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

Ntokozo Mthembu

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 Enlighten-ment 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 geogra-phically and historically came into contact with one another, where the deve-lopment 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 else-where 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, coloni-alism, 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 (ተዋህዶ), 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 corner-stone 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 arrange-ments 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