economy*, which was edited by the following academics, E.M. Conradie, D.E. de Villiers and J. Kinghorn (1992). The consultation was hosted by the Stellenbosch Economic Project. The Lutheran Church was represented by several people and one of them General Manager of its property management agency, ELCSA Property Management Company (ELCSA PMC), Mr M. Madjera, who presented a paper on *The Land issue in South Africa: Case Studies (ELCSA*). Mdjera (1992:1) also concedes the church is a significant landowner, particularly the Lutheran Church (ELCSA). He argues that the church must use land as guided by Christian Ethics and in the best interests of and for the benefit of society. His argument was that the church exists and performs within society and it comprises members of society and is in fact part of society. He cites Jeremiah 29:7, which states, 'Seek the welfare of any city to which I have carried you off, and pray to the Lord for it, on its welfare, your welfare will depend' (Madjera 1992:1). According to Madjera, 'land ownership is to the church of importance in view of serving people, and the point of land ownership may be for the church only of secondary importance. The mandate and responsibility of the church is to use the land in the interest of the communities' (1992:12).

What the ELCSA has done and continues to do, is a radical departure from what its former General Manager of its property portfolio, according to Madjera (1994) said in 1992, which was said in the spirit of the *Rustenburg Declaration* (1990). What the Lutheran Church is doing is not different from other churches, as they are also silent regarding the debate on land, particularly their commitment to restitution of land rights to dispossessed communities. Thus, the scandal is ecumenical and affects all the so-called mainline churches.

According to Van Donk, the church ecumenical cannot avoid involvement in efforts to address the land question in the South African context (Van Donk 1994:1). At different levels, the land directly affects the church as a

landowning institution. It also affects the church, precisely because the landless, the land-hungry and the dispossessed are members of churches (Van Donk 1994). The landowners are also members of the church and in some cases, the church itself is the landowner, as it is the case with Bethany Farm 610, which the Lutheran Church sold without any consultation with the communities that submitted the claim and those that successfully claimed a portion of the farm. Therefore, the church cannot afford to absolve itself of responsibilities regarding the debate around land and around Christian activism in view of facilitating land reform processes and possibly mediating between various parties that may be in conflict because of the land question. However, this facilitating and mediating role becomes compromised in some cases,

- In the case that the church is a landowner that is silent amid the debates about land reform and about expropriation of land without compensation.
- In the case that the church itself as the landowner continues to perpetuate dispossession by selling its land without any reference or consultation with the communities on church land and communities that have submitted claims such as it is the case with ELCSA and the land claiming communities of Bethany; and
- In the case that the church pretends that landownership and land reform are not its business. As indicated earlier, if the church is not a landowner, most of the stakeholders are part of the church, be they landowners, the land-hungry and the landless and be they the dispossessed and land claimants.

The church must re-examine itself at various levels, namely,

- Re-examine its present land ownership and critically reflect on how it makes use of that land and what its relationship is with the people living on church land. In the case that a church is a landowner, can the church make its land available to address landlessness, land hunger and demands of restitution? Land ownership by the church presents the church with both the responsibility and potential to become directly involved in issues of major social relevance.
- As it re-examines itself the church must develop a healthy theology

of land, even in cases where the church is not a landowner, as all stakeholders in land reform and in the cry for land are members of churches.

- Re-examine its mediating and facilitating role and possibly work out models of development that can set an example for other land-owning institutions and individual owners (cf. Van Donk 1994:19); The church's role must be a humanizing role that reverses the dehumanization that happened when people were dehumanised by dispossession and impoverishment.
- Re-examine itself as the representation of God in the world of strive and suffering, as it has a vital role to play in conflicts that arise over land (Van Donk 1994:20). According to Van Donk (1994:20) the church must attempt to be a mediator in land disputes, particularly when people become blind to the needs of others and deaf to the cry and demands of others; and
- As the church re-examines itself, the church must look at ways of working together with stakeholders such as relevant government department, civil society organisations and organized labour, commercial farmers and others in find solutions to the land questions in South Africa.

As it re-examines itself the church must be able to repent and to make a metanoia, to make a U-turn and return to the Road to Rustenburg, where the church looked at itself, re-examined itself and made a commitment to working with other stakeholders in contributing to making the new South Africa a better place for all. The church must get out of its scandalous journey of not caring for the dispossessed and the impoverished and the dehumanized. If not, the church is risking suffering serious reputational damage.

In the author's second letter to the Lutheran Church (ELCSA) Buffel (2018) states,

> Being too technical and legalistic about the matter will not help. The church may win the legal battle, but that will be tantamount to a declaration of war against its own members and against the dispossessed, the poor and the oppressed that we will not win and this will forever tarnish the image of the church and leadership with struggle credentials.

Buffel continues and says,

> It is for that reason that I plead with you to find it in your hearts and in your collective consciences to consider dealing with the matter differently (Buffel 2018).

Sadly, the church did not listen to the author and to the leadership of the community and proceeded with the sale and with its failure to re-examine itself and to recommit itself as churches did at Rustenburg in 1990. The Lutheran Church, like many other churches referred to as the mainline churches, remains disturbingly silent in the amid the raging debate on land and expropriation of land without compensation. Not only that; it even disposes of land without consulting communities and despite their pleas. That is a big scandal amid the big debates about land.

Conclusion

The paper raises some serious concerns about the raging debate on land and expropriation of land without compensation. It argues that it is not only the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches that are bringing the church into disrepute but even the so-called mainline churches. A concrete illustration of this is found in the disturbing silence of the churches with regards to land reform and expropriation of land without compensation, notwithstanding the commitments that the churches, including the Lutheran Church (ELCSA) made in Rustenburg when they came up with the Rustenburg Declaration in 1990. The Lutheran Church and other churches are missing an opportunity to make the church relevant and to set an example for the rest of society on how to deal with land in a way that is helping to redress the injustices of the past and in ways that are helping to make contributions to the humanization of society. The church, Lutheran and ecumenical movements, must re-examine its landownership, its disturbing silence and complicity regarding ongoing injustices that perpetuate dispossession, impoverishment and dehumanisation. The church has no choice but to develop a healthy theology of land and to find ways of contributing to the humanisation of our society so that the church can be truthful to its nature as a caring and compassionate institution, that does not exist for itself but for others.

References

Alberts, L. & F. Chikane 1991. *The Road to Rustenburg: The Church Looking Forward to a New South Africa.* Cape Town: Struik Christian Books.

Anderson, A. 2005. New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 35, 1, February: 66 – 92. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1581661?seq=1 / https://doi.org/10.1163/1570066052995843 (Accessed on 16 December 2020.)

Berlin Mission Society 2013. History Online. http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/berlin_mission_society (Accessed on 07 April 2013.)

Buffel, O.A. 2015. A Journey of the People of Bethany Marked by Dis-possession, Struggle for Return of Land and Continued Impoverishment: A Case Study of Land Reform that has not Yet Reduced Poverty. *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 41,2: 131 – 144. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/102;

Buffel, O.A. 2018a. The First Letter to the Leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Unpublished letter).

Buffel, O.A. 2018b. The Second Letter to the Leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Unpublished letter).

Buffel, O.A. 2018. The Church as a Caring and Humanising Community in the Context of Xenophobic/ Afrophobic Attacks against Migrants. In Mashau, T.D. (ed.): *Standing where God Stands.* Pretoria: Unisa Press.

Bundy, C. 1990. Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa. In Murray, C. & C. O'Regan (eds.): *No Place to Rest: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

Department of Land Affairs 1998. *White Paper on the South African Land Policy.* Pretoria: Department of Land Affairs. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201411/whitepaperlandreform.pdf (Accessed on 30 June 2018.)

Desmond, C. 1971. *The Discarded People.* Braamfontein: Christian Institute.

ELCSA Church Council Meeting Minutes No. 145. 2019. Held from 28 to 31 July 2019. Outlook Safari Lodge, Lakeside, Kempton Park.

Hall, R. 2007. Transforming Rural South Africa? Taking Stock of Land Reform. In Ntsebeza, L. & R. Hall (eds.): *The Land Question in South*

Africa. Cape Town: HSRC.

Hebinck, P. 2013. Land and Agrarian Reform Policies from a Historical Perspective. In Hebinck, P. & B. Cousins (eds.): *In the Shadow of Policy: Everyday Practices in South African Land and Agrarian Reform.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press. https://doi.org/10.18772/22013107458 (Accessed on 20 March 2018.)

Kgatle, M. 2017. The Unusual Practices within some Neo-Pentecostal Churches. *HTS Theological Studies* 73,3: 2, a4656. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656; https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4656 (Accessed on 16 December 2020.)

Madjera, M. 1992. The Land Issue in South Africa: Case Studies (ELCSA). In Conradie, E.M., D.E. de Villiers & J. Kinghorn (eds.): *Church and Land: Working Documents on the Post-apartheid Economy.* Stellenbosch: SU.

Mapadimeng, M.S. 2020. Pentecostalism and Charismatic Christianity in South Africa. *Global Dialogue: Magazine of the International Sociological Association* 9,2. https://globaldialogue.isa-sociology.org/pentecostalism-and-charismatic-christianity-in-south-africa/ (Accessed on 16 December 2020.)

Noordman, A. 2018. Email Correspondence to Mr. K.L. Sebeela. (Unpublished email correspondence dated 27 February 2018.)

Noorman, A. Letter from Mr. A. Noordman to Members of the Bethany Communal Property Association 21 September 2018. (Unpublished letter.)

Ntsebeza, L. 2007. Land Redistribution in South Africa: The Property Clause Revisited. In Ntsebeza, L. & R. Hall (eds.): *The Land Question in South Africa.* Cape Town: HSRC.

Offer to Purchase (Agreement) between AAA Boerdery and ELCSA. (Dated 20 September 2018.)

Pakendorf, G. 2013. A Brief History of the Berlin Mission Society. http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/10.111 (Accessed on 06 April 2013.)

Plaatje, S. 2007. *Native Life in South Africa.* Northlands: Picador Africa.

Rugege, S. 2004. Land Reform in South Africa: An Overview. International Journal Legal Information 283: 1 – 28. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0731126500004145

(Accessed on 22 March 2019.)
Saayman, W. 1991. *Christian Mission in South Africa: Political and Ecumenical.* Pretoria: Unisa.
Saayman, W. 2007. *Being Missionary, Being Human: An Overview of Dutch Reformed Mission.* Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.
Schoeman, K. (ed.). 1985. *Die Huis van die Armes: Die Berlynse Sendinggenootskap in die OVS, 1833 - 1869.* Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau.
Sebeela, K.L. 2018. Email Correspondence to Noordman Attorneys. (Unpublished email correspondence dated 22 February 2018.)
Sebeela, K.L. 2018. Letter from Mr. Sebeela to Ms. Nomfundo Gobodo, the Chief Land Claims Commissioner (dated 2 July-2018).
Twala, C.T. 2007. Bethany Mission Station: The First Successful Land Claims in the Free State. *Journal of Contemporary History* 32,1: 1 – 14.
Van Aswegen, H.J. 1993. Die Grensverhouding in die Noordwestelike Transgariep: Die Lotgevalle van die Kora tot 1858. *Contree* 33. https://estatedocbox.com/Architects/78709883-Die-kora-in-transgariep-1840-contree-33.html (Accessed on 17 December 2020.)
Van Donk, M. 1991. *Land and the Church: The Case of the Dutch Reformed Churches. No 1.* Cape Town: Western Cape Provincial Council of Churches.
Vila-Vicencio, C. 1988. *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of English-Speaking Churches.* Orbis Books.

Olehile A. Buffel
Professor of Practical Theology
Department of Philosophy, Practical Theology and Systematic Theology
University of South Africa
Pretoria
Buffeoa@unisa.ac.za

Contributors

Thinandavha Derrick Mashau is a Professor of Missiology and Chair of the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He holds a PhD in Missiology from North West University. His research areas include missiological studies, urban missions and ministry, and African theology. He is a National Research Foundation C-2 rated scholar who has supervised 11 masters and 15 doctoral students to completion. He currently serving as a General Secretary of the Southern Africa Missiological Society (SAMS) and the Deputy President of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS). Contact details: mashatd@unisa.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9914=8982

Christof Sauer is Professor for Religious Freedom and Research on Persecution of Christians at Freie Theologische Hochschule Giessen in Germany, as well as visiting Professor of Religious Studies and Missiology at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven in Belgium. He is co-founder and co-director of the International Institute for Religious Freedom (Bonn – Cape Town – Colombo – Brussels/Geneva – Brasilia) and Professor extraordinary at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He lived in Cape Town, South Africa for 20 years and currently resides near Giessen, Germany. He did his DTh in Missiology at Unisa and a post-doc "habilitation" in Intercultural Theology and Mission Studies at the Protestant University Wuppertal/ Bethel, Germany. Contact details: christofsauer@icloud.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4976-7574

Georgia du Plessis worked as lecturer and researcher at the University of the Free State. Here she also completed her Masters degree in law. In 2014, she obtained a scholarship to do her PhD at the University of Antwerp in Belgium, specializing in human rights and the right to freedom of religion or belief. After the completion of her PhD, she worked as postdoctoral researcher at KU Leuven. She is currently a research fellow at the University of Antwerp and the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Belgium, as well as the University of the Free State in South Africa. Contact details: georgia.myburgh@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4149-9058

Contributors

Zuze J Banda is a senior lecturer in the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, teaching Missiology. He specialises in inter-cultural communication of the gospel. He holds Masters (cum laude) and Doctoral degrees in Missiology. His research interests are in communication of the gospel through TV, Mass Media and Internet broadcasting, African Renaissance, Gender-based violence, and is currently venturing in engaged scholarship with keen interest in food security and community dialogues. He is a member of Southern African Missiological Society and Church History Society of Southern Africa. Contact details: Bandazj@unisa.ac.za and zuze.j.banda@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2431-1087

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle is a Professor at the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology, University of South Africa, and a National Research Foundation (NRF) Y-Rated researcher (2019-2024) in African Pentecostalism. He has published more than 50 peer-reviewed articles and 6 books in the same field. He is the visiting scholar at the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies University of Birmingham and Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford (2020-2023). He is the founding President of the Southern African Society for Pentecostal Studies. Contact details: kgatls@unisa.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9556-6597

Ntokozo Mthembu was an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of South Africa, before his untimely death. He has served as the Acting Chair of the Department of Sociology, University of South Africa when requested to serve by the College of Human Sciences. Previously, he was affiliated to the Centre for Civil Society and as a lecturer of Sociology at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus in Durban. He holds a Doctor of Literature and Philosophy – Sociology degree – University of South Africa. His research niche ranged from young people, pedagogy, andragogy, survival, livelihoods, indigenous knowledge systems and African ethics and presently engaged in the studies that include the introduction of African centered research analytical framework and the survival strategies of the indigenous medical practitioners – *izinyanga*. He has published a number of articles and books in various reputable publications. In 2019, he has been nominated and awarded the Honorary Doctoral Degree by the London Graduate School – Commonwealth University.

Phillip Musoni is a Research fellow at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology and a senior lecturer at the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU). His PhD was conferred by the University of Pretoria on 06 April 2017, and has published articles and book chapters on various topics including Religion and sustainable development; Religion and gender in selected traditions; Religion and the Zimbabwean politics; and Religion and contemporary ethical/ health issues. In this collection, Musoni's contribution focuses on Religion and gullibility looking at how new Zimbabwean Pentecostal church leaders ride on literal interpretation of scriptures and African cultures described as the 'enchanted worldview' to manipulate the masses. Contact details: mphil2020@gmail.com or emusonp@unisa.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4597-8526

Olehile A. Buffel is a Professor of Practical Theology at Unisa in the Department of Philosophy, Practical Theology and Systematic Theology. He previously taught at the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Lutheran Theological Institute (LTI). His teaching areas include pastoral care and counselling, homiletics, liturgy and Christian leadership. His current research interests include pastoral care in a context of poverty and Covid-19, interface between theology and psychology, human sexuality, marriage guidance and counselling and black theology of liberation. He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Theologia Viatorum*. Contact details: Bufffeoa@unisa.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2895-1997

❋❋❋❋❋❋❋❋❋

***Alter*nation Special Edition 38a, 2021**
Print ISSN 1023-1757; Electronic ISSN 2519-5476

Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa

ARTICLES

PRINT CONNECTION Tel (031) 202-7766; 202-7766