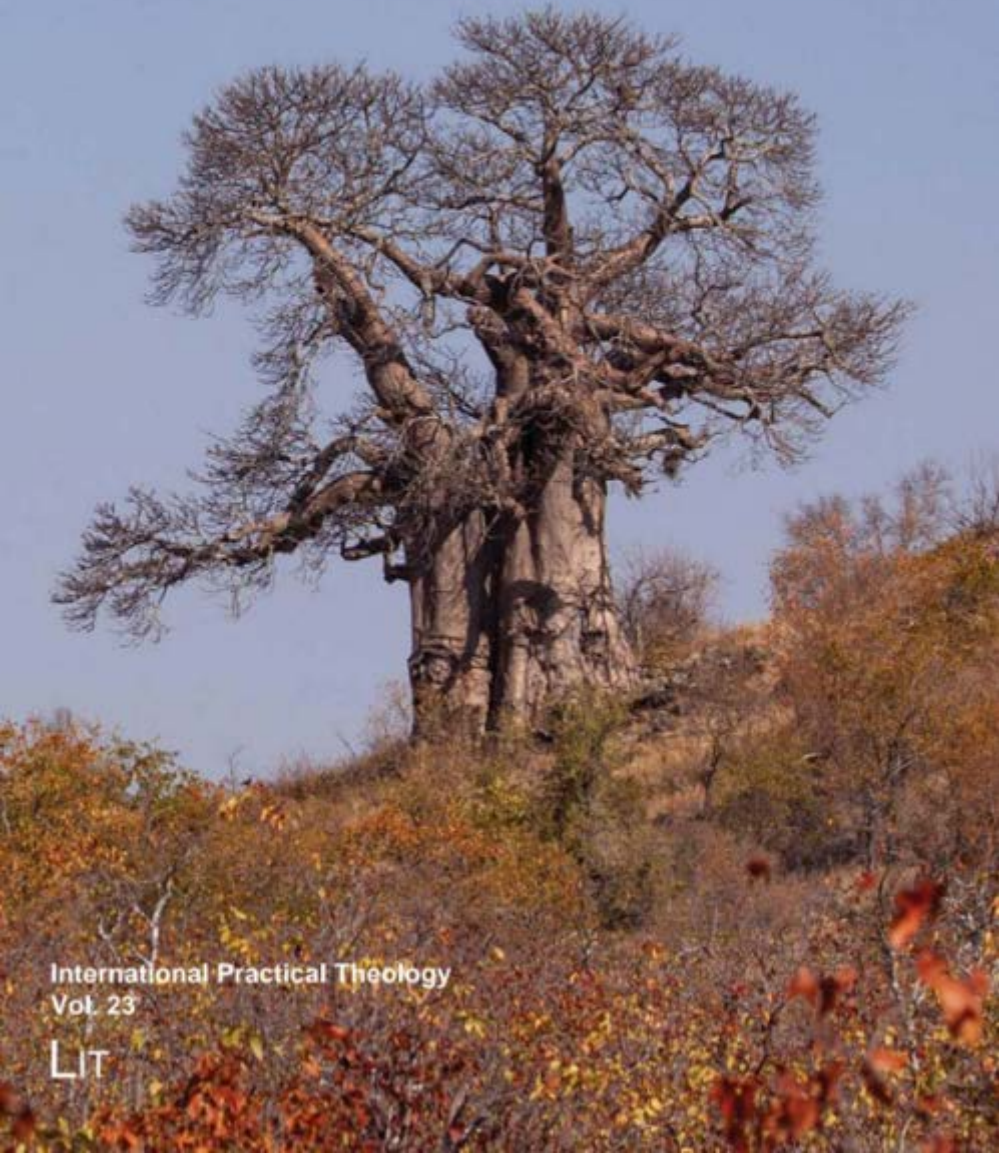
Chris A. M. Hermans & Jan-Albert van den Berg (Eds.)

Battle for the heart

How (not) to transform church and society



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Contents

Foreword

Rantoa Letšosa

'A battle for the heart' – which heart and what battle would be the first question that comes to mind when dealing with this kind of topic. This phrase is immediately followed by another – 'how (not) to transform society', which also a challenge on its own. The topic can be viewed from two perspectives: the first focusing on the battle and the second focusing on how to or not to transform society. What impact would the unprecedented pandemic that led to a state of emergency have on the topic? Perhaps a call for a more serious battle for the heart; a state of restlessness for the heart. Nevertheless, there would also be a call on the how (not) to transform – and this in a situation where society is transforming itself, due to the pandemic. It appears that the heart might be faced with a totally different battle of how to deal with the self-transformation of society. In order to determine which heart and what battle, it would be appropriate to define 'heart' from a theological perspective. According to Proverbs 4:23, the heart, as the core, makes and identifies the person. Character, personality, will, and mind are modern terms that all reflect something of the meaning of 'heart' in its biblical usage.[1] The *Baker Encyclopedia* makes use of four categories to describe the heart. The first is the physical heart as a vital bodily organ, which is, however, not prominently referred to as such in the Bible. In this context, it can be affected by food and wine, it can faint, and it can tremble. Metaphorically, it can refer to the centre of everything. The reference to heart occurs approximately a thousand times in both the Old and the New Testament, often disguised in translation, with a considerable range of meanings. The second category is the religious heart, which is viewed as the mystery through which the hidden self is fully known to God, the seat of our knowledge of God, the state that governs the vision of God, and from which one speaks to God, as well as a locus of divine indwelling. The third category is the psychological heart that, among others, perceives, understands, debates, reflects, remembers, thinks, imagines, is wise or mad, and has technical skill.[2] It is said that an American missionary in Africa, who wanted to translate the English word 'faith' into the local dialect, struggled to find an equivalent. He approached an old sage, himself a fine Christian,

[1] Walker, L.L., 2000. Heart D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers, & A. B. Beck, eds.*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, p.563.
[2] Elwell, W.A. & Beitzel, B.J., 1988. Heart. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1, pp.938–939.

to help render the needed word into understandable language. After studying the concept, the guru finally responded: "Does it not mean to hear with the heart?"[3]

In the words of Owen: "The heart in Scripture is variously used, sometimes for the mind and understanding, sometimes for the will, sometimes for the affections, sometimes for the conscience and, sometimes for the whole soul. Generally, it denotes the whole soul of man and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing of good and evil."[4]

It is thus clear that, in dealing with this particular topic, 'heart' would mainly refer to the psychological heart. That is the intellectual and technical heart, a heart that, among other things, thinks, perceives, and debates. Due to the nature of this heart, it is already in a battle, because of what it is capable of accomplishing. It is a hard-working marvel that can keep on beating automatically, even if all other nerves were severed. And what a beat![5] This very heart is not in a fixed mindset, but rather more in a growth mindset, not only focusing on the here and now, but more on tomorrow and then.

It is also essential to look into the meaning of the concept 'to transform' or 'transformation'. The *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* views transformation as an inward renewal and reshaping of the mind whereby a Christian's inner person is changed into the likeness of Christ, as in Romans 12:2. It is not instantaneous, but it happens gradually. The Greek concept implies a change from one state to another, which is contrary to conforming/appearance. Ephesians 3:21 reads "who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself". As one's Christian life progresses, one should gradually notice that one's thought life is being changed from Christlessness to Christlikeness. Transformation does not happen overnight – regeneration is instantaneous, transformation is not. Christians are transformed into Christ's image gradually as they spend time beholding him in intimate fellowship. Eventually, they will begin to mirror the one they behold. Paul refers to this when he mentions that we are all, with unveiled face, mirroring the glory of the Lord, being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another, even as from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). This is not a result of mere conscious imitation, but of spiritual communion with the Lord. The result will be beyond our expectations. John aptly states: "We cannot even imagine what we will be like when Christ returns. But we do know that

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[3] Jones, G.C., 1986. *1000 illustrations for preaching and teaching*, Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
[4] Orr, J. ed., 1999. *The International standard Bible encyclopedia: 1915 edition*.
[5] Tan, P.L., 1996. *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

when He comes, we will be like him, for we will see him as He really is." (1 Jn 3:2).

This publication aims to examine, from a practical theological perspective, how transformation should or should not take place within society, which is beyond only within the inner self, but how society should undergo a radical change, especially within the context of the immediate challenges facing society, but this is not only as a presentation of facts, but as a battle for the heart. May the reader find joy in reading this. May he/she also be touched, enriched and transformed.

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Introduction

Chris Hermans & Jan-Albert van den Berg

There is a trend in theology (for example, in the works of Jamie Smith in the USA and of Herman Paul in The Netherlands) to describe the battle of the heart as the core problem of the Christian religion in modern culture and, more specifically, the Christian churches. According to Augustine, the economy of the heart prevails for human beings; in other words, the complex mixture of longings are the driving forces of human lives. This longing is not an intellectual puzzle, but rather a craving for sustenance (see Ps. 42:1-2). The heart is the location of the teleological orientation towards the good life. For Augustine, this teleological aspect is coupled with the fundamental centrality of love: What we love, is where our heart is. We do not love God as our creator and sustainer of the world, but our love is oriented towards the world and manifested in individualism, narcissism, materialism, nationalism, and terrorism.

The notion that emerges from this central orientation to so many aspects of the existential foundation of human existence provides sufficient motivation for further academic reflection. For this research project, academic reflection occurs against the background of the 40th birthday celebrations of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. In this 40th year of the Faculty's existence, we can indeed reflect on various "battles of the heart" that form part of the history of this special institution. As organisers of the project, the Department of Practical and Missional Theology, University of the Free State, deemed it fit to facilitate further reflection and discourse on the "battle of the heart" within this context. The Faculty of Theology and Religion is honoured to have Profs. Chris Hermans and Stephan Joubert associated as extraordinary professors with the Department of Practical and Missional Theology. Both Profs. Hermans and Joubert were requested to deliver introductory papers to the research conference. Interlocutors from various Departments in the Faculty, from other theological faculties in South Africa, and one colleague from another associated discipline were invited to participate in the prestige research conference that took place on 26 February 2020 in Bloemfontein.[1] The initial papers presented at this conference were later extensively adapted, further developed and edited for this publication by the authors.

[1] The research contributions in this volume were facilitated prior to the Corona pandemic in South Africa and reflections hereon are thus not part of the volume. The perspectives in the contributions are however still significant for post-Covid contexts.

The research problem at the core of the conference, the papers that were further developed and the resultant publication can be summarised as follows. If the heart is the location of the problem, then the transformation of the heart is the answer to the problem. This may lead to the key question as to "how (not) to transform the heart".

The assumption that there is not "only a battle for the heart, but also a battle in the heart" facilitates a number of research questions with the focus on the following aspects.

Where are the authentic voices of leaders who can change the heart? How to mend a 'broken' heart? How to transform congregations towards inclusion of difference? Can we embrace the dignity of difference as attitudes that enable transformation of church and society? Can we learn to feel, think and act differently from the mimetic imagination of the way in which God acts? Some seek transformation in the love for God, while others seek transformation by God of restored human capabilities to change the world. Others view transformation as emerging in the interaction between religions.

On the basis of all these questions, this volume maps different voices on the "battle for the heart" and transformation from an African perspective. The contributions locate the battle for the heart and transformation of society and church in the context of the ethnic divided, multi-religious, socio-economic differences of Africa.

The volume starts with two chapters that conceptually map the territory of the battle of the heart and transformation. The first chapter by Prof. Hermans maps the territory of the human heart, where spiritual and felt processes interpenetrate each other. Transformation is defined from an eschatology of restored capacities. The second chapter by Prof. Joubert maps a biblical-exegetical understanding of the heart of God and the transformation of the human heart by a mimetic process. Both chapters set the conceptual frame of the topic of the book.

The central topic in this volume is approached from different disciplinary perspectives in theology, notably practical theology, missiology, congregational studies, biblical-exegetical, leadership theory, and from developmental sociology as a "critical friend" in the issue of transformation of society.

The contributions in this volume are organised in four topics. The first part of this book introduces the main concept of the human heart as a feeling for the absolute or transcendent, and the heart of God as mimetic compass for a way of living in church and society. The second part connects transformation of church and society to listening to the heart of others. The authors illustrate that real transformation can emerge from listening to the heart of others. The third part centres around leadership and transformation of the heart. There is no transformation in society or church without a transformation of the heart of leaders.

The final part focuses on the topic of diversity and voices of transformation. The contribution draws attention to different manifestations of diversity (economic, social, or religious) and analyses the possibility of change through voices of transformation.

In the first contribution, *Battle for/in the heart: How (not) to transform the heart*, Prof. Chris Hermans defines the human heart as the interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes. The human soul is a finite spirit, but with an appetite for the absolute. Hermans defines transformation of the heart as an eschatological transformation of restored capabilities.

In *Feeling, seeing and acting differently: The emotional disposition and actions of God in Luke 15:20 as a mimetic compass for the contemporary church*, Prof. Stephan Joubert focuses on the heart as the centre of emotions. On the basis of the well-known parable of the lost son in Luke 15, the author surprisingly indicates how God's heart should influence the emotions of the people in the church.

In a further development, in which biblical text-hermeneutical perspectives are translated for daily life, Prof. Yolanda Dreyer asks: *"How can you mend a 'broken heart?'": A good life for the church in the time that remains.* Based on interdisciplinary perspectives, the author argues for the correct interventions and procedures to repair a broken heart.

As part of the pastoral nuance in the debate, Prof. Vhumani Magezi provides, in *From the heart to the public? Towards conceptualisation, definition and framework of public pastoral care to foster community healing, peace and transformation*, markers of how the individual heart can also beat in rhythm with others, in order to shift the focus from the heart and inner soul, contemplation and intrapsychic matters to addressing important public issues.

In *A change of heart – The transformation of a multicultural congregation*, Dr. Nico Mostert and Prof. Kobus Schoeman show that a change of heart towards a more desired practice of being a multicultural congregation is possible, if the social actors are willing to engage in contact and in a different way of being together in a historically divided country.

In *Congregational leadership through imitation and persuasive speech as key drivers for transforming congregations and society*, Drs. Eugene Baron and Joseph Pali provide important perspectives on how the good heart's embodiment in leadership can lead to the transformation of both the congregation and the community.

Following the perspectives of the New Testament, Dr. Lodewyk Sutton, in *The heart of leadership: The shape and shaping of the king in the Psalter*, provides, from an Old Testament point of view, insight into the heart of leadership and how this can facilitate change in both the church and the community.

In *Communities, government and the church: Who has the authentic voice to change the heart?*, Dr. Thomas Resane evaluates the power of the voices of communities in South Africa, the usual responses of the government, and the unheard voice of the church. The church's voice seems to be absent to echo her authority to change the hearts of discontented masses, corrupt government, and above all to correct herself by not being parochial, but by political activism to normalise the situation. It is argued that the voice of the church is authentic, despite her failures to vocalise justice amid chaos.

In line with this, the sociologist Prof. Lucius Botes, in *Embracing the dignity of difference in South Africa: Possibilitators for opening up church and society*, confirms that diversity is a key actuality in contemporary South Africa. The "battle of/for the heart" can only be waged significantly, if true transformation occurs by way of continued human development.

The challenge of diversity also lies in religious intersections expressed in traditions and rituals. Dr. Joel Mokhoathi's contribution *Conflicting spiritualities or transforming religions? Religious intersections at Mantsopa Cave in Modderpoort* views religious intersections as spaces of transformation of the heart. Do the religious intersections that occur at Modderpoort imply spiritual conflicts or symbolise religious hybridity, as an intentional borrowing from one religious or cultural tradition to another?

The Boabab tree (scientific name: *Adansonia Digitata)*, also known as the "upside-down tree" because of its unique appearance is typical of the natural beauty of Africa. Traditionally, it is the symbol of knowledge and wisdom that is anchored deep in the heart of the continent of Africa. In 2020, this tree was earmarked as one of the trees of the year in South Africa. In that year, in which the Corona pandemic drastically changed the world, the baobab tree on the front cover of the publication personifies not only a deep contextual interwovenness with Africa, but also the changed world in which we live and to which this publication endeavours to make a contribution. The nature of the volume is, indeed, as symbolised in the photo on the front cover, organically and deeply contextually anchored. Perspectives from the Bible, philosophy, sociology and other sciences confirm that the search for organic and contextual transformation ought to be interpreted as a dynamic, growing characteristic.

The research presented in this volume, *A battle for the heart. How (not) to transform church and society*, is not aimed at providing definite perspectives on this topic, but rather at unlocking horizons and vistas for further reflection by the reader. In that way, the continuing and never-ending "battle for the heart" will, indeed, make a positive contribution to both the church and the community.

Chapter 1
Battle for/in the heart: How (not) to transform the heart

Chris Hermans[1]

1.1 Introduction

The title of this essay is inspired by a book written by Herman Paul, Dutch Professor of Secularisation Studies at the University of Groningen. In 2017, he published a book titled *The battle for the heart. On secularisation of desire*.[2] The Dutch word '*verlangen*' can be translated as 'desire', 'longing', or 'passion'. What surprised me is that a theologian, well versed in the reformed tradition, would write about desire and longing as a core element of faith. The book is already in its fourth print run (as of October 2019), and the author is asked to present his ideas at multiple meetings, specifically of reformed orthodox congregations and organisations. I wondered: Why has there been such a strong response among members of reformed orthodox communities? Why the heart? Why battle? And what would be the role of desire in the Christian faith?

Another author in the same reformed tradition in theology, Jamie Smith (2013; 2016; 2017) (Calvin College, United States of America), and writing on the same topic using the same concepts as Paul, also received a strong response. Smith's work came to my attention because many theologians in the Dutch Reformed church in South Africa, seeking renewal and revitalisation in church life, mentioned his work to me.

My reason to reflect on the battle for/in the heart is the need to rethink theology from the concepts of 'contingency', 'free will', and the priority of 'possibility'. Why? Such concepts indicate a change in human self-understanding and self-realisation (Hermans 2019a; 2019b; 2019c). If the heart is a battlefield, we must presume contingency, free will and possibility. We need them, in order to understand the transcendental openness of human beings and the affective fallibility of the heart (see section 3).

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[2] Published in Dutch as *De slag om het hart. Over secularisatie van verlangen* (Paul 2017).

In the first section of this essay, I endeavour to understand what is at stake, according to both authors, and what transformation they suggest in both church life and society. Next, I map the territory of the heart (or affective intentionality), as developed by Stephan Strasser.[3] The reason for this theoretical journey is to critically evaluate what is written in the literature mentioned above on desire, longing, passion, the heart, and related concepts. In his foreword to Strasser's book, Paul Ricoeur (1977:xiii) mentions two major problems in the field of philosophy of affections (feeling), namely oversimplification and confusion. Oversimplification is a problem, because authors neglect the hierarchical conception of feelings having different levels and miss the rootedness of the higher feelings in the vital feelings. The result is that the higher feelings are unrelated to the rest of human life. Confusion is a problem, because the authors use terms such as 'emotion', 'longing', and 'passion' in a vague manner and fail to note the differences of meaning in the field of feeling.

Why choose the work of Strasser as a theoretical frame to map the field of the heart? Compared to a phenomenology of cognition or action, there are not so many theories of the affective domain. Strasser is regarded as one of the best works on the philosophy of the heart (Tallon 1992:342; Ricoeur 1960:15, 123-124, 162-163).

In the last section, I first place the battle of the heart in the frame of contingency, free will and possibility. I use the notion of eschatology of restored capability to evaluate the need for transformation of the heart in connection with affective fallibility (see section 3). Then I evaluate the ideas of Paul and Smith from Strasser's map of affective intentionality. What is the battle *in* the heart, and the battle *for* the heart? How to transform the heart? What role can practices play in transformation? In what direction can transformation go?

1.2 The battle for/in the heart: problem and solution

In this section, I refer to two authors (Jamie Smith and Herman Paul), who describe the battle of the heart as the core problem of the Christian religion in modern culture, and, more specifically, to the Christian churches. If the heart is the location of the problem, the transformation of the heart is the answer to the

[3] Stephan Strasser was born in Vienna (Austria) in 1905 and died in Nijmegen, The Netherlands, in 1991. He fled from Austria to Belgium before World War II because of his Hungarian-Jewish background. From 1942 to 1947, he worked at the Husserl archive in Leuven, Belgium, and from 1947 to 1975, at the University of Nijmegen. His *Das Gemüt* was published in 1956. In this article, I refer to the English translation by Strasser 1977.

problem. I use both authors as protagonists of this chapter, without analysing the differences between them.[4]

First, what is dominant for human beings is not the will, thinking, feeling or acting, but the economy of the heart; in other words, the complex mixture of longings that are the driving forces of human lives (Paul 2017:11). In the Augustinian tradition, feeling precedes thinking and acting (Smith 2016:7). The longing that Augustine describes is not so much curiosity as hunger – less like an intellectual puzzle to be solved, and more like a craving for sustenance (see Ps. 42:1-2) (Smith 2016:8). A second theme Smith (2016:6) derives from Augustine is the location of the teleological orientation towards the good life in the heart. This teleological aspect, coupled with the fundamental centrality of love, generates Augustine's third insight: because we are made to love the One who made and who loves us – "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19) – we will find 'rest' when our loves are rightly ordered to this ultimate end (Smith 2016:19).

Secondly, according to Augustine, the *saeculum* is defined as the time between the fall and the end of time.

> The secular is that which belongs to this age and will have no part in the age to come, when Christ's kingship will hold universal sway (Paul 2017:43).

Secularisation is a form of eschatological oblivion. The church must remain focused on the end of her pilgrimage.

> God alone is the end of the desire and that entails that there is no finality, no closure, no settled or intrinsic meaning in the world we inhabit (Paul 2017:31).

Whatever happens before the eschaton, according to Paul, has no other goal than to direct our longing to God. Smith (2017:14) gives a more positive role to public institutions of society,[5] as he perceives them to have a religious force, because they aim to shape our loves. He contests the idea that public institutions are merely about the 'penultimate' truth of the secular and have no hold on the ultimate of the kingdom to come. Smith (2017:34) wants our eschatological orientation of the kingdom to transform the vision of human flourishing that informs our public institutions.

Thirdly, the battle is not only *in* the heart; there is also a battle *for* the heart. The longings of the heart are susceptible to manipulation, often without

[4] James Smith is a prolific author who has written many books on this topic recently (2013; 2016; 2017).

[5] By 'more positive', I refer to Smith's idea that public institutions have a role in the kingdom to come, to the degree that they are transparent to, or participate in the kingdom to come.

the subjects being aware thereof. This manipulation can come from examples given by others, promises of reward, or the prospect of gratification (Paul 2017:40). The battle *for* the heart takes place in practices whereby human beings acquire conflicting habits.

> Our inclinations to construe and constitute the world are themselves habits – dispositional inclinations to perceive the world in a certain way, against the background of a specific horizon (Smith 2013:57).
>
> So, in the practices of the shopping mall we acquire the consumer habit of a dispositional inclination to seek the gratification of buying products (Smith 2016:21).

Fourthly, the battle for/in the heart is a battle between contradicting voices. People seek satisfaction in these worldly goals, to which Augustine refers as 'needs' or *concupicientia* (Paul 2017:40-41). There is a resonance between the *telos* of human flourishing, to which we are oriented, and the longings and desires that propel us in that direction.

> Our desires have been captivated by rival visions of flourishing. And that happens through practices, not propaganda. Our desires are caught more than they are taught. All kinds of cultural rhythms and routines are, in fact, rituals that function as pedagogies of desire precisely because they tacitly and covertly train us to love a certain version of the kingdom, teach us to long for some rendition of the good life (Smith 2016:29).

Fifthly, the core question is: What is the direction of our desire? The desire for God has a source that is other than that of worldly desires; in other words, the desire comes from God. The heart of the Christian creed is that only God is *in control*. People who want to be *in charge* place themselves in the centre of the world (Paul 2017:79). Transformation of the heart, then, is

> to want what God wants, to desire what God desires, to hunger and thirst after God and crave a world where he is all in all – a vision encapsulated by the shorthand 'the kingdom of God' (Smith 2016:2).

Sixthly, transformation of the heart demands a pedagogy of the heart: a Christian character formation in the form of a formation of virtuousness grounded on the image of the kingdom come. Smith (2016: 137) defines 'liturgy' in terms of formative rituals of ultimacy that tap into our imaginative core:

> Such liturgies are pedagogies of desire that shape our love because they picture the good life for us in ways that resonate with our imaginative nature.

1.3 Mapping the territory of the heart

I would like to start with a definition of the coming-into-being of man from the perspective of the concept of the 'heart'. I take this definition from Wood's (1977:26) introduction to Strasser's book:

> The ontogenesis of man is a movement from the life-functions through the phatic level where life first becomes consciousness to the level of the Logos which leads to transcendental openness and self-governance as the end of the process of governed by the soul.

This formulation integrates two important aspects that can be considered the core principles on which Strasser's theory of feeling is grounded.

- First, the idea that there are three different strata or levels involved in this process, namely Bios (the life functions of vitality), Pathos (felt experiences), and Logos (the spiritual life) (Strasser 1977:172). Coming into being must presuppose three levels (Bios, Pathos, Logos), as well as the interaction between these levels. The unity of the levels is to be considered a given, in the actual life of a person, in the stream of becoming human.
- Next, in every intermediate phase of development, the basis is laid for higher forms of becoming conscious and becoming oneself. In the actual genesis of human beings,
- biological life shows itself as the presupposition for the phatic level, and the phatic level shows itself as the maternal culture-medium for the spiritual (Strasser 1977:170).
- The highest form of becoming is defined as the soul, "the bearer of the idea of man as a being which is also spiritual" (Strasser 1977:170). The level of the spirit presupposes the level of Pathos, and the level of Pathos presupposes the level of Bios. Spiritual life is always life that is embodied and felt. But the aim (finis) or ultimate meaning of the development of man is the spiritual life.[6]

In section 1.3.i, I describe that the spiritual lets itself be known in feeling. However, on each level, the interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes is different. The highest level is the level of the spirit, which is the level of possibility and of freedom (1.3.ii).[7] On the level of the spirit, we must distinguish felt modes of readiness from emotions that are more impulse driven. Felt modes of

[6] There are two principles in the ontogenesis of man: the principle of order (for example, the three strata and their unity), and the principle of realisation of meaning (Strasser 1977:170).

[7] This is defined by Wuchterl (2019) in his theory of contingency as the "Other than reason". Because human beings are characterised by contingency, they have transcendental openness to the absolute, the telos of human flourishing.

readiness are characterised by a certain degree of fixity and stability, and by a certain degree of spiritual orientation (1.3.iii). Passions are a felt mode with a high level of stability, the power and intensity to orient a person's life, and a strong transcendent openness (1.3.iv).

1.3.1 The heart as interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes

How do human beings experience their relationship with the world? The elementary foundation of experience is constituted in dispositions and not in perceptions (Strasser 1977:182). Dispositions are felt models of readiness that regulate our directedness towards action and give continuity to existence (Strasser 1977:275). I elaborate on four markers of dispositions, namely concrete, all-encompassing, organic growth, and openness to Being.

There is in dispositions an intimate relationship between spiritual and felt processes. The human being, as *animal rationale,* is marked by embodied feelings and a spiritual desire for the absolute. These elements are interwoven and can become in opposition to each other. The human soul is a finite spirit, but with an appetite for the absolute.[8] In line with this, we can define 'heart' as follows: "the mutual interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes and the configurated whole of human existence that rests upon this interpenetration" (Strasser 1977:199).[9]

The first characteristic of the category of the heart is that it refers to a felt state of mind as being directed to the world. Feeling is not a form of pure subjectivity, but of world relatedness, referring to concrete experiences of I-in-the-world (Strasser 1977:187). For example, the feeling of love is always directed at a concrete object of love: this child, this community, this form of psalm-singing in the church. "Things that have 'grown close to our heart' are no abstract thoughts but individual realities" (Strasser 1977:197).[10]

Secondly, what is apprehended in a disposition is always a supra-personal reality: nature, art, society, nation – in short, "the world" (Strasser 1977:188). A disposition is all-encompassing, such as the disposition of the lover for whom everything appears 'in a rosy light'. A disposition is a feeling for the All which precedes the subject-object dichotomy that our consciousness

[8] "A finite spirit co-naturalised to a horizon we can experience only non-objectively in a desire for the absolute and then can think and will in the substitutes of the heart that we call concepts and will-acts" (Tallon 1992:344-345).

[9] Strasser connects spiritual processes to the notion of Logos and felt processes to Pathos.

[10] Strasser (1977:197-198) adds that "this does not exclude the possibility that ideas can gain power over us through mediation of the individual-concrete, as, for example a flag has power over soldiers".

usually produces. It is a lived experience of I-in-the-world, on the level of a pre-intentional unity of subject and object.

Thirdly, dispositions bind us to 'what has grown to our heart'. It is important to understand this growing into one's innerness as something organic that is not sought, willed or devised (Strasser 1977:198). The binding tie is not the goal of human action, but the dispositional residue accompanying human acts.

Fourthly, in the feelings of oneness of I-in-nature, I-in-society, I-in-the-world, there is also an openness to Being as a region of meaning. Without this openness, there would be no possibility for the human consciousness (Logos) to grasp Being. The disposition of love is, therefore, to be regarded as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the ascending process of understanding love as the meaning of interrelatedness with specific others. The notion of the heart is apt, indicating the interwovenness of dispositions and being disposed to the spiritual. Human beings have an openness to Being as human flourishing, which is reflected in sayings such as 'having a heart', or (negatively) 'being heartless'.

1.3.2 Development of the interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes

The mutual interpenetration of spiritual and felt processes is not similar on different levels of human self-realisation.

On the pre-intentional level, self-realisation is enacted in simple performance, described as "acts that begin in order to end" (Strasser 1977:201). At this level, our feelings govern our acts completely. At the same time, we are conscious of feelings of pleasure or vulnerability. At the beginning of a performance is an impulse of neediness with regard to the pleasure of singing. We seek fulfilment of this need: we start singing, in order to sing. The terminating experience of pleasure brings to rest our impulse to want to sing (Strasser 1977:211).

On the intentional level, the recognition emerges of the possibility of the double value of good and evil in the world. This possibility of double value, the role of spiritual processes in the interplay between 'the spiritual' and 'feeling' increases. The positive or negative impulses connected to the instances of good and evil are primary, while the impulses that grow from the apprehension of concrete situations are secondary. "Felt-responses like hope, resignation, and timidity give the intentional act its peculiarity: selective, adapted to the situation, flexible" (Strasser 1977:226-227).

At the meta-intentional level (level of the Spirit), the felt relationship between good and evil in the lived environment is decisively broken by the capacity to recognise the abstract possibilities of purpose, the ordering of goals

under purpose, and the invention of means related to goals (Strasser 1977:246-247). On this level, we are able to project purposes of completely abstract values such as peace, health, beauty, and truth. How is that possible?

> World is first of all distinguished from environment in that not only the real, but also pure possibilities belong to the World. Such possibilities are not grasped by feeling but are seen by thought. The Logos is indeed, among other things, the possibility of grasping, ordering and fixing abstract connections in concepts and categories, and on that basis, advancing to new insights (Strasser 1977:246).

Seeing possibilities belongs to the field of the level of the Spirit. In the specific human style of willing and planning, the positing of purpose precedes the choice of goals. "As far as the *via inventionis* is concerned, purpose has spiritual priority" (Strasser 1977:249). This subordination of goals to purpose creates an entirely new situation. Now man makes values or goods the primary object of his will-intention, which gives his freedom much room to play. The purpose must be grasped as something to be realised through me (or through us), or else it remains a mere "thought possibility" (Strasser 1977:255). The heart must be involved with some kind of imagining of instances of good and evil that must be brought before our spiritual 'eyes'. "They alone are capable of impulse and turning the thought-structure into a practical ideal" (Strasser 1977:256).

1.3.3 Different felt modes of readiness on the level of the spirit

On the level of the spirit, there are different felt modes of readiness. We need to distinguish them along these two dimensions, namely stability (will the intention last?) and spiritual meaning (what is the good?).

Emotions such as anxiety, fear and despair are characterised by a formless, absolute reaction to a situation, in which a person feels no grip on his or her situation. Imagine a situation in which a person is being threatened or feels the close proximity of imminent death. As long as the person stands 'over against' the situation, he/she can see a way of acting and feels him-/herself capable of attaining his/her goal in a certain way. When a person falls into a fear of death, he/she has lost his/her composure and ability to stand 'over against' the situation. This transgressing behaviour reveals that the person is experiencing something as absolute – for example, the good of being alive, to which a person will cling. Over and against an absolute good, there is no way of acting, and no possibility of selecting a goal. This experience of something absolute shows that man is a being gifted with spirit (Logos). Fascinated by the absolute,

man runs the risk of transgressing the boundaries of behaviour.[11] This breakdown presupposes a knowledge of death, and the breakdown is the price man must pay for this knowledge.

As modes of readiness that can change rather easily, attitudes are related to awareness of changes in the environment; for example, an adolescent changes his/her attitude of responsibility towards his/her learning results in a situation in which teachers allow students to set their own goals and ways of reaching those goals. Convictions may be distinguished from attitudes by their clearly spiritual meaning and less changeable character (Strasser 1977:278). For example, a person may have the conviction that visiting the old and sick is an ethical good act.

Felt modes such as ambition, care, inertia, negligence, and lack of consciousness are neither attitudes nor convictions, but modes of comportment.

> Comportment is a lasting readiness which is experienced in the individual features of behaviour ["*Verhaltens*"], but which permit no direct inferences with respect to spiritual background (beliefs, evaluations, insights (Strasser 1977:278).

The most complex mode of dispositional directedness is basic comportment.

> By basic comportment we understand a structure of attitudes, convictions and modes of comportment which is expressed in a relatively constant readiness for determinate modes of behaviour (Strasser 1977:279).

Examples of modes of basic comportment are the mystical, aesthetic-playful, pleasurable, power-seeking, and adventurous styles of behaviour and experience. In a basic comportment, various dispositional factors of attitude, convictions and modes of comportment interpenetrate and influence each other, and together construct the felt mode of readiness. Another characteristic of a basic comportment is a corresponding world view, which expresses the meaning of the self, the good life with and for others, nature, death, and life.

> What is lastingly experienced as value or disvalue; what is posited as purpose and avoided as danger; what is proclaimed as truth and what is generally not noticed: all this depends upon the ordering structure of inner readiness which we call basic comportment (Strasser 1977:279).

[11] An animal's state of extreme rage in a situation of danger follows the adaptive governance of feeling. The animal adapts its efforts to its goals. This shows that the animal is still '*en route*' and not '*dérouté*' compared to human beings (Strasser 1977:273).

1.3.4 Passion

What do we mean by 'passion'? Passion is a meta-intentional preparedness in the form of a basic comportment. But it is a special kind of basic comportment, namely a transcending comportment.

> Everywhere that a man is engrossed in, one-sidedly refers and absolutizes a certain mode of experience, behaviour and interpretation because through it he intends to possess the meaningful and satisfying as such (Strasser 1977:294).

Human development (see section 3.2) presents itself to man as a development towards more freedom, versatility, and world governance (Strasser 1977:290). There is more freedom on the intentional level than on the pre-intentional level, and there is more freedom on the meta-intentional level than on the intentional level. Our anticipatory presentiment towards the transcendent gives the development of human beings a special stamp.

> It appears to constitute the ideal possibility to be realised, the crown of human becoming. If his spiritual soul is the meaning of his body, directedness to transcendence is the meaning of his spiritual soul (Strasser 1977:291).

What does this 'development towards' mean? "Transcendence is set as a task, but is not a given" (Strasser 1977:291). The condition of man is characterised by freedom,[12] and the price for his/her freedom is the tragic possibility of erring. It is a task for which every man stands alone, with no adequate guarantee against the habits, practices and traditions of his/her fellow man. He/She could take up a contemplative mode of comportment, or a serving mode towards the poor and suffering in society; but all these attempts are no guarantee that the ideal possibility (the transcendent) will be realised as the meaning of life. On the one hand, the human being has a metaphysical neediness that is insatiable. "His neediness is an absolute neediness, his desirousness a universal desirousness, his *amor* an absolute demand for Being" (Strasser 1977:292). On the other hand, he/she is also a being of metaphysical vulnerability. Since man knows of his/her mortality, he/she knows that the fulfilment of his/her *amor* or absolute neediness is beyond the limits of human existence. A residue of ideal possibility will not be realised. What is more, "man stands under a threat which is more fearful than death: that of the lived futility of his existence" (Strasser 1977:292). Human beings are vulnerable to feeling ultimate meaninglessness in their lives, when they know they are deprived of the absolute or meaningful.

Passions are a specific kind of basic transcending comportment.[13] The ideal possibility (transcendence) is felt as the reality of one's life; the perfect

[12] And, as I like to add, contingency and the priority of the possible (Hermans 2019).

[13] A basic transcending awareness can also be expressed in the form of mystical awareness, contemplative reverie, or the playful cultivation of an aesthetic ideology (Strasser

good emerges as actuality of/in the person. And this overwhelming power gives the person an enduring power to transform social life forms and institutions to operate in line with this absolute good.

- Passions are characterised by a transcending mode. They absolutize a region of value which affords fulfilment of life. The absolute (or absolutized) good surpasses everything that man has experienced previously in fullness, perfectness, and value. The affirmation of a region of value is absolute, in the sense that it is affirmed once and for all.
- Passions are marked by a passivity, which refers to an experience of being apprehended, being overpowered, being mastered. When a human being is drawn to the absolute good, he/she can 'respond' in no other way than in the mode of unreserved receptivity. In passions, the felt mode of preparedness manifests as a heightened susceptibility and capacity for being apprehended by the valuable.[14]
- Passions have a life in organising and concentrating power. The behaviour of the passionate man is distinguished by consistency, perseverance, composure, and awareness of goals. One who is passionate is able to dedicate oneself unreservedly to a single thing, in other words, the meaningful and satisfying as such.
- Passionate concentration has an ethical nature, and always has as its object an accustoming of oneself to a definite region of value such as peace, care, sustainability of nature, or love. This region of value emerges in concrete bearers of value, for example when care is manifested in caring for sick people or for migrants. Characteristic of this passionate concentration is a drive towards what is beyond oneself; and this drive manifests itself as "an increase in power …, in the intensity of willing, of preparedness for sacrifice, of the gift of sensitivity for the discovery of means, and, in general, in the productivity of the heart" (Strasser 1977:295).

1.4 How (not) to transform the heart

What do we mean by a transformation of the heart? In line with Strasser's theory of the heart, I define transformation from an eschatology of restored capabilities (section 1.4.ii). Next, I reflect on the ideas of Paul and Smith regarding the battle *in* the heart (section 1.4.iii) and the battle *for* the heart (section 1.4.iv), and evaluate their proposal for transformation. Before taking up the theme of transformation of the heart, I locate the issue of transformation in the specific

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1977:294). An ideology is a form of basic transcending comportment almost opposite to the specific markers of passion.

[14] On the other hand, Strasser (1977: 295) stresses that this 'being apprehended' is always simultaneously a 'letting-oneself-be-apprehended'.

context of South Africa, specifically the unfinished racial reconciliation as perennial challenge to the churches (section 1.4.i).

1.4.1 A contextual African transformation

We cannot 'copy-paste' the work of authors from the United States of America and The Netherlands as remedies for the contextual problems of South Africa. We need to locate transformation in the specific context of South Africa, in order to understand the nature of the battle *for* the heart and *in* the heart. Specifically, we need to focus on whiteness and White churches in South Africa and the issue of racial reconciliation as unfinished case for theology and Christian churches in South Africa. Van der Borght (2009) grasped this issue in a beautiful image: "Sunday morning – The most segregated hour".

> The theology of the church, guided by its creedal confession as being on and catholic, does not know how to account for human social diversity (Van der Borght 2009:5).

The visitors of White churches are blind to see this segregation, for example, the absence of other colours.

> The enforcement of racial segregation during apartheid was aimed not only at regulating public spaces, residential areas and the workforce, but also at shaping the subjectivities of individuals who were socialised to see themselves through the lens of a white racial hierarchy (McEwan & Steyn 2016:1).

One of the reasons why the participants of the Sunday service do not see segregation is because of the language that makes them blind to see colour (Steyn & Forster 2008). New South Africa Speak (NSAS) helps people meet the need to feel that they are good human beings, embracing values that make them decent members of a modern society. NSAS clusters around certain 'safe' tropes such as non-racialism and democratic principles, concern for poverty, and good Blacks that put the best foot forward and that carry no risk. In this way, language enables a person to keep a positive self-presentation, while resisting transformation.

Secondly, we need to include intersections of oppression and dominance in the racialised landscape of religious communities in South Africa.

> Attempts, therefore, to segment human lives and experiences into categories (such as race, class, gender, ability and disability) or genres and spheres (i.e. home life, personal life, political life, work life, religious or spiritual life, intimate or romantic life) risk the reproduction of hegemonic orders and the status quo (McEwan & Steyn 2016:3).

The intersection of different categories of identities and different spheres of societal life rejects attempts to conceptually sever 'faith' and 'politics' into separate entities of the self or communities.

Thirdly, "Inequality is … both the most divisive and enduring aspect of South African society. In addition, improvement in race relations since 1994 has been slow, with race ranking as the second most divisive aspect of South African society for the first time in 2015, and again in 2017" (Potgieter 2017:24).

All the hashtags and fallist movements that emerge in the South African context are a wake-up call that true racial reconciliation in the post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa includes issues of justice and equality (Mashau 2018). At the same time, there are strong indications that the cultural identity of Whites is blind to the dimension of justice and equality, while stressing the spiritual dimension in their relation to God and interpersonal practices of harmony within the community (Forster 2017; Forster 2019).

Finally, research into interracial relationships indicates the subtle influence of hegemonic structures in the South African context. These relationships are characterised as hyperracialised to capture interracial relationship as a site of intensely focused attention for the racial imagination, and where the broader society performs race work, or "race making" (Steyn *et al.* 2019:1672. Borders between colours are contested sites of inclusion and exclusion. The authors describe different forms of boundary-policing as "the ways that actors actively stigmatize those who attempt to cross social boundaries of colour". How to transform these subtle forms of racial imagination?

To summarise, transformation of the heart in South Africa needs to be connected to the social life forms of individuals and communities, specifically with regard to justice and equality. "Race continues to have social influence on society and identity of individuals although the category is officially disavowed" (Naidoo 2019:171).

1.4.2 Transformation defined from an eschatology of restored capabilities

Strasser's phenomenology of feeling offers an anthropology from above (Tallon 1992:356), in which the human heart is the field of transcendental openness. The human soul is an embodied finite spirit, with an appetite for the absolute. The soul is not defined primarily as a form of the body (as in the Aristotelian tradition), but as an image of the perfected spirit, "whereby we understand our capacity to know and love self-transcendentally against the horizon of infinity"

(Tallon 1992:356).[15] The life of the spirit is the essence of human self-realisation that permeates all the levels of the heart (see section 2.4).

If we locate man's transcendental openness in the domain of the heart, the fault must also be located in the heart. The avowal of the fault is simultaneously a discovery of freedom. And this freedom is rooted in the condition of human contingency as a possibility of the fallibility of man, but not the necessity.[16] The disproportion of man is also "a *power* to fail, in the sense that it makes man *capable* of failing" (Ricoeur 1986:145). The passage of fallibility to fault implies the positing of evil by human beings.[17] The disproportion of man is the primordial weakness from which evil arises. Yet evil arises only because it is posited as a capacity of man: it need not happen, yet it becomes actual through human acting and speaking.

Building on Strasser's theory of the heart, Ricoeur has coined this possibility of the fault 'affective fallibility' (Ricoeur 1986:1). The ontological constitution of the human being contains a paradox: there is a disproportion of being greater and simultaneously lesser than him-/herself. Man is characterised by an insatiable metaphysical neediness and by impulses such as anger, jealousy, and envy, which make man vulnerable of the fault. Human beings need to connect their passion towards the absolute (the love of God) to the level of human acting and willing, which is characterised by the possibility of the double value of good and evil in the world. They experience that their goals will never fulfil what is felt to be absolute, and that they do not will what they consider to be the good life with and for others.

How to transform the heart that is capable of the fault? How to avoid acting and speaking in a way that brings in the fault? Human beings can speak in a vicious way about other persons, or they can speak of the good that wants to emerge in others. They can act based on the feeling of hate, or they can forgive. We need to connect the notion of affective fallibility to the notion of capable man; that is, the capabilities of human beings, which are transparent towards the absolute.[18] A good example is the (im)possibility to forgive.[19] If a person

[15] In theological terms, there is an interpenetration not only of spiritual and felt processes, but also of the Holy Ghost in the life of the human spirit. The notion of the soul as a perfected spirit co-naturalised with the infinite implies the mediation of such perfection by the Holy Spirit. The soul longs for this perfection, of which it is not the origin (see Hermans 2017).

[16] "[F]allibility is the condition of evil, although evil is the revealer of fallibility" (Ricoeur 1986:144).

[17] Theologically, this passage to fault affects the relationship of man to God, as expressed in the notion of 'sin'. Sin is a destruction of the relationship between man and God, and grace is the restoration of this relationship by a radical unbinding of the person from the act of positing evil.

[18] I follow the suggestion of Kearney (2010:44), who makes this connection to fallibility and possibility in reference to Ricoeur. This connection is grounded in an ontology of

feels anger and hate because of the evil done unto him/her or his/her community, he/she will not feel that it is possible to forgive. His/Her feelings will block him/her from acting and willing (intentional level). How to restore the 'I can', of realising the good – that is, how to transform a heart that is plunged in darkness to a heart that gives a new, unexpected future to the other and the community with the other?

In line with Kearney (2010), I define the transformation of the heart as an eschatological transformation of restored capabilities (Hermans 2019b). What does this notion imply? First, we view the heart as being characterised by affective fallibility. The human condition is characterised by

> the enigma of a fault held to paralyse the power to act of the 'capable being' that we are; and in reply, the enigma of the possible lifting of this existential incapacity (Venema 2010:65).

The possibility that a person is capable of something other than his/her offences and his/her faults is an unexpected eschatological gift. Transformation implies the shift from 'the-possibility-to-forgive' to the actuality of 'I-can-forgive'.

Secondly, eschatology refers to the *how much more than possible* of superabundance. There is a longing (passion) of the heart towards a surplus of possibility, human fullness and flourishing, perfect happiness. This longing is an eschatological longing beyond any act of termination. According to Kearney (2010:52), it must be accompanied by an eschatological imagination, which is an anticipation of, or conjecture towards a life beyond limits. In addition, this eschatological imagination needs to be viewed as a practical imagination of the various possibilities to act,[20] and this imagination includes the possibilities of others who are like me (Kearney 2010:54).

Thirdly, eschatology refers to the completion of an action, where possibility emerges in actuality. Under the human condition of contingency, human capability is often characterised by incompletion, where possibilities are not actualised. There is the impossibility of the pardon or the unbinding of the agent from the acts that brought evil into the world, and the impossibility of changing the heart towards the possibility of 'I-can-forgive'. The act of giving the other a new beginning ('I-can') is not necessary, yet possible. The wonder is the possible becoming actual; that is, the positing of the capability of forgiveness. New

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the possible, or (as I like to define it) as an ontology of contingency (see Hermans 2019a; 2019b; 2019c).

[19] More is to be found on human capabilities and the restoration of capabilities towards the absolute which is God (Hermans 2019c).

[20] Forster (2017; 2019) was able to show in his research that the imagination of forgiveness could be changed through intercultural Bible reading.

beginnings can be viewed from an eschatological perspective as participation in the power of the possible that is God.[21]

1.4.3 The battle in the heart

What do we mean if we say that there is a battle *in* the heart? Is it a battle on the level of our 'gut feeling', something less related to curiosity, but more like hunger (Smith)? Is it a battle on the level of love that is on the praxis and imagination of human flourishing (Smith and Paul)? Based on Strasser's map of affective intentionality, I make a plea for the complexity of the battle *in* the heart and, related to this, the complexity of transformation of the battle in the heart.

In line with the role of affective intentionality, we like to affirm the important role of our dispositional connection to the world. Life functions of vitality are located on the pre-intentional levels of affective impulses such as anger, jealousy, or pleasure. There can be a battle in the heart between an impulse of anger and a passion of love (towards the absolute), but there can also be an alignment between the love of God and the pleasure of singing psalms. Is pleasure a 'wrong' feeling when connected to singing psalms?

On the intentional level, the awareness emerges of the possibility of the double value of good and evil in the world. Felt modes such as hope, relief, resignation, and timidity are connected to the good in a specific time and place for a particular person or community. The battle in the heart needs to be related to this situatedness, in which we set our goals that let the good emerge in a specific situation. If we connect this to the context of racial reconciliation in South Africa, we can recognise a battle in the heart of Coloured persons within the fallist movement who feel anger or despair because of the problems they experience to study in places of higher education or universities. What is more, will there ever be a just educational system with goals and opportunities for all which is beyond the double value of good and evil?

On the meta-intentional level, feelings are characterised by a degree of stability and spiritual meaning about what is considered to be the absolute good (God, the Kingdom come). Felt modes of readiness such as the emotions of anxiety, fear and despair are very strong and stable, but incorporate a 'good', on which a person feels he has no grip. For example, intergroup contact between people of different colours can lead to anxiety, because they feel that their cultural identity or socio-economic position is at stake. As an emotion, anxiety overwhelms a person who feels 'out of control', but also blocks the imagination of the human good life with and for others, in just institutions and a sustainable

[21] See also Hermans (2019c), where I develop this idea, based on the concept of God as Posse developed by Nicholas of Cusa, as viewed by modern theological interpreters from the concepts of contingency, free will, and the ontology of the possible.

society.[22] Transformation of the heart cannot neglect this conflict between emotions and the love of God. What is more, we need to be aware that our feeling of love of God and our imagination of the Kingdom is informed by our cultural, historical, and socio-economic identity. In the context of South Africa, we concluded that race still continues to have social influence on society and the identity of individuals, although officially it is disavowed. Because of the emotions connected to this identity (for example, whiteness), transformation of the heart is messy and difficult.

Passions are located at the highest level, which Strasser calls "basic transcending comportment". Passions have an enormous affective power and give a person ultimate freedom in his/her self-realisation. The price for his/her freedom is the tragic possibility of erring: "Is this what God is asking from me?". Because man cannot see complete fulfilment of the absolute good in life, there will always be doubt that this is meaningful and satisfying.[23] If Strasser is correct on this, then it means that there is also a battle *in* the heart on the level of the passions.[24] Transformation also needs to incorporate the struggle in the heart on the level of our passion for the love of, due to our metaphysical vulnerability.

If the battle *in* the heart is more complex than is suggested by Paul and Smith, if it needs to distinguish between different levels and incorporate the interpenetration of cultural/ethnic/socio-economic identity (see 4.1), then the transformation is also far more complex than the participation in liturgy as formative rituals of ultimacy (as suggested by Smith and Paul). In Christian spirituality, the praxis of discernment is suggested as core of all spiritual practices of transformation at the high sea of the struggles in life (Waaijman 2013). There is definitely a place for liturgy in the transformation of the heart. But, dealing with the complexity of transformation demands a praxis of both individual and collective discernment (Marais 2019).

1.4.4 The battle for the heart

According to Paul and Smith, our desires have been captivated by rival visions of human flourishing through practices, in which persons are emerged in society such as practices of consumerism, racism, nationalism, sport, culture, politics, and so on. "They function as pedagogies of desire because they tacitly and covertly train us to love a certain version of the kingdom, teach us to long for some

[22] On the social imagination of forgiveness, see Forster (2017; 2019).
[23] See section 2.5 on metaphysical vulnerability.
[24] Smith (2017) calls everything on the level of basic transcending comportment a passionate orientation. Not all forms of a basic transcending comportment have the character of passion, for example mystical experiences or a life of meditation and silence.

rendition of the good life" (Smith 2016:29). They are forms of deformation connected to rival visions of the good life.

We can only agree with a critical awareness of the habituation that is taking place in society and evaluate it in light of the human flourishing of the Kingdom come. In this instance, we like to ask some critical questions. Is consumerism on the level of the spirit the same as our love of God, as Smith and Paul are suggesting? Is habituation the effective pedagogy of desire that can transform human beings towards the Kingdom come? Does habituation meet the complexity of the conditions in which human beings live, notably the poor and the deprived?

Consumerism is a relatively stable felt mode of readiness to buy goods, connected with a structure of attitudes and convictions on what to buy and the promises of happiness connected thereto. According to Strasser, this stable and constant mode of readiness has a corresponding world view that expresses the meaning of the self, the good life with and for others, how to deal with nature, what is wrong, and what is right. The question is whether consumerism is also a basic *transcending* comportment referring to the absolute good of human flourishing, which surpasses everything that man has experienced previously in fullness, perfectness, and value? The answer is "No", because consumerism is an ideology characterised by reproductive imagination (Dupont 2010:213). The pedagogy of desire is towards conformity of the existing praxis of consumerism. Your freedom is to choose between product x and product y. Eschatological imagination is a productive imagination towards the possibility of a better life with and for others that wants to emerge in actuality. Where ideologies bind human beings to the existing reality, the eschatological imagination opens human beings towards the possibility of what can be and transformation towards the 'I can'. Habituation in the existing world will always be successful (guaranteed result!); the transformation towards the absolute is a wonder that is possible, but also a risk. "Transcendence is set as a task, but is not a given" (Strasser 1977:291). Passions such as the love of God are a complex disposition marked by a structure of attitudes, convictions, and modes of comportment and connected to a world view. Attitudes can be changed by habituation; but growing in the passion of the Kingdom come or the love of God is far more complex. There are different schools of spirituality that take a person on a lifelong process of transformation (see Waaijman 2010; Hermans 2013), and next to the collective process of transformation, we need to distinguish an individual road of the "holy fool" (Dols 1992).

1.5 Conclusion

Finally, I like to stress that we do not know how to transform the battle *for* the heart in the situation of the poor and deprived in society. We do not know how to transform the heart in a context of scarcity (Hermans 2017). Take,

for example, the situation of young men who are drawn into gangsterism on the Cape flats (Bowers du Toit 2014). Transformation of the heart implies a transformation not only of practices, but also of a mindset focused on scarcity and a change of context (poverty, deprivation). The mindset focused on scarcity is an involuntary impulse connected to survival on a pre-intentional level. This mindset is a contextual outcome (rather than a personal trait) encouraging behaviour that keeps a person trapped in scarcity. The structural context of poverty and deprivation leaves little room for change. What is a sustainable transformation of the hearts of young men who are attracted to gangsterism?

> If we want to be successful, we need to start from the specific configuration of the problem situation of the people we want to help; and together with them, co-construct a plan of action (Hermans 2017:48).

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Chapter 2
Feeling, seeing and acting differently: the emotional disposition and actions of God in Luke 15:20 as a mimetic compass for the contemporary church in search of a vibrant faith

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2.1 Introduction

As part of the Faculty of Theology and Religion's fortieth anniversary celebration theme, *Transforming theology and religion*, my contribution to this book endeavours to address the challenges facing the transformation of "stagnant church" from the "dispositions and actions of God", as portrayed in the well-known parable of the so-called prodigal son in Luke 15. The emotional disposition of God, as portrayed, in this instance, could serve as an important clue for the contemporary church's quest for revitalisation. New possibilities could be unlocked by means of a different, mimetic reading of this text, particularly in terms of challenging contemporary believers to "align" their "moral responses" with that of God.

2.2 Stagnant church has lost its lure, Jesus has not!

Church has become predictably boring. "Same-old, same-old" is at the order of the day – the same old sermons, liturgies, meetings, theological discussions, conflicts, and so on. Far too many communities of faith are not too responsive to the increasingly fluid dimensions of an ever-changing culture, or to the transformative power of their normative texts. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of churches have seriously decreased their capability to engage in the mission of Jesus. It often feels as if the original gospel code has been mutated in their midst, since they have chosen to be less adaptable to cultural changes in favour of entrenching their traditional roles as gatekeepers of a fast-shrinking religious *status quo*.

In 2018, a study by Pew Center among twenty-four thousand participants found that only 18% of Western Europeans still view themselves as Chris-

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tians, of which only 46% are still actively engaged in local churches. In 2016, a study in The Netherlands found that two-thirds of Dutch people mentioned that they have no religious faith whatsoever (Goins-Philips 2019). In South Africa, similar patterns are emerging. In his inaugural lecture at the University of the Free State on 12 September 2019, Prof. Kobus Schoeman referred to the results of the 2018 Congregational Survey and the South African National Church Life Survey. A staggering 63.9% are in financial decline or in serious trouble, with 63.5% sinking or busy with church maintenance. At the same time, less than a third (27.6%) of church attendees are aware of, or strongly committed to the direction of their congregations, while only 15.9% opine, to a great extent, that church leaders encourage them to use their gifts and skills.

"Stagnant church" as official custodian of Christianity has lost much of its influence as agent of change and grace in the world. In far too many places church has turned into an inherently consumptive system where "active" congregation members are, in fact, passive most of the time, since they are mostly in the receptive mode when they show up at comfortable church venues, in order to receive their spiritual food (cf. Joubert 2018). Fortunately, this growing negativity towards the church, in particular, and Christians, in general, is not projected *sito-sito* to Jesus. Elsewhere (Joubert 2019), I have referred to the findings of Dan Kimball, who held interviews with students at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where less than 2% of the students actively participated in activities of churches or Christian organisations. Kimball's team opted for different questions such as: "What do you think of when you hear the name Jesus?", and "What comes to mind when you hear the word Christian?". All of the respondents were extremely positive about Jesus, but when asked: "What do you think of Christians and the church?", nearly all responses were negative. Clearly, the Church needs to be reintroduced to Jesus and his merciful Father who still inspires hope and admiration in outsiders.

2.3 Tuning in to our emotions

We cannot turn into relevant followers of Jesus by consuming our way into discipleship. Neither can we do it by constantly tweaking our dogmas, teachings, structures, meetings, rules and regulations to align with people's present wants and needs. What is called for is a vibrant faith, one that is rooted in a rich, creative theology, as well as

> a strong and vibrant faith community, and a clear vision of what it means to be a Christian in a post-Christian world (Stronks & Stronks 2014:112).

More to the point: A vibrant faith needs to be rooted in a biblical understanding of, and realignment with the emotional Jesus and his equally emotional Father.

We have for far too long neglected emotions in theology and ecclesiological thinking as highly subjective, pre-reflective feelings.[2] Instead, theologians and church leaders alike have preoccupied themselves with more urgent matters of doctrinal, historical, textual, and ecclesiological concern. Barton (2011:578) rightly warned against this oversight. He is convinced that cognisance of emotion, as a form of rationality, opens up new avenues toward understanding early Christian rationality as a whole. From the perspective of this essay, it also offers a way out of the present stagnant situation, in which the church finds herself.

In her study of emotion in 1 Peter, Hockey (2019) argues that emotions, as responses to certain stimuli, determine our object-directedness. In terms of the cognitive component of emotions, they constantly provide evaluative judgements by way of interpreting situations and providing information about particular objects' impact on ourselves and our personal goals. Emotions always carry an action tendency, by providing the disposition to act in certain ways, in order to achieve desired outcomes. At the same time, emotions "are constructed within cultural systems" (Hockey 2019:44). They rely on our norms and values, which again are based on our socially constructed world views. In other words, emotions should not be reduced to something private, personal and subjective – to inner states accessible only by introspection, since emotions are constructed

> in the interplay between social agents and structures. On this account emotion is 'both-and' rather than 'either/or': both personal and relational; private and social; biological and cultural; active and passive (Riis & Woodhead 2010:5).

Although emotions are cultural constructs, from ancient times everybody knew

> that a person's emotional life directly influences her ethical life, which in turn influences her ability to achieve happiness, and has implications for a society as a whole (Hockey 2019:85).

Since emotions and feelings are indispensable for rationality (as behavioural neuroscientist Anthony Damasio [1994] pointed out many years ago), and since the separation between body and mind, reason and emotion are no longer tenable, we need to rethink the positive role of emotion in reshaping the church, starting with the mimetic power of divine emotion.[3]

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[2] Riis & Woodhead (2010:1-2) correctly observe that it is "strange then, how little attention has been paid to the emotional dimension of religion in academic work, relative to the vast amount of work devoted to religious beliefs and practices".

[3] According to Damasio (1994), "pure" reason, uninfluenced by emotion, seemingly only occurs in pathological states that are characterised by impairment of day-to-day social interaction and decision-making.

2.4 Can God feel anything?

To link emotions to God is to venture into complex theological territory. For many centuries, the impassibility of God (that is, the doctrine that he cannot have emotions) has been the topic of intense discussion in theological circles. The current debate on emotion in God is still active. For instance, according to Chiavone (2009:199),

> [t]he divine persons, apart from the Son in the incarnation lack the physiological components which are central to human emotion … God the Father has no limbic system, no adrenal glands, and no blood vessels. What then can it mean to say that he 'feels' anger? Certainly, the Bible ascribes emotions to God, but to take those less analogously than did Aquinas is to confuse God's incorporeal existence with the corporeal existence of his creatures … An incorporeal God lacks any physical parts, and does not experience physical sensations, including emotional ones.

However, there is also a shift towards a more contextualised thinking on the issues of passibilism and impassibilism:

> The overall impression that emerges is that, rather than shifting from impassibilism to passibilism, Christian theology has shifted in emphasis from stressing the invulnerability and omnipotence of God to focusing on the emotional fulness of God's life and the suffering of God. This is partly as a result of contextual demands. The early church needed to emphasize God's otherness in reaction against perceived anthropomorphic conceptions of divinity in paganism. In contrast, modern theology has needed to speak to challenges of faith arising from our increased awareness of the extent of human and animal suffering (Scrutton 2011:56).

In his study on divine emotion, Lister (2012) grapples with the question of how an infinite God can relate to finite creatures. How can he be holy and sovereign and simultaneously also personal and relational? In this regard, he adopts what could be referred to as a "duality model" of the divine nature and God's activities. Since God is "impassible" (that is, the eternal God *in se*), he cannot be manipulated, overwhelmed, or surprised into an emotional interaction that he does not desire to have or allow to happen (Lister 2012:36). However, God is and becomes "impassioned" *in re*, in the sense that he voluntarily allows himself to have passions and emotions, which he does not have otherwise. It is not as if God can be "overtaken" by the onset of an unexpected mood or passion, but in responsiveness he passionately engages with his creation and his people. On the one hand, according to Lister (2012), God is timelessly eternal, but at the same time, upon creating the universe, he also becomes temporal. From this

perspective, God's impassibility (that is, his emotional stability) complements his compassion toward his creatures as well as the love within the Godhead. From this perspective, Lister endeavours to address a commonly made mistake, namely to confuse traditional doctrines of impassibility with a theological position in which God has no emotions at all.

The complexities and finer nuances of endless theological debates could easily blur our hopes of coming to terms with God's emotions as a hermeneutical compass for questions related to the text of Luke 15 and current ecclesiological contexts.[4] Hence, it is only addressed, in this instance, as part of the theological proposition that a fresh understanding and realignment with the emotions of God, as vividly expressed in the so-called parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, could provide new hermeneutical keys to contemporary communities of faith that are faced with anything from irrelevance, to boredom, to spiritual decay. It is my contention that biblical texts, in general, and Luke 15:11-32, in particular, serve as normative windows and mirrors for individuals and communities in search of the transformative capabilities of God's presence.

2.5 Jesus, teller of provocative God stories

Jesus loved stories, or parables, as we call them. Amid the vast amount of research on his parables, ranging from their historical and literary contexts, to genre, theology and message, they are, in essence, "kurze Erzählungen, d.h. narrative Texte, bei denen mindestens eine Handlungssequenz oder eine Statusveränderung berichtet oder vorgestellt wird" (Zimmermann 2007:26). Jesus chooses stories for a number of reasons, but, in essence, his parables function as windows on the kingdom of God. They serve as narrative announcements of, and invitations into the story of God's good news. As expanded analogies, they point their audiences towards God, while at the same time providing them with essential clues to Jesus' own identity. The parables move the hearers out of everyday life into the new reality of the kingdom of God. According to Snodgrass (2008:1), they tell us

> what reality exists in this narrative world, what happens, and why … From this 'other world' we are invited to understand, evaluate, and, hopefully, redirect our lives.

The parables are not intended for the listeners' entertainment. Parables seek "the radical cross-bearing, God-imitating response worthy of the name 'conversion'" (Snodgrass 2008:9). They are not only informative, but provocative. No wonder Jesus was crucified for the stories he told. Right from the beginning, Jesus' parables elicited different emotional reactions from the hearers. While the disciples were, at times, confused and struggled to make sense thereof (Mk 4:13), the

[4] For a more detailed discussion, see Peckham (2020:27-68).

religious opponents of Jesus in Jerusalem understood the provocative parable of the vineyard and the bad tenants (Mk 12:1-12) so well that they signed off on his death sentence there and then.

Since the Gospels never shy away from expressing Jesus' emotions, as Voorwinde (2011) tells us, it should come as no surprise that his parables are also filled with strong emotion, both explicitly and implicitly. They live up to Habermas' (2019:17) view that "narrative is the format that communicates emotions in the most comprehensive way by embedding it in a story". Jesus' parables challenge, confront, invite, provoke, nudge, question, comfort, and inspire, in order to elicit specific emotional and behavioural responses, and, ultimately, new life in God. In other words, the emotional qualities inherent in the parables give the hearers and readers a sense of how they ought to behave and in that way help define correct religious responses and behaviour.

2.6 Lost and polluted: Luke 15:11-32

Luke 15:11-32 is the third in a trilogy of so-called "lost and found" parables. The two short parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, which precede the longest parable of Jesus, set the tone in terms of the theme of all three, but Luke 15:1-2 provides the ideological setting. We read that sinners and tax collectors flock to Jesus to listen to him. This causes an uproar among the Pharisees and the scribes, the religious gatekeepers of Israel. They respond by means of a typical ancient Mediterranean insult: "This man prefers the presence of sinners and eats with them." In this way, Jesus is publicly shamed, because he deliberately chooses to ignore the purity laws of the religious leaders by freely associating and eating with ritually unclean people. The latter are unfit for participation in official religious activities. They are human pollutants.[5] Jesus responds by telling three stories that focus on God's passionate and concerted search for the very people rejected by the religious elite.

The third story, incorrectly referred to as the parable of the prodigal son, focuses on the role of the merciful father caught up between the shameful behaviour of his younger son (vv. 11-24) and the "righteous" response of his embittered older son (vv. 25-32). More to the point, the shocking conduct of both sons are countered by the overwhelmingly gracious response of the father, who represents God. The youngest son blatantly transgresses Jewish tradition, by taking up his inheritance while his father is still alive (see Num. 27:8-11; Deut.

[5] The purity codes of Israel are fundamentally concerned "with the ordering of the world and making sense of one's everyday experiences in light of that order, which is usually conceived of as being a divine ordering of the cosmos (and thus 'the way things are and have to be'). It tells us 'what and who belong when and where,' and thus enables us to know when order is being maintained and when something is out of place" (DeSilva 2000:246).

21:15-17). In this way, he openly rejects the duty of a son to honour his father and mother, as spelled out in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) (Hultgren 2000:73).

The youngest son then heads off to a foreign country where he shamelessly wastes his entire inheritance. Eventually, he has to compete with pigs for food, which, to the Jewish ear, is nothing but vulgar. He is overwhelmed by remorse when he remembers *who* he is and *whose* he was (vv. 17-19). He knows that he severed all familial ties by treating his father as if he were already dead. Hence, his return could elicit anything from rejection to physical harm from his family and members of the community. In this regard, Bailey (1980:167) tells us that, if a Jewish son lost his inheritance among Gentiles and then returned home, the community could perform a ceremony practised around the first century in Palestine, called the *qezazah* (which literally means "a cutting off"). In such cases, they would often break a large pot in front of the guilty party and call out that he is now cut off from his people. In later times, the Talmud tells us that it was the responsibility of other sons of the family to carry out this *qezazah* ceremony. Hence, there was a very real possibility that the older brother could take physical revenge on his younger brother, since, in Mediterranean societies, the honourable male role included protection of vulnerable and dishonoured members of the kinship group, including elderly fathers (see also Bailey 2005:54; Corley 2013:157).

Notwithstanding the risks involved, the youngest son decides to go back (v. 20a). The content of his self-talk indicates that, in spite of the shame he has brought on his father, he knows that his father is inherently good and gracious. In other words, his inner sense of shame, contrary to that projected onto him by his kinship group, compels him to strive for reconnection. Therefore, he returns to his father to beg for work as a day labourer.

2.7 The Father's shame-removing look and his compassionate heart

The father sees his lost child from a long distance. But his look is different from that of the religious leaders elsewhere in the gospel of Luke. This becomes clear, for instance, in Luke 7:36-50, where Jesus is the guest of honour at a banquet in the house of a Pharisee called Simon. This meal is disrupted by a sex worker (as indicated by her loose hair) who falls down at the feet of Jesus and 'anoints' them with her tears. Sensing the judgemental looks of Simon and his guests, Jesus responds with a short narrative and then tells Simon to look at this woman – that is, to look at her as a real person. He knows that the religious elite regarded sinners such as this woman as human pollutants. They infected and defiled everyone and everything they came into contact with. Therefore, the only emotion that could be communicated by means of their judgemental looks, insofar as one's look on oneself is mediated by the look of others, is shame.

According to Sartre (1956:285), shame is "the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object which the other is looking at and judging". It is usually transferred by the look of others and associated with feelings of unworthiness, embarrassment, humiliation, mortification, and defectiveness in terms of the values or evaluative properties related to a particular person or object.[6] However, Jesus deems such shameful looks as immoral. He reprimands his host for his judgemental attitude, and at the same time looks at this heart-broken woman at his feet with kindness. In fact, Jesus' look constitutes a wordless sharing of God's forgiveness as his following words confirm (vv. 49-50).

Similarly, in Luke 15:20c, the father refuses to look at his younger son in a "shame-transmitting" fashion. Contrary to Sartre's (1956:313) notion of a self-reflective awareness, awakened by the objectifying, witnessing look of the other which renders one defenceless and filled with shame, the father in Jesus' parable has a compassionate look. His look does not "transmit" guilt or shame onto his son. He knows guilt is present when one feels bad about an action or something one has done, but shame is about that one is.

Shame is connected to one's core self and identity; it concerns a transgression, fault or flaw that will lead others to think less of who one is (rather than merely what one has done) (Dolezal 2017:424).

The father in Luke 15 does not use the same judgemental diagnosis as others in the parable by associating the outward appearance and behaviour of his son with his physiognomy and, by extension, his character, value, and status. He spots a different sense of shame in his son. Dolezal (2017:435) describes this type of "positive" shame as "fundamentally as a longing for connection to our social world through our sense of embodied vulnerability and our striving for belonging". The younger son's pain of being removed from his family, as well as his experience of abandonment, not-belonging and disconnection allows social death and physical death to feel imminently convergent to him. Hence, the father's compassionate look. At the same time, on the meta-narrative level of the parable, it also becomes apparent to the intended hearers/readers that God refocuses his righteous look when faced with the transgressions of the lost and the disobedient by a new, soft glance, one that is embedded in the ministry and the cross of his own Son. God overcomes the inclination of threatening people with reduction and destruction by means of his look of love that reflects his utterly gracious emotional inner self.

[6] Shame is said "to promote not only hiding, and sometimes aggression, but also, and more positively, attempts to reform oneself" (Deonna *et al.* 2012:9). Therefore, shame typically manifests itself in blushing, gaze aversion, and a downcast posture.

2.8 God's emotions as mimetic guideposts

The look of the father in Luke 15:20d is inviting and forgiving. The image of his defenceless, guilt-ridden child on the horizon is heart-breaking to him. He is immediately overwhelmed with deep emotion, as Luke's use of the term *splagnizomai* indicates. This is the strongest emotional term in the Synoptic Gospels for the intense feelings of compassion and affection of God and Jesus. In particular, this is the emotional experience of Jesus in the presence of suffering and disease (Mark 1:44; Matt. 20:29-34); death (Luke 7:11-17); spiritual impoverishment (Matt. 9:36), as well as hunger and physical poverty (Mark 6; 8). *Splagnizomai* also occurs three times in the parables. In Luke 15:20 and in the parable of the master of the unmerciful servant (Matt. 18:27), *splagnizomai* gives expression to the wholly gracious emotional disposition of God. According to Voorwinde (2011:24), "none of the twelve occurrences of "splagnizomai" in the Gospels therefore is ever used of a human emotion pure and simple". When used in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:33), it directly links the Samaritan's look, emotions and caring for the stranger who has been beaten up by robbers to the emotional disposition of God. By imitating God, he is free from the ethnic, social and other prejudices of the priest and the Levite in the narrative. In this way, the Samaritan serves as proof for the intended hearers/readers that, when they fully immerse themselves in the narratives of Jesus, they become more God-like and also share his compassionate heart, as well as his capacity to love and to do good. The force of emotion

> is to a great extent the sense of moral or pragmatic compulsion, the sense that one must do what the emotion 'says' one will do … Conversely, particular moral ideas take what force they have from the commitment people learn to feel to them (Lutz 1988:213).

Hence, the response of the father in the parable not only serves as a normative window into the emotions of God, but also as a narrative map for the intended hearers/readers to discern which emotions are morally correct and pursuable, and which ones are not, and how to behave accordingly. It is all about exchanging hearts and looks, their hardened hearts for the compassionate heart and look of God! It is about adopting the divine look in the presence of all others.

> *splanchnizomai* reveals the very character of God within the messianic involvement and engagement with human suffering. The theology of the entrails reflects God's 'being' quality (Louw 2011:online).

According to Levinas (1985), ethics literally begins with the face of the other, but then this face of the other does, in principle, not coincide with his/her appearance, photograph, representation, or evocation. The human face speaks out and speaks with or without words. The human face, as first disclosure, calls out for respect. However, such responses to others would always be asymmetrical;

in no way does it take as precondition any payment or reward from the other.[7] From this ethical perspective, according to Levinas (1985:106-107), when any human face calls out to me, I can only respond, like Abraham to God, with the words:

> Here I am … However, it is precisely in and through this response that the 'response ability' - the 'I' of 'here I am' - makes sense.

This is the challenge facing all individuals and communities of faith who want to follow Christ vibrantly. We need new eyes to see others better, the divine type!

2.9 The father's running, embrace and kiss as bodily connection

The father's emotions propel him into action. He immediately starts running towards his son (v. 20e). This could only be understood as "outlandish behaviour" (Hultgren 2000:78). In the ancient Mediterranean world, where comportment, posture, movement, and gesture served as visible reflections of a person's identity, character and status, this type of hurried movement in the case of noblemen, such as the father in the parable, would have been frowned upon. One's gait visibly reflected one's identity and character in motion (see Joubert 2014; 2017). According to O'Sullivan (2011:21),

> the ideal male always walked slowly, with total control, his head and shoulders upright and confident, metaphorically towering over those beneath him.

Hurriedness was associated with people of low public status, but also with the gait of slaves, since it was expected of them to go about fast; hence, the Roman expression *servus currens*, the running slave! However, the father does not care for his public reputation. He runs towards his son before the older brother and other family members of the community get to him with their vengeful hearts. Then the father passionately embraces him, as shown in the idiomatic expression "to fall around the neck" (v. 20f). In the most emotionally intimate moment in the entire parable, the father also kisses him (v. 20g). Suddenly, all physical and emotional distance is out of the way. All guilt and shame are removed. This kiss (*katafileō*) is the expression of deep affection. It is the wordless language of love, forgiveness and acceptance. The father kisses his son back to life. His kiss transcends all logic. It renders the confession of the son (v. 21) in his father's

[7] It is 'pure goodness', 'love without eros', charity without reciprocity. Such goodness, as the path to the other, is not at all a self-evident, 'natural' idea that would emerge spontaneously in our everyday struggles. It is anything but self-evident. On the contrary, it establishes an 'inverted order', an 'Umwertung aller Werte', for it is possible only as radical transgression of our 'ordinary' striving" (Burggraeve 1999:35).

embrace redundant. He cannot even complete the last sentence he practised before (vv. 18-19a), namely that he should be treated as a servant, because his father has begun to shower him with grace, gifts, and a huge feast. He receives a proper homecoming. The best robe (signifying his new status of honour), as well as a ring, shoes (v. 22), and a special banquet (v. 23) openly proclaim that he was lost, but now he is found. He was dead, but now he is alive.

2.10 No "right of admission reserved" plaques – all are welcome at the feast

Verses 25-32 narrate the shocked reaction of the oldest brother to the fact that his father receives his "ex-brother" back into the family, who, in his own eyes, is still nothing less than a human pollutant. His "righteous anger" at his father's "disgraceful grace", and his indignation at the privileges bestowed upon his younger brother fuel his refusal to partake in the feast. But the father does not turn his back on him either. Once again, the father's emotions propel him into action, "in coming out to plead with the elder son the father is ignoring his own dignity and position" (Tannehill 1996:243).

The elder son's bitterness about his father's unfairness is vocally stressed by the contrast he draws between himself and "this son of yours" (v. 24). Contrary to the younger son, who addresses his father as such (v. 21), he refuses to do so.

> If the elder brother has a story, that story is 'outside,' is the story of the 'outside.' The old economy to which the elder brother adheres is rendered increasingly suspect. The elder brother's relationship to the father is not only 'legalistic' but 'servile.' Moreover, although the elder brother may keep 'the letter of the law,' he breaks 'all its spirit' (Robbins 1991:36-37).

But the father does not react in similar fashion. The older brother is still his child (*teknon*). At this provocative point, the story ends open-endedly with the father's affirmation "that the elder son is 'always' (15:31, in contrast to the son's 'never' of 15:29) with him, and that he is still heir to all that is now left" (Hultgren 2000:82).

2.11 A forgotten narrative compass for vibrant faith

Luke 15:11-32 is such a popular parable that it has even been called "*Evangelium in Evangelio*" (see Robbins 1991:37). It is packed to the brim with numerous practical applications, as Blomberg (2004:24) confirms:

> it is not wrong to see, for example, in the father of the two sons an image of God, to view the prodigal as symbolic of all wayward sinners in need of repentance … and to regard the older brother as representing those who think they are God's followers yet who respond with envy when he lavishes grace on the most obviously undeserving.

Still, this life-changing, mimetic impact of this parable is largely lost on the vast majority of believers because of a bad religious habit, aptly described by Peterson (1997:4) as

> extracting from the Bible what we pretentiously call 'spiritual principles' or 'moral guidelines' or 'theological truths' and then corseting ourselves in them in order to force a godly shape on our lives. That's a mighty uncomfortable way to go about improving our condition. And it's not the gospel way. Story isn't imposed on our lives; it invites us into its life. As we enter and imaginatively participate, we find ourselves in a more spacious, freer and more coherent word. Story brings us into more reality, not less, expands horizons … Story is the primary means we have for learning what the world is, and what it means to be a human being in it.

We have been taught to "stand on the Bible", to defend the Bible, and to repeat big confessions such as *sola Scriptura*, but not to live out of it. We have turned the Bible into a "go-to" book whenever we need answers, or 'proof-texts' when we have to do battle with divergent theological opponents. Sadly, we have not learned how to immerse our own lives in hermeneutically responsible ways in biblical narratives. We have no clue how to imbed our lives in the stories of Jesus. They actually provide the larger context and plot in which our life stories need to be situated. They provide the antidote for religious boredom, stagnation, and shrinking churches. Otherwise, if they do not remain alive in our hearts and lives, they begin to lose their transformative power, as has happened in far too many ecclesiological and theological contexts. The well-known American author Neil Gaiman describes this point in a different, but applicable, context.

In a filmed interview on 9 June 2015, entitled "On how stories last", Gaiman 2015) mentions that some stories remain alive by making it from medium to medium, from oral to written and beyond. However, they need people as vectors. In Gaiman's own words:

> We are the media in which they reproduce; we are their petri dishes… Stories grow, sometimes they shrink. And they reproduce - they inspire other stories. And, of course, if they do not change, stories die (Gaiman 2015:n.p.).

Stories teach us how the world is put together. They teach us the rules of living in the world. But they also have to come in an attractive enough package that we take pleasure from them and we want to help them propagate.

Gaiman (2015) shares one lesson he learned about the power of story from his cousin, Helen Fagin, a Holocaust survivor. During the Second World War, she taught twenty girls in the Warschau ghetto, where books were forbidden on pain of death. Helen had a Polish translation of *Gone with the wind,* which she read at night, and she told its story to her entranced students by day. Gaiman (2015:n.p.) then asked her why would she risk death for a story? She answered:

> Because for an hour every day, those girls weren't in the ghetto — they were in the American South; they were having adventures; they got away.

According to Gaiman (2015: n.p.):

> The magic of escapist fiction is that it can offer you escape from an otherwise intolerable situation, and it can furnish you with armour, knowledge, weapons, and other tools you can take back into your life to make it better.

2.12 Embracing the story, embracing God's emotions

As noted earlier, emotions contain inherent judgements about objects. Our experience of specific emotions implies that specific opinions are also carried cognitively. Emotions constantly shape our perceptions and vice versa. They are integral to our personal engagements in social and religious processes. Hence, we need to

> appreciate the positioning of certain emotions within the cultural repertoire … This will require recognising the narrative context of an emotion, which means having an awareness of worldviews, norms and values (Hockey 2019:101).

From this perspective, we have grappled with God's emotions embedded in Jesus' parable of the gracious father.

Seldom, if ever, in the Bible do we find such an intimate description of God's emotions as in Luke 15:20. His loving embrace and kiss transcend all other biblical expressions of divine intimacy. Amid various Bible figures' longing for a deeper intimacy with God, such as Moses' wish to see the face of God (Ex. 33), or Nathaniel's request to Jesus to show them the Father (John 14), God chooses for an even more expressive form of intimacy to tell us who he is and we are. He does not fix our brokenness, or, for that matter, the church's lack of religious vibrancy, by means of rational theological explanations, abstract trea-

tises, or twelve-steps church programmes. According to Jesus, God follows a much more intimate, relational route. He opts for a shame-removing look, a compassionate heart, a fast sprint towards people, as well as an embrace, a kiss. Not the touch of his finger, as portrayed in Michelangelo's renowned fresco in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, but the divine kiss is the most intimate of all. It is the kiss of life, new life. In the presence of his kiss, words become superfluous.

God's emotions in Luke 15:20 serve as moral guideposts on how to engage with him and others. His deeply emotional response to his youngest son, as the timeless "human pollutant", and the older son, as the timeless "self-righteous religious figure", challenges present-day communities of faith to new emotional responses and a lifestyle; that is, to a vibrant *imitatio Dei*. It challenges us to a new intimacy with God and others, including the lost, outcasts, nobodies, somebodies, has-beens, celebrities, poor, arrogant, self-righteous, non-believers, potential believers, and so on. You name them! It challenges us to a softer look, a more compassionate inner disposition, and a new bodily posture of embrace and acceptance. From this mimetic perspective, Luke 15:11-32 underscores the fact that the father's emotional responses to his sons entail even more than leniency or unconditional acceptance. In fact, God's emotional responses equal his relentless and loving pursuit of people, people who are ungrateful, unworthy, and unlovable.[8]

2.13 Conclusion

Luke 15:11-32 is an open-ended narrative, one that provides the ideal format for understanding divine emotions and for evoking the correct moral responses in terms aligning ours with that of God. This deeply moving parable leaves us with the question as to whether we shall make the moral decision to embrace the emotions, posture, look, embrace, and kiss of God. The narration of his emotions points us to specific action tendencies. But it is up to us, as individuals and present-day communities of faith, to vibrantly embody this parable in authentic, yet contextually relevant ways.

It has become clear from our brief sojourn into the parable of the gracious father with his two prodigal sons, in Luke 15:11-32, that the route to a new vibrant faith is not commanded by Jesus in the form of rules. Had this been the case, our relationships to God and others would be mediated by all these rules that we need to consider before acting. But when we open up to the emotions of God in the narrative and become receptive to his narrative-mediated

[8] In the words of Tchividjian (2015 online), God's goodness "is a divine vulgarity that stands caution on its head. It refuses to play it safe and lay it up. Grace is recklessly generous, uncomfortably promiscuous. It doesn't use sticks, carrots, or time cards. It doesn't keep score."

voice, we could embody Luke 15:20 along the lines of Galli's (2011:125) enigmatic remark:

> God's love for us is uncoerced and so freely given that it does not demand a response. But so freely is it given that it creates freedom in the recipient, so that our response is not one of obligation or duty, nor the returning of a favor, but uncoerced love.

From this perspective a vibrant contemporary church would be one where believers mimetically synchronise their lives with that of the compassionate God. The 'how and what' of such mimetic responses, in terms of the nature and content thereof, is up to individual churches, but the necessity thereof in terms of a relevant personal involvement in the lives of others is non-negotiable. In this regard, Louw (2011:online) captures this type of involvement (specifically in terms of the role of Practical Theology) as follows:

> Ta splanchna describes the compassionate praxis of the crucified God. Practical theology is essentially practical when it changes our human brokenness into the healing of eschatological hope: fides quaerens spem [faith seeking different expressions of hope].

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Chapter 3
"How can you mend a broken heart?": A good life for the church in the time that remains

Yolanda Dreyer[1]

3.1 Introduction

Sometimes, the heart of the body of Christ is courageous and compassionate. The voice of the church sings God's praise and speaks out against injustice. Following in the footsteps of Jesus, the church helps, heals, supports, and uplifts those in need. However, sometimes, the body of Christ seems broken and heartless – caught up in power struggles, self-enriching, perpetrating, and perpetuating injustice. This is a heart-breaking betrayal of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the head of the body.

This book, *The battle for the heart: How (not) to transform church and society*, examines the condition of the body of Christ and the environment in which it tries to survive. The chapter by Stephan Joubert shows the rapid decline of the institutional church (Benadé 2019:203-205). Chris Hermans' chapter focuses on feeling, with the metaphor of the heart as the centre of feeling. The heart of the church is about the emotive aspect of being the body of Christ. It may well be that the church, the body of Christ, is dying from a broken heart. The question then is whether transformation to health, well-being and goodness is still possible for an endangered church in, what Agamben (2005) calls, "the time that remains". This chapter explores how the body of Christ can live a good, joyful, and productive life with a strong and healthy heart.

"How can you mend a broken heart", sang the Bee Gees in the 1970s. In a TED Talk titled "How your emotions change the shape of your heart", cardiologist Dr Sandeep Jauhar (2019), author of *Heart: A history* (2018), explains a broken heart as follows:

> No other organ, perhaps no other object in human life, is as imbued with metaphor and meaning as the human heart. Over the course of history, the heart has been a symbol of our emo-

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> tional lives. It was considered by many to be the seat of the soul, the repository of the emotions … But what is this link? Is it real or purely metaphorical? As a heart specialist, I am here today to tell you that this link is very real. Emotions, you will learn, can and do have a direct physical effect on the human heart … The heart may not originate our feelings, but it is highly responsive to them … In other words, it is increasingly clear that our hearts are extraordinarily sensitive to our emotional system, to the metaphorical heart, if you will.

A heart disorder, first recognised roughly two decades ago, is called "takotsubo cardiomyopathy", or "the broken heart syndrome".

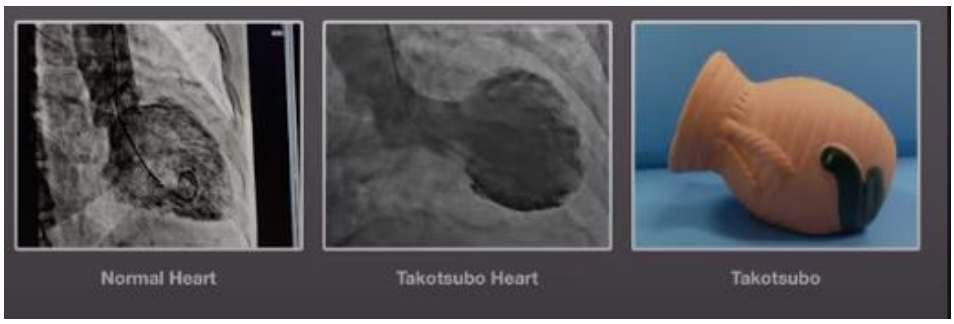

Figure 3.1: The broken heart syndrome

As these pictures show, the grieving heart in the middle looks very different to the normal heart on the left. It appears stunned and frequently balloons into the distinctive shape of a takotsubo, shown on the right, a Japanese pot with a wide base and a narrow neck.

"Feeling" does not stand in opposition to cognitive understanding. All of it, heart, feeling, thought, action, and spirituality constitute the whole human being. If divine presence is felt, experienced, acknowledged – whichever verb you would want to use to express what cannot be expressed – then signals of transcendence can be recognised in everyday reality (see Berger 1970). Hermans explains "feeling" as a philosophical concept. I briefly explore "heart" as a biblical concept.

3.2 Heart as biblical metaphor

In language, the term for something concrete is often also used figuratively and a metaphor is born. 'Heart', literally a blood-pumping organ, in the figurative sense becomes a metaphor for states of feeling. The Bible focuses mostly on the figurative sense of 'heart' (Louw & Nida 1988:136). People should open their

hearts to God, others and nature. What we would currently call 'an open mind' would, in the Bible, be an 'open heart'. The heart, in this sense, is like a container filled with knowledge and feelings (Basson 2007:324). The Spirit of God can come into a heart that is open to it. A life permeated by the Spirit is also open to others and creation. This openness is inclusive. The heart cannot be open to some – the own group – but closed to others. Convictions about God and the world are housed in the heart. These convictions should be in accordance with the will of God. Heart and mind should turn to God (*metanoia*).

'Heart' can, however, also be a stumbling block. Whereas a healthy heart is permeated by God's Spirit, which guides a person's feelings toward friendship with others, an unhealthy heart is troubled, filled with fear, worry, and apprehension. It disrupts relationships and causes sorrow to others. In Zechariah 7:12, Israel is criticised for making their hearts as hard as flint, for they would not listen to the word of God. If all stumbling blocks are removed, the heart is pure, says Jesus. A pure heart is a healthy heart.

3.3 Heart and eyes

In the Bible, 'heart' is often used in conjunction with the eyes or vision: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Borg's (2004:xiii) *The heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a life of faith*, is about "seeing the 'heart' of Christianity". In another book, co-authored with Tom Wright, Borg zooms in on what is most central to being a Christian in the contemporary world, namely to be "centered in the Spirit" and having "a life full of God" (Borg & Wright 1999:242-243).

A heart not centred in God is "a darkened heart". It feels and causes pain and trouble. It is governed by "envy", the result of having an "evil eye" (Elliott 2017). Envy impedes being open to others. 'Envy' is derived from the Latin word *invidere*, to see into oneself, to see only onself, to look over others, to not see them. The darkened heart is preoccupied with inequality. Others are classified: reputable and acceptable or the disreputable outcast.

How healthy is the heart of the body of Christ nowadays and what do the eyes see? The mainline institutional church acknowledges that it is terminally ill. Through desperate measures to attract more people and get people to give more money, it tries to ensure that the institution will continue and that pastors will be paid. Such a vision is centred in itself; it looks inwards and fights for survival. If the gaze of the body of Christ is fixed on the privileged and prosperous, its words of justice and mercy ring hollow. This is not a good and healthy life for the church in the time that remains.

Prosperity cannot be central to the church's message, because it never was central to the message of Jesus. However, for human beings, it is a

tempting and appealing message, to which many succumb. It really is nothing more than a new face for an old apocalyptic message: although this world is full of tragedy, disaster and suffering, there is an utopian world out there – the world of God – where there will be no more tears. Prosperity religion draws that utopian world into the now. Here and now people can live without illness and suffering. They can be prosperous, healthy, and wealthy. With the focus on the ideal of more and better, the gap between those who achieve 'success' and those who do not, inevitably becomes wider. Inequality becomes more pronounced and visible.

An utopian world dawning in the here and now in the form of wealth and prosperity is not the same as hearing "a rumour of angels" in the everyday contemporary world, as Berger (1970) calls the signals of transcendence that can be glimpsed in the midst of the realities of being. These realities of being include the whole spectrum of illness and death, disaster and tragedy, joy and togetherness, hope and despair. Churches that promise some form of utopia on earth are dealing in dangerous currency. They trade in people's hope and despair. If prosperity does not come, the already unhappy people are blamed for their own flawed existence – their faith was not good or strong enough. Milbank (2010:29) describes prosperity theology as follows:

> The church becomes perversely that place where egotism is diverted from criminal recourse into subtle modes of spiritual pride, the place where both excessive emotional drives and excessive accumulated capital can be redirected toward the recruitment of new souls for heaven in the world to come.

The aim of prosperity-driven churches to "save souls" for an eschatological future, as they themselves display prosperity as a sign of success, may seem attractive. However, the message and example of Jesus are about helping real people in the real world full of trouble. That is not a particularly attractive prospect. It requires 'compassion', literally 'to suffer with' the other. Paul asks: Are you prepared to see it, or have the gods of this world blinded your minds to keep you from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4)?

3.4 Mirror, mirror on the wall...

Since 1981, the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has been doing sociological and demographic research with the aim to construct an image of what is going on. The results are published under the name *Kerkspieël* (literally, church mirror). When looking in the mirror to see what church and religiosity look like in the contemporary world, some fragments can be identified. There is a dying institutional church. There is evidence of a post-secular spirituality. There is the big noise of prosperity religion. In some instances, Christianity has taken a post-

denominational turn. There is interreligious affinity and interaction, on the one hand, and religious intolerance, on the other. There is a civil-like religiosity which is the post-secular version of civil religion. Fundamentalist biblicism is often the response to fear. There is a trend toward anti-intellectualism in favour of activism – stop thinking and rather do something.

'Do something' is, indeed, a pertinent message. It is necessary to try and shake the solid foundations of oppressive systems, or nothing will change. However, this cannot be done at the expense of thinking, in order to come to a deeper *understanding* of the underlying forces that hold these systems in place. Only then can depth-strategies for thorough and effective disruption be devised. If the consequences of action are not thought through, disruption can simply become a wave of destruction.

If the mirror image of church and religion is complicated, so is the image of the world in which we are trying to be church and do church. The frustration levels of the youth are high. Ecological disaster is becoming increasingly evident. A kind of mondial culturalism is developing. Rapid demographic change is taking place worldwide. Unemployment, poverty, and migration are escalating. Although there is much 'speak' of human rights, human dignity, well-being, and flourishing, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening. The renewed interest in scientific eugenics (breeding good genes and eradicating bad ones) is again giving momentum to neo-nationalism. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has implications for humanity. Kinzel (2017:81) asks: Where does all of this "progress" leave the human factor?

As all things technical take central stage, *homo disruptus* – the thorough disruption of humanity and what it means to be human – will quite possibly be the result (Ungerer 2019). From a theological perspective, anything in this world, be it human or machine, that ousts God from the centre of life will lead not only to disruption, but also to annihilation. If God and human beings have become obsolete, how can believers *be* the body of Christ in this world with a healthy heart that is open to the other? Deep reflection is necessary. These issues and questions cannot be brushed over in a superficial and populist way.

3.5 Populism

'Populism' illustrates the *drawbacks* of the 'advantages' of our brave new world. If the church fails to recognise the *drawbacks*, it is in danger of getting sucked in by what is uncritically taken to be 'advantages'. In his ground-breaking works *Sapiens – A brief history of humankind* (2014), *Homo Deus: A brief history of tomorrow* (2016), and *21 Lessons for the 21st century* (2018), in which he reflects on "what it means to be human in an age of bewilderment", Israeli anthropologist Yuval Noah Harari points out how humanity, wealth and

industrial revolution have become god in the 21st century. This is the kind of disposition to which Isaiah 6:10 refers as a "fat heart", "the heart of someone who has everything he or she wants or needs – and therefore does not change direction" (Wünch 2017:185).

Every era throughout history has had its specific challenges, not only for humanity, but also for Christian communities of faith and church institutions. Every era, in its own way, disrupted the ordinary lives of people. In the past, the disruption was, more often than not, caused by war, which affected people's outlook on life and the future and influenced their relationship with the world and often also with God.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, there is a wholly different kind of 'warfare'. A complicated diversity of factors, among others the rise of populism, and racist, nationalist and xenophobic tendencies, disrupts human lives. Disruption itself has become central. It affects people's identity and reality. They have become *homo disruptus* – the disrupted human being (Ungerer 2019). Although old enemies such as war, famine and natural disasters are still prevalent, the new threat of total disruption includes the "ever-expanding offer of technology, material goods, the Internet of Things (IoT), connectivity and availability of multimedia" (Ungerer 2019:1). For Schwab (2016:1), this disruption is "fundamentally changing the way we live, work, and relate to one another", the scope of which is "unlike anything humankind has experienced before". What affects people and their world will also affect their personal spirituality and communities of faith.

Rapid technological innovation is called 'progress' – a positive term that purports unlimited contact with one another (96% coverage of mobile cellular networks) and easy access to information (90% accessibility to the Internet) to be good for people (Ungerer 2019:2). 'Connection' and 'progress' are presented as positive.

However, history has shown that disruption of any sort does not affect all human lives equally. Whatever the cause, be it war or natural disaster or technological 'progress', vulnerable groups are affected most. The current era is no different. Disruption and the 'progress' that lies at its root, serve to perpetuate systems of inequality. They widen the gap between rich and poor. Schwab (2016:42-44) gives another example, namely from The Global Gender Gap Report of 2015 (World Economic Forum), according to which gender parity is another one hundred and eighteen years away. 'Progress' clearly does not mean progress for all, or that the world will change for the better. It may be 'progress' for some, but for those who have always suffered most, it remains more of the same.

There are different opinions with regard to the implications of all of this for communities of faith and institutional churches. For some, religion and the church will become increasingly *irrelevant* in a world where the machine and

'progress' take the central place. For others, the church will become *more relevant* as human beings are made irrelevant by technological progress and where, in spite of endless connectivity, there is a dire need for authentic human connection. As is the case with all forms of rampant 'progress', ethical issues ensue. In this instance, churches can also play a significant role. In-depth reflection and discernment are necessary in a confusing and disruptive world (Ungerer 2019:6). Branson (2018:45) calls it "discernment and participation". For him, "God is present and active, and we are invited to join." One way to "join" the present and active God, is by caring for one another. In his book, *Pastoral and spiritual care in a digital age. The future is now,* practical theologican Kirk Bingaman (2018:1) explores what the care of human beings entails in an age of "rapid advance and proliferation of digital technologies".

3.6 Discontent

Even in the West, whence came the technological revolution, many regard it with trepidation. In an article in *Foreign Policy* titled "We are on the verge of darkness", Roth (2017a), Executive Director of the Human Rights Watch, explains that "many people feel left behind by technological change, the global economy, and growing inequality". In the 2017 World Report of the Human Rights Watch, he points to a growing sense of unease with diversity – ethnic, religious and racial, and "the sense that governments and the elite ignore public concerns" (Roth 2017b). Some politicians exploit people's fear and discontent. Polititians who take a strong stand against terrorism or migration by scapegoating individuals or communities, often gain ground among voters. This means that the rights of individuals and groups are compromised by a populist majority who regard it as their right to protect themselves, irrespective of the cost to others.

European immigrant communities, for example, who have long been productive citizens of the land, are now facing increasing hostility from politicians and even neo-nazi-type organisations. One such organisation is Combat 18, which was founded in 1992 in the United Kingdom (Atkins 2004:67) and has since spread to the United States of America, Canada, and Germany. The deaths of a number of immigrants and other ethnic minorities have been linked to this terrorist group. The German government banned the group on 23 January 2020.

In the 2017 World Report of the Human Rights Watch, Roth (2017b) points to another symptom of "the rising tide of populism". He calls it "the shallow appeal of the strongman". The 2016 presidential election campaign in the United States of America is an example. The autocrat, who asserts his "majoritarian" vision, is embraced by the majority and those who disagree are verbally attacked and/or removed from office. The own is protected, often at the expense of the rights of others. None of this really contributes to stability in

society. It is a reaction to the fear and unease caused by the disruption of rapid change in all spheres of life. For Roth (2017b), "what is needed in the face of this global assault on human rights is a vigorous reaffirmation and defence of the basic values underpinning these rights".

Who is better equipped to defend the basic values of respect for all humanity, as creation in the image of God, than communities of faith? Theologian Jürgen Moltmann, who lived through the Nazi-era in Germany, calls the resurgence of nationalism "a setback for humanity" in a 2019 lecture to students at the World Council of Churches' Ecumentical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland. He challenged Christians to reject nationalistic ideas because "the church of Christ is present in all the people on earth and cannot become 'a national religion'" (Moltmann 2019). The body of Christ should be "the church of all humanity". According to Anderson (2010), "attempts to authenticate a particular national identity inevitably distort Chistian understanding of the biblical narrative, and thus the identity and practices of the ecclesia".

3.7 How can you mend this broken heart?

The broken heart of the body of Christ cannot be mended by "more" – more effort, more action, more technology, more wealth and prosperity. The empty excess of the contemporary world is part of the problem, not the solution. The heart of the body of Christ can heal when it is filled with the Spirit of God and is open to others. In Ezekiel 36:26, God promises to do just that: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."

The father of practical theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher ([1830] 1976:16-17), who witnessed the rise of nationalism at the turn of the 19th century, used the theory of affect to reflect on emotion and feeling. Something from the outside triggers an inner state. A specific *Zeitgeist* affects how people think about, interpret and feel about things (Herder 2009:357-382). This leads to shared values and a shared practice. Mind and body are a unity. Thoughts are expressed in the body. The two cannot be separated and the one should not dominate the other. That would amount to a reduced life. It was about whole personhood with all its attributes – physical, intellectual, and psychological – "and the heart was conceived of as the governing centre for all these" (Banwell 1980:625). Theology reflects on the unity of mind and body and on what human wholeness and a full life entail. The "lived religion" of believers is their effort to make sense of life and cope with a complex world (Gräb 2005:185).

The inner state or feeling caused by the environment both *affects* the self and *transcends* the self (Herder 2009:6). This is what makes connection with the transcendent (God) possible. Existential freedom can be experienced where human existence is transcended (Van Aarde 2019). A deep connection

with God leads to a meaningful and healthy existence, even in a world where experiences cause emotions to fluctuate. The transcendent God is the only constant in human life. Connection with God is only meaningful if it is also connected with the real world and people's real lives. This is how a broken heart can be mended.

In the pre-modern era, the poet of Psalm 82 described the connection between God, human beings, and the real world. The gods, like the stars, come and go. Great empires and their 'state religions' appear like stars and are swallowed up by the next upcoming star. At present, the empires, emperors and state religions of old are dead. Julius Caesar and emperor Augustus, who were simultaneously regarded as the sun god, also came and went, swallowed up by Christianity, which became a world religion, with Jesus Christ as the upcoming star – the morning star and the evening star.

If the present Christianity is simply another empire-like religion, it too will be swallowed up by the next up and coming star/god – technology and 'progress' maybe? If the Christian church remains its male-dominated, prosperity-oriented self, power hungry, torn by internal politics from the micro-level of the church councils of congregations, to synods, to the upper echelons of the mighty Roman Catholic Church, it does look a lot like those lost empires.

Psalm 82 uses the image of a great assembly, a great "synod", where God presides and renders judgement over the gods of the world. The presiding "moderator", God, asks: How long are you going to carry on like this?

> How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked?
> Defend the weak and the fatherless;
> uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
> Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.
> The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing.
> They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
> I said, 'You are "gods"; you are all sons of the Most High.'
> But you will die like mere mortals; you will fall like every other ruler.
> Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

Maybe, in the time that remains, now is the time for a call to synod, asking God to preside and take God's place in the centre. Not the doings of empires of power or churches of power will endure, but the righteousness of God. *Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they will see God* (Matt. 5:8).

3.8 Conclusion

The broken heart of the body of Christ cannot be healed with 'more' effort. The pressures and excesses of the present world and the stress of the church's battle for survival burden the body and strain the heart. Rather, "less is more", as the saying goes.

Rest is prescribed for the over-burdened heart and fatigued body of Christ. To "rest in God" means to trust God for whatever is needed – nothing more, nothing less.

A life of *true simplicity*, in the words of the hymn, is congruent with the gospel of Jesus Christ: Simply being in God and being with and for others.

If body, head and heart are congruent, the body of Christ is whole. A whole body can be strong and flexible, with a healthy, Spirit-filled and pure heart that is open to others. Then the church can be what it is meant to be. The joy of being what and where you are meant to be, is described in the old Shaker hymn (*Simple gifts* by Joseph Brackett [1848]):

> 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
> 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
> And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
> 'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
> When true simplicity is gained,
> To bow and to bend we shall not be ashamed,
> To turn, turn will be our delight,
> Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

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Chapter 4
From the heart to the public? Public pastoral care to foster community healing, peace and transformation

Vhumani Magezi[1]

4.1 Introduction

This chapter locates the need for churches to engage with public issues as a critical church and society process. The human heart (mind) influences our disposition to transformation. To steer people's thinking and hearts to practical action (transformation of church and society), this chapter contributes to *A battle for the heart. How (not) to transform church and society*, by providing a public pastoral care framework that could be embraced on the frontline ministry by practitioners to ensure church and society transformation.

The heart is considered the centre of human life. In combination, heart (*kardia*) and mind (*nous*) are part of the soul (Louw 2014). The New Testament describes the heart and soul as the seat of life or even life itself. Marsh (2018:1) observed that "most languages are littered with references to the heart as the seat of the soul and emotion". Marsh (2018:1) added that, even within scientific medicine, before the mechanistic explanation of human physiology where "the heart came to be seen as a pump and the idea that people could die 'from a broken heart'", the heart "has always had a central role in human imagination and iconography". Marsh (2018:2), citing Sandeep Jauhar's history of cardiology, noted that the huge progress in cardiology of inserting a catheter through a vein has "moved away from the emotional heart to a narrow focus on the biomechanical pump". This mechanical approach hurts patients, as this has removed the warm humane feeling to treating the human being as a thing (Marsh 2018). In African thinking and languages, a heart is more than an organ; it is a controlling centre of human disposition and regulator for good or bad. For instance, a caring person who helps others and is concerned about other people is often described as a person with a 'good heart' (for example, in Zulu, *unentliziyo elungile*, a person is good and kind). A 'good heart' is expressed through humaneness, which is evident through acts such as love, generosity, kindness, and good manners towards other people, while a 'bad heart' is evident through one's

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inability to care and relate well with other people. Thus, far from being an organ, the heart denotes the centre of life. This centre (heart) is to the service of not only the self, but also the community. It has a public social role. The heart has a public visible dimension that can be evaluated.

Theologically, the heart entails the reality of the total human being, both soul and body as a whole.

> As the image and likeness of God, people are animated subjectively from the core and throughout their being by that primary faculty of thought, affection, and will which the Bible calls the 'heart'. The heart is responsible for how a man or woman sees the world (Dallas Baptist University 2011:1, 6).

Thus, from a theological and popular perspective, the heart refers to the centre of human life, the inner being of an individual that influences and shapes our disposition to the outside world and our relationships. An individual's disposition to others such as kindness, concern, and helpfulness forms a compound of publicly expressed virtues termed a good heart (*inhliziyo enhle*, in Ndebele) or the opposite thereof (*inhliziyo embi – an evil/bad heart).* In pastoral care, the positive attitude and concern for other people that flows from the heart defines the qualitative dimension of Christians as spiritual people recreated by the transforming power of the Spirit – pneumatological beings (Louw 2014; Magezi 2020). Within a pneumatological ontic being framework, Christians' humanity is expected to reflect the ethos of love and care for other human beings.

The public dimension of Christianity is a critical element of the expression of Christian faith. Theology is not merely a private matter of the heart. It has a public role. There is an increasing challenge for theology to shift from being a private enterprise to performing a public role. This has resulted in the rise of public theology (Kim 2017:40). Public theology attempts to correct individualistic privatised Christianity that does not address people's lived realities to engaging people's daily experiences (Levesque 2014:38; Mannion 2009:122). Elsdörfer (2019:106) noted that "public theology is related to social sciences, to social ethics, to systematic theology and to theological ethics". While public theology is a theological approach that focuses its reflection on ongoing issues at the public square, the question that should be posed is: How are the other theological approaches such as pastoral care engaged in people's daily experiences? Tracy (1981:5) usefully guided that all theology has a public orientation, but the difference is the publics of the theologian. Tracy maintained that the academy is for fundamental theologians, the church is for the systematic theologian, and the wider society is for the practical theologian. Tracy's broad guide is a good starting point, but it does not give clarity on how other specific subdisciplines such as pastoral are deemed public. McMaster's (2001:125) remark is apt in this regard:

> most of us never suspected that pastoral care would be a significant discipline in the movement to publicise theology. Ethics, of course; theology, yes; but pastoral care? No way!

McMaster's (2001:125) question about how pastoral care could be a significant discipline in the movement to publicise theology is important in light of the increasing conversation of public pastoral care. Many pastoral care scholars agree that pastoral care is shifting from individual intrapsychic focus to addressing public issues (Louw 2014; McClure 2012; Miller-McLemore 2004, 2005, 2018; Ramsay 2004, 2014). Koppel (2015:151) advised that

> practising public theology asks that pastoral care practitioners and theologians take seriously and engage mindfully with issues that concern groups of people and whole populations, rather than individual persons in isolation.

However, these theologians do not clearly define the boundaries of public pastoral care, which causes lack of clarity on what it is. Leslie (2008:96-97) admitted that, at one level, public pastoral care appears to be practical theology and, at times, sounds like public theology.

In view of the lack of a clear definition and markers of what constitutes public pastoral care, this chapter attempts to address this lacuna in two ways. First, it conceptualises, defines and draws some boundary markers for public pastoral care. Secondly, it suggests some practical ways on how churches could perform a public pastoral role, particularly in African communities.

4.2 Conceptualisation of public pastoral care

Public pastoral care is a ministry approach that integrates different theological disciplines in addressing people's life challenges. It is a ministry approach at an interdisciplinary theological interface. It draws largely from public and practical theology in conversation with other theological disciplines. To have clarity on public pastoral care, it is imperative to have an understanding of public theology and practical theology. Public theology will be discussed first, followed by practical theology as an umbrella discipline for pastoral care. This will be followed by discerned overlaps between public theology, practical theology, and pastoral care.

Kim (2017:40) observed that, in the 1970s, Martin Martyr and Robert Bellah introduced the phrase 'public theology' into theological circles. Public theology is a "critical, reflective and reasoned engagement of theology in society to bring the kingdom of God, which is for the sake of the poor and marginalised" (Kim 2017:40). Kim (2017:40) added that public theology is a theology that

> arises out of the engagement of theology in the spheres of politics and economics, which was then expanded to civil societies and other areas of the public life.

Public theology is an attempt to correct irrelevant, distant and aloof theology in light of people's daily realities. In fact, public theology interrogates the role of theology in society. As a theological approach, public theology draws from many theological movements and social sciences. Thus, "public theology is related to social sciences, to social ethics, to fundamental theology and to theology of morals" (Elsdörfer 2019:105). Brietenberg (2003:66) argued that public theology is

> theologically informed public discourse about public issues, addressed to the church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other religious body, as well as the larger public or publics, argued in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria.

However, it is important to note that the word 'public' in 'public theology' does not simply refer to the opposite of private as in our daily usage. Morton (2004:25-36) explained that publics are different from communities in that the emphasis is not on commonalities as in communities, but on difference. The publics are social spaces where dialogue occurs. Day and Kim (2017:2) noted that the publics

> cohere in the midst of, and because of, the difference and even conflict they accommodate. 'It is indeed a forum or agora, a space which allows and indeed encourages encounter with that which is different'.

Day and Kim (2017:2) added that the publics is characterised by "questioning, doubting and challenging, as well as asserting, confirming and agreeing". Tracy (1981:5) identified three publics, namely the academy, the wider society and the church. Day and Kim (2017:2) explained that Stackhouse (2005) added a fourth public, namely the religious and political sector. Benne (1995) added law as another public, while Smit (2013) identified four publics, namely political, economic, civil society, and public opinion. Clarity on public theology can be shed from its marks: It is an incarnational theology; it strives to identify the publics to engage; it is interdisciplinary, and it is dialogical, fifthly, and performed (Koopman 2010; Tshaka 2014; Day & Kim 2017; Walker 2019).

Methodologically, Mannion (2009) observed five typologies that public theology has followed. The first is a defensive approach, where one argues for the relevance of theology and religion in society. The second is a reactionary approach, where battle lines are drawn between theology and the secular world. The third is an integrationist approach, where church and theology can carry on with their business and be free to interject into public debates. The fourth is a

pluralist approach, where theologians advocate for inclusion of Christian symbols in the public square to ensure that theology is fully theological and fully public. The fifth is an analogical, pluralist-constructive and dialogical approach, whereby the public realm and the realm of the church and faith should be free of borders in both positive and negative terms. This approach employs a comparative and hermeneutical approach, is attentive to historical consciousness, and affirms pluralism.

In view of the above clarifications about public theology, Stackhouse (2005:8) suggested that its task is to influence people's consciences, so that their political decisions will be informed by moral and spiritual convictions. Differing with Stackhouse's position on public theology, Walker (2019:33) asked:

> How did we get to this place where an eminent advocate for public theology considers the church to be out of place if it seeks to influence public policy, but in its place when content with influencing only individual conscience?

In response to the question, Walker (2019:34) drew an explanation of the context, that gave birth to modernity, from Toulmin followed by Dean Drayton's analysis of Philip Bobbitt's *The shield of Achilles*. Walker's (2019:34) analysis reveals the "phenomenon associated with the rise of nation state, namely separation of church and state". Furthermore, he maps the evolving place of religion within the state. Walker noted that the church has been the dominant authority in the West for centuries, but that, by the late 18th and early 19th century, the state became an entity with authority that rivalled the church, and then the state exceeded the church. Drawing from Bobbitt, Walker (2019:35) explained that the period between 1861 and 1991 saw gradual evolution and blossoming of the modern nation state. This resulted in the shifting of the relationship between the church and the state. In Bobbitt's analysis, there are six epochs of the modern state. We are currently in the sixth one, the market state. In the market state, there is tension between culture, justice, and morality, on the one hand, and business and government, on the other. In this context, business and government direct the concerns of the state.

In view of this historical context, Walker (2019:37-39) opined that public theology has three tasks. First, to be a reminder both as an academic discipline and a voice in the public square that the modern democratic state has a theological foundation. Democracy, in its origin and developments, has deep roots in the Christian faith. This foundation is that all people are created in the image of God, that love is the inner spirit of a covenantal binding for communities, and that the state is the bulwark against sin understood as crime. Secondly, public theology is to be an instrument that the theological values of image of God, love and protection from sin should flourish. These three theological motifs provide a systematic and doctrinal agenda for public theology. Thirdly, pub-

lic theology has a responsibility to name the ways in which the democratic state itself is sinful. Walker (2019:39) usefully suggested that public theology functions as a voice for people's expression of what things ought to be; provides opportunity for correction of things that are going wrong, and gives people hope in the midst of degenerating state systems.

What then is practical theology? How does practical theology interface with public theology? Practical theology is difficult to define, because its spectrum "is so large that it can accommodate many different contexts and challenges" (Ganzevoort 2009:2). Hermans and Schweitzer (2014:88) commented that there are different understandings of practical theology:

> There are different understandings or, as some would say, different paradigms in practical theology, depending on the question whether this discipline aim[s] at the praxis of the pastor; of every person (believer) in the Christian community; the Christian community within society as a whole and / or the Christian community in relationship to other religions and secular worldviews. Is practical theology about the praxis of faith, religious communication, spirituality, the sacred, or the experience of ultimate concern? Is it about the praxis of the past, the present, or the possible? What kind of theory do we build about this praxis? Who can profit from this theory or be supported by it?

Ganzevoort (2009:2) described the divergences in practical theology as "forks" in the road:

> the forks in the road regard how broad the object is defined, how praxis and theological theory are related, how the researcher is positioned vis-à-vis the object, and how the primary audience is understood.

For this reason, Ganzevoort mentioned that practical theology is much easier doing than understanding or defining what it is. Despite these divergences, practical theologians agree that a practical theological approach entails three elements. It begins with a base in practice, moves towards theoretical reflection, and returns to practice (Magezi 2019a; Cahalan & Mikoski 2014). However, this line practice-theory-practice is not straight (Cahalan & Mikoski 2014). Miller-McLemore (2012) explained that practical theology points to different locations, including from daily life to the library, from fieldwork to the classroom, from congregation to the community, and from academic guild to global context. Miller-McLemore (2012:20) offered a broad inclusive definition of practical theology as:

> (1) an activity of believers seeking to sustain a life of reflective faith in the everyday life, (2) a method or way of analys-

> ing theology in practice used by religious leaders and by teachers and students across the theological curriculum, (3) a curricular area in theological education focused on ministerial practice and sub specialties, and (4) an academic discipline pursued by a smaller subset of scholars to support and sustain these first three enterprises.

To provide a pragmatic understanding of practical theology, in agreement with Miller-McLemore, Darragh (2007) advised that it is better to think of practical theology as a way of doing practical theology than to think of it in abstract or definition terms. According to Browning (1991:55-56), to understand and practise practical theology, we must ask or undertake four fundamental questions or tasks:

- 'How do we understand this concrete situation in which we must act?' – this consists of the interplay of institutional systems and how they converge on the situation.
- 'What should be our praxis in this concrete situation?' – the bringing together of symbolic and actional norms into an intimate relationship with the particularities of the situation.
- 'How do we critically defend the norms of our praxis in this concrete situation?' – the defence of these norms is what distinguishes the revised correlational approach to practical theology.
- 'What means, strategies, and rhetorics should we use in this concrete situation?' – this poses the issue of where people are in the process of transformation.

Osmer (2008:4), following the same line as Browning, explained that the task of practical theology entails answering four questions:

- What is going on? This entails understanding the situation, which is contextual analysis.
- Why is this going on? This is an interpretation and understanding of the situation.
- What ought to be going on? This entails developing a perspective and understanding from the normative texts.
- What are the strategic steps that should be taken to respond to the situation? As by its very nature, practical theology should result in strategic actions.

How do practical theology, public theology and pastoral care converge? Pastoral care is a subdiscipline of practical theology. In view of public theology and its parameters, when pastoral care takes an explicit public dimension, it becomes public pastoral care. From the above consideration of practical theology and public theology, there are clear areas that assist in establishing convergence points for public pastoral care. Dreyer (2004:919-920) explained that practical

theology takes a public dimension when it focuses on the broader everyday issues of people, including vexing global issues, than merely church and clergy. Osmer and Schweitzer (2003:218) advised that public practical theology entails ensuring that the public is one of the audiences of practical theology; that practical theology includes everyday concerns and issues in its reflection, and that practical theology should facilitate a dialogue between theology and contemporary culture. The convergence of public theology and practical theology is evident in some methods such as integrationist and dialogical approaches that are followed in public theology. Furthermore, some public theology typologies such as incarnational, interdisciplinary, dialogical and performance have similarities with practical theology. Pastoral care, as a practical theology discipline, is anchored in such dialectic and spiral approaches.

In linking public theology and pastoral care as a practical theological discipline, the proposal for the public theology task, namely giving people a voice to enable them to express themselves on what things ought to be; providing an opportunity for correction of things that are going wrong, and giving people hope in the midst of degenerating state systems, finds resonance with pastoral care.

In pastoral care, the *paraklesis* metaphor function entails advocacy and speaking on behalf of people (Louw 1998; Magezi 2007). The pastor is the voice of the voiceless (Louw 2014; McClure 2012). McClure (2012:276) observed that the increased participation and writing of women, people of colour and pastoral care theologians from liberation perspectives is making pastoral care conscious of the role of structures that need to be confronted and corrected. In this sense, pastoral healing is shifting from intrapsychic healing to changing structures that hinder community healing. Indeed, the healing of individual people is the sum total of community healing. Pastoral care should thus adopt a public healing dimension. The theme of hope translates from individuals as hoping individuals to a community of hope. Hope ceases to be solely an intrapsychic, private, personal aspect, but something that translates to the rest of community people for the exuberance of life. Hope therapy (Louw 1998, 2014) entails instilling a fresh perspective of anticipation of change in the now and the future. Notably, the overlaps in public theology, broader practical theology, and pastoral care make public pastoral care fuzzy and confusing. Leslie (2008:96-97) experienced that, at one level, public pastoral care appears to be practical theology and, at times, sounds like public theology. Leslie thus clarified that it is pastoral care, not practical theology or public theology, because it is the practice of pastoral care in a public setting.

Perhaps, the clearest distinction between public theology and public pastoral care as a practical theology subdiscipline is that public pastoral care always ends with a reformation of practices or practical strategies to improve ministerial approaches. Louw (2014) noted that, in terms of recent developments, practical theology is viewed as an action science. In this sense, Louw

(2014) added that practical theology is, therefore, the science of the theological, critical and hermeneutical reflection on the intention and meaning of human actions, as expressed in the practice of ministry and the art of faithful daily living. Public pastoral care is about addressing diverse vexing challenges of daily life in all spheres. Elsdörfer (2019:105) rightly states that

> Christian spirituality and its foundational theology are not to separate from daily life practice. Christian spirituality has to be rooted in theological reflection; it has to be accountable for everyday encounters and actions in daily life. In this respect, theological theory ranges behind public activities for the sake of societies.

4.3 Public pastoral care: definition and markers

In view of the above discussion, a definition and markers of public pastoral care will be proposed. I offer the following definition:

> Public pastoral care is (1) caring for people from a Christian spiritual perspective whereby (2) the care is provided to people in different public spaces and contexts (3) to address holistic issues affecting people such as spiritual, social, emotional, cultural, economic, political and others (4) to enable them to meaningfully cope with life.

First, public pastoral care is a special type of care that is provided from a Christian spiritual perspective. Pastoral care is *cura animarum* (cure of souls), which refers to the care provided from a spiritual perspective. It is sometimes referred to as spiritual care (Lartey 1997; Louw 2014; Magezi 2016; McClure 2012). The care has a specific goal and motive. It endeavours to help people cope with life issues in a manner that enhances their spirituality and fosters meaning. It is provided by people whose motive derives from their Christian convictions. A Christian spirituality is founded in transformation of the complete work of Christ's redemption and the fulfilment of all God's promises. The goal is a mature faith that overcomes the limitations of the imperfect world. This conviction entails a challenge for Christians to embody God's kingdom to the world. The embodiment and mediation entail being conduits of God's shalom to the world. Any aspect of the present life that obstructs God's shalom in people is an object of address in public pastoral care. Thus, the new ontic being of Christians as spiritually transformed people (who we are), the empowerment by the Spirit (Holy Spirit empowerment), and the Christian love for humanity created in the *imago Dei* (motive) define the identity and perspective of the public caregiver.

Secondly, the care is provided to people in different public spaces. This indicates that the context and environment, where the care focuses, are not the

church or congregation, but non-ecclesial contexts. These people at the public square are from different walks of life.

Thirdly, the care aims to address diverse issues affecting people. The problems could be spiritual, social, physical, political, or any other issue affecting people. The people could be experiencing political oppression, family breakdown, grief, poor service provision, or any other issue causing individual and community anxiety, pain, suffering, and despair. Public pastoral care entails championing initiatives to give voice to people, explore correctives, and give people hope in the midst of degenerating situations. The care approach in these contexts takes different forms. For instance, in a municipality where there is poor service provision, one could approach the responsible authorities for redress and, if resisted, mobilise for mass confrontation (Magezi 2019b). In some instances, there could be community tensions where the pastor may have to play the role of mediator and peacemaker. The type of care is informed by the prevailing needs. The challenge in providing such care is that a pastor has to know something of everything, which Magezi (2019c:5) called an "expert generalist". Magezi (2019c:5) quipped: "But how is this possible? How can a pastor be expected to perform such a 'superhuman' role?". Greider (2008) asked this question of the ever-expanding scope of pastoral care and suggests that pastoral caregivers should make strategic decisions about where to focus depending on their social context and demand. She suggested that pastoral care providers should be articulate about their limits and how they triage (Greider 2008:54).

Fourthly, the care enables people to meaningfully cope with life. Louw (2014) argued that theological understanding of hope is not merely about an exit point and futile attempt to bypass painful existential realities. It is a hope founded in the complete work of Christ's redemption and the fulfilment of all God's promises. However, how is this language of hope communicated to the public? It is imperative to translate the Christian language to a language understood at the public square. De Villiers (2005:530) noted that it is imperative to translate Christian vision to a wider society. The public requires a language that is understood by all (De Gruchy 2007:39). Koopman (2012:1) advised that "prophetic public theology should include a vision of a redeemed and new society (habitat) of people, with new habits (habitus)". In this instance, the deep theological roots of democracy are important (Walker 2019:37-39). For instance, the notion 'image of God' (*imago Dei*) resonates with human rights, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Loving your neighbour as yourself challenges people to maintain community adhesion and virtues of care and concern for each other. The theological notion of sin provides and informs the understanding of crime. The hope (wish and trust) of people will be ignited, as people are given voice and the possibility of change in their challenging situation.

4.4 Approaches for applying public pastoral care in congregations – propositions

Having provided an understanding of public pastoral care and a definition framework, it is worthwhile to suggest some possible approaches of performing it in African congregations and communities. The approaches are summarised in a five-point public pastoral approaches model in Figure 4.1.

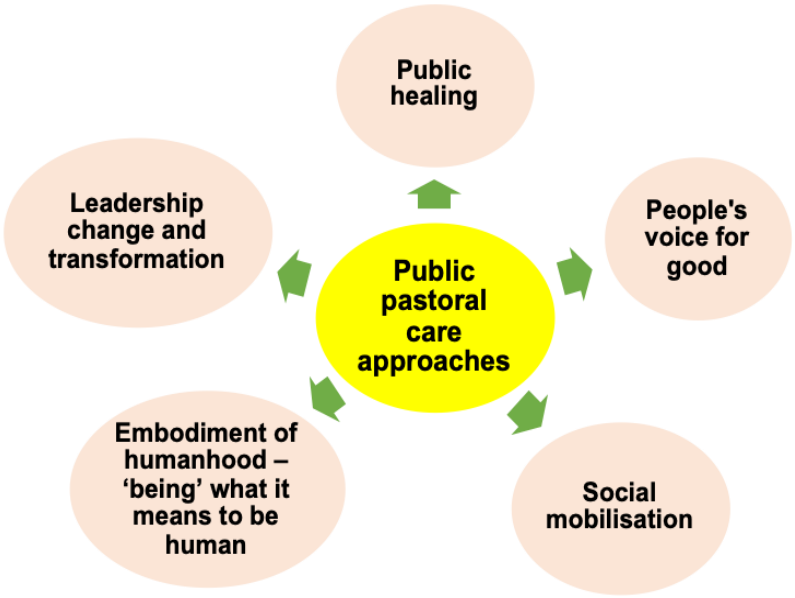

Figure 4.1: Public pastoral care approaches

4.4.1 Public healing

The pastor and church (congregation) can perform a public healing ministry and blessing of communities. This role entails four areas, namely community healing, spiritual healthcare, blessing communities, and national healing. Community healing refers to community stability restoration, peace and flourishing. The healing roles that could be performed include mediating and fostering community peace in times of community conflict. Spiritual health care entails being consulted as a spiritual leader in the community on different matters, including spiritual attacks, offering prayers in public gatherings, and officiating in public functions. Pastors also perform hospital ministry, including praying for the sick who belong to their congregations and for those who do not belong to their congregations. This is different in the United States of America and other countries where they have specialised Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) staff that perform hospital ministry. The blessing communities are evident in many African communities and national events. Several examples could be cited, including the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) inviting a pastor to bless and pray for the

delegates at the previous presidential elections rally, and public national events such as state funerals (for example, the late former President Nelson Mandela's funeral). National care and healing entails pastors playing an active role in some national counselling and healing efforts. For instance, the Healing of Memories initiative in South Africa is a pastoral effort. These community and national trauma counselling efforts were also witnessed during Bishop Tutu's leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Land Commission in Zimbabwe and the counselling efforts in post-genocide Rwanda.

4.4.2 Giving people a voice

Pastoral care plays a critical role as a voice of conscience and advocating for good. Pastors perform this role for the sake of justice, prosperity, and the good of the nation (Maqhina 2016). The advocacy areas, in which pastors and churches have been active, include good governance; eradication of gender-based violence (GBV), as well as oppression and ill treatment of women and children. Other areas include pathological religion – religion that extorts and oppresses people (for example, prosperity and inhuman acts; prioritisation of youth in the current time; migration; economic exclusion, exploitation and suppression; negative global forces, and positive cultural practices). The South African Council of Churches (SACC) and other church bodies such as the Catholic Bishops Conference have performed this role in varying degrees. Pastors and churches perform advocacy initiatives and partner with other national bodies to implement community interventions.

4.4.3 Church-led social mobilisation

Churches and church leaders (pastors) are also critical in mobilising communities for the social good. In situations where communities experience community ills, churches provide critical community adhesion that can pull people together to harness them for a collective good. Churches can thus lead in community and context analysis (Hendriks 2004), raising awareness of evil, organising people, providing social gathering spaces, linking communities, and networking for democratic change (Magezi 2019a).

4.4.4 Leadership and transformation

Pastors are considered important leaders in their communities. They play a critical role in leadership change and transformation through their followers. For this reason, many political leaders in Africa work hard to lure church leaders to endorse and encourage their followers to support them during election time. In many instances, some church leaders have become politicians such as, for example, former President of Zambia Frederick Chiluba (1990-2000) and first

leader of Congress of the People (COPE) in South Africa, Bishop Mvume Dandala (Allaby 2010). Church leaders could also lead in engagement with public leaders in local, district and national government for improved leadership; lobby for transformation as community leaders when public leaders fail; exert community pressure through mobilising people, and campaigning for change to oppose unethical and bad political leadership.

4.4.5 Embodiment of humanhood through 'being' what it means to be human

Churches can challenge bad leadership and bad practices through advocacy. They should, however, model good leadership and what good people look like. Notwithstanding many bad pastoral and Christian leadership examples witnessed in communities, churches and church leaders can perform a public pastoral role of providing hope through modelling what good leaders in community, society and nation are like. For instance, churches should provide care and *diakonia* services to all people, in order to show compassion, embrace, help, and support other people. Churches can be beacons that respect women, children and the youth, thereby being a community model. Rather than focusing on scriptural texts that advance some acts that do not promote healthy communities such as women subordination, churches should highlight life-giving and empowering scriptural texts and interpretations, such as, for example, the Tamar campaign (Nyabera & Montgomery 2007). Churches should also focus on contemporary challenges rather than on abstract things that do not currently apply in people's lives. These contemporary issues should entail social and community engagement.

4.5 Conclusion

This discussion highlighted that theology and Christian ministry should shift from being a private heart or soul matter to adopting a public dimension. In that regard, pastoral care should adopt a public pastoral care dimension. Public pastoral care is a care ministry approach that draws from public theology and pastoral care. Therefore, public pastoral care, as an interdisciplinary theological approach, has similarities with both public theology and practical theology. Within this fuzziness, public pastoral care is distinguished as *cura animarum* (cure of souls) that focuses on pastoral care in the public domain. Four markers define public pastoral care, namely its caring spiritual perspective or framework; public audience and context; focus on integrated holistic issues affecting people, and its ultimate intention to foster coping in life. To overcome a theoretical approach to public pastoral care, suggestions have been made to implement such a pastoral approach. Five approaches have been suggested: adopting a public healing approach; giving people a voice; undertaking social mobilisation

to influence situations for people's good; pursuing a leadership change and transformation, and the embodiment of humanhood to vividly communicate the ideal of the kingdom on what it means to be human and serving other people. In order to perform such a ministerial approach effectively, pastors and churches should adopt an expert generalist approach, by developing awareness on multiple community issues affecting people, in order to assist them meaningfully.

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Chapter 5
A change of heart – the transformation of a multicultural congregation

Nico Mostert & Kobus Schoeman[1]

5.1 Introduction

The congregation as a community of believers is a place where believers come together to worship and confess their belief in, and relationship with the triune God. The desire and need to worship together should contribute towards answering certain needs of the heart of the believers. A core problem for both the Christian religion and the church is the battle of the heart. The problem lies in the heart and the answer should then also lie in the transformation of the heart for the individual believers and for the community of believers. There is a need for practices of flourishing, not only an individual need, but also within a community. The possibility of a better life with, and for others should be possible within a congregation. Using a practice-oriented framework, this chapter aims to describe possible changes in the movement towards a more desired situation in a multicultural congregation by the leadership of the congregation. It is essential to first describe the action problem and the empirical methodology, in order to address the action problem. The practice-oriented framework requires that, first, the actual position of the congregation and then the desired or normative position should be described. The following key question needs to be answered: Is it possible to describe a movement from the actual towards the desired, a change of heart by the leadership of the congregation?

5.2 Understanding the action problem

A congregation has an actual or current position and the intention to move or be reformed towards a more ideal or desired position. Verschuren (2009:155) describes this as a gap, the actual and the ideal. A congregation has a theological identity, which differs from its empirical or current identity that calls for an analysis to describe this gap (Nel 2009b:2). Action problems express the discrepancy between the actual (A) and the desired (D) component,

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and the participants express a need to understand or solve the difference between the actual and the desired (Verschuren 2009:155; McKenney & Reeves 2012:85-108). An action problem is identified and emerges from an awareness that the actual situation is not what it should be, and practices should be identified to move towards a more desired situation (Hermans & Schoeman 2015:30).

The desegregation of post-1994 South Africa posed new challenges to the local congregations that serve traditionally White urban communities. As Jonker (2006:19) points out:

> The political changes since 1990 have brought a much greater appreciation for the diversity of peoples, cultures, languages, and religions. The right to form cultural, religious, and linguistic communities is even entrenched in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution.

In support of this argument, Maponya (2018) argues

> that the church in South Africa after apartheid needs an honest re-evaluation of its liturgy, style and practice to precipitate transformation not only to those who are in one same circle, but also to the community or society it finds itself in.

It is, therefore, not only about the radical changes and their (negative) effects on a specific community such as a congregation, but also about the challenges, the new possibilities, and the ideal or the desired beyond the actual that these changes can unlock. Hermans (2014:115) describes this point as the "discrepancy between actual – ideal, the historical manifestation of the church (what is) and its essence as the Church of Christ (what ought to be)".

The Dutch Reformed congregation Hugenoot is different from other Dutch Reformed congregations in that it does not follow the traditional pattern of being White Afrikaans-speaking congregants only. Although this congregation is situated in a traditionally White urban neighbourhood, White Afrikaans-speaking, Black Sotho-speaking, and Asian (Chinese) Mandarin-speaking people form part of this congregation. Worship services are conducted in the same building at different time slots in different languages. Not all pastoral staff members are White and several events such as bazaars, certain worship services, meetings, and communal meals reflect some kind of inclusivity, which makes Hugenoot different from other congregations of the same denomination within the same geographical area. The congregation defines itself as a multicultural congregation, but there is a need and desire to be more inclusive.

In 1992, a new congregational vision was adopted that embodied the missional character into which the congregation was growing. It was taken from John 17:21 and read: "Een in Christus sodat die wêreld kan glo" (translation: One in Christ so that the world may believe). The church council describes the

purpose of this vision as a means to keep the congregation focused on their permanent relationship with God and their continued involvement with the church of Christ, each other, and the world (Oosthuizen 2009:15). The leadership of the Hugenoot congregation expressed a need to be more inclusive and the action problem is formulated as a need to grow towards a more integrated and multicultural congregation.

The A component may be identified by asking questions such as: What is the current position of the congregation? What are the challenges the congregation is facing? How does the problem manifest itself? How is it experienced or communicated in the congregation? The answers to these questions would contribute towards the description and understanding of the action problem.

The description of the A component in itself does not create an action problem. There needs to be an awareness that "it should not be like this". If not, there is no action problem, and people and organisations simply continue to do what they are doing. The D component is the prescriptive or normative dimension of the action problem. It does not refer to questions of true or false, but of what is desirable in terms of what we should be able to do. The D component is formulated in action terms of a dream for the future: What practices would shape the future of congregations? What, from a missional perspective, would be the calling of the congregation?

5.3 Methodological considerations for the exploration of the action problem

The methodology explains the empirical way in which the movement or change from the A component towards the D component is going to answer. The study positioned itself within a qualitative research framework; hence, the importance of making sample selection systematically, in order to ensure that the sample is indicative of the group and the data collected is credible. In qualitative research, statistical representativeness is not the aim; samples are usually selected with a purpose in mind. This implies that participants are selected, because they are likely to generate useful and rich or thick data for the research project.

In this research, the main category of sampling was non-probability sampling and the subcategory stratified purposeful and quota sampling, as described by Denscombe (1988:14, 15); Goddard and Melville (2001:16), and Niewenhuis (2010:79). Since this research was not working with a homogeneous group, stratified sampling was applied to obtain a purposeful sample from the leadership of the three selected ethnic groups in the congregation. Leaders of the Afrikaans-, Sotho- and Chinese-speaking groups within the congregation were purposefully selected as a sample population. The size of the quota for each stratum (ethnic group, in this case) was determined by the size of the best number of participants for a focus group (following literature guidelines as to

the size of the group). This totalled nine participants assigning three participants per stratum (Reason & Bradbury 2006; Stewart *et al.* 2007). This was done by considering the intergroup contact[2] theory, which states that the contact between groups should be characterised by four key conditions, namely equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support by social and institutional authorities (Allport 1954; Allport & Ross 1967; Dovidio *et al.* 2005). By using an equal number of participants from each group, valuable data was collected regarding equal status. The cooperation was achieved by collaborating as a group in the research and formulating common goals for the congregation.

A focus group of nine participants from the congregation was then formed to gather data. It was assumed that people could make shifts and thus be more inclusive. In practice-oriented research, Hermans and Schoeman (2015) stated that "research will start from the perspective of the leadership"; hence, it was decided to form the focus group by selecting leaders from the three different groups in the congregation to participate in the research. This congregation functions with councils or boards or committees in each of the language groups present, thus forming the leadership of each group.

5.4 Describing the actual position of the congregation (A component)

Formulating a consensus on the actual position of the congregation or the A component in the research was done by giving a summary[3] to the group of what

[2] Apart from a practical theological orientation, the study also needed to connect on an interdisciplinary plane with social sciences, as congregations are not mere spiritual creations, but social and inter-relational real-world constructs between people. Within the congregational context, culture, process, structure, and space are sociological concepts that are part of how people define and identify themselves; the way people relate to others and form relations; the structures people construct to facilitate their being, and the manner in which they define and utilise their physical space. Intergroup contact in each of these social areas will spark prejudice, fear, and conflict according to intergroup contact theory, and within a multicultural congregation, where diverse ethnic groups are present, this will be even more so. If the positive effects of the contact theory are taken into consideration, the reduction of prejudice, fear, and conflict – provided this is being done within the parameters of four key conditions – it will influence the practices adopted by the congregation. The question remains as to how they are present in the congregation and whether they are contributing towards reducing prejudice and creating more inclusivity.

[3] All three groups indicated that:

- Regarding culture, they feel that they are an ethnically mixed congregation and that they accept the other groups that are part of the congregation and that there is mutual respect for different cultures.
- Regarding our structure, there is a strong indication in the groups that we have integrated structures at the church and that segregation is not practised by one group over another.

they perceived the actual situation is within the congregation. This data was collected via group-specific focus groups.[4] In the combined group,[5] the question was asked whether the group considers the summary an accurate reflection. The data collected from the combined group[6] helped formulate an A component, which disclosed that the contact between the different groups is valued and that the diversity within the congregation is appreciated in terms of language diversity (viewed as inclusion and not a means of exclusion), and ethnic diversity.

First, moving to contact. It was observed that contact between the different groups forms part of the reason why they prefer to attend this congregation, as expressed in the following:

> I think we are definitely unique. There is no other congregation in the city that has this make-up that we have. Which makes me very proud of being part of this congregation (P1:75).
>
> For meeting regularly is most important for us (P1:114).
>
> You know last week that meal was really practical thing that will help. That means that we need to eat much more (P1:69).

Secondly, dealing with diversity. Moving towards an appreciation of the existing diversity in the congregation, it was observed that the group confirmed two aspects, namely an appreciation for language diversity and a view that diversity is broader than simply ethnicity. This was reflected in the following:

- The groups reflected a feeling of belonging to the church and that they are part of what is happening at the church, and they share in collaborating on certain matters in the church.
- Regarding space, there is no evidence that people do not feel that they share the space and that they are welcome in the space. There is a strong indication that space belongs to all in the church.
- Language is the last aspect, and it is clear that the groups are comfortable with having multiple language services and that moving to one single language, English, would not benefit those who do not understand English. Language is not experienced as a tool of separation; rather, it is experienced as a means of welcoming different languages and ministering to all people so that they can understand.

[4] The methodology followed consisted of three separate language-specific focus groups that were held using the same set of questions. The data collected was then coded and analysed in Atlas.ti. From this, a summary was compiled of how the three groups viewed the congregation.

[5] The fourth focus-group meetings were a combined meeting consisting of the same participants who attended the language-specific group meetings, now forming a combined group.

[6] The same methodology was followed, as described in 2.

> And I see that in here and we haven't seen, as far as I can gather, we haven't seen language as a exclusionary thing. The fact we are served and practiced in three different languages but that is empowering and not dividing (P1:10).
>
> But it is because lots of our members about 80-90% of our congregation (pointing to himself indicating the Chinese group) they cannot speak English well or they are scared to speak English (P1:63).
>
> I think there is churches and congregations where everybody is welcome but then they use only one language. So what is different for me from our congregation is that ja, we are together and we are in one building and we pray to one God and we have one purpose. But we also give one another the space to do it in his one mother language and in his own kind of culture. Because it is also different but then we have the openness to come together and do it in a good spirit (P1:79).

The leadership described the actual or A component as a desire for more intergroup contact, while observing or appreciating broad diversity and multilingual services. The next movement in the research was to describe the desired or the D component.

5.5 Explaining a desired position for the congregation (D component)

In the theoretical endeavour of the research, Acts 10:1-43 were identified as a biblical normative that indicates God's desired (D component) for a multicultural congregation.[7] Summarised from the exegesis, the following normative indicators were identified:

- Social reality and the social actors within that reality consist of ethnical and cultural differences. These differences are not to be considered unbridgeable divides or sacred spaces that focus on maintaining some form of purity (religious or cultural) by keeping some actors in and others out.
- Human actors do change, once they understand the divine desired.
- Acceptance of people into communion cannot be a mere theoretical exercise. The engagement with others, who are ethnically and culturally

[7] The study is fully aware that Acts 10:1-43 is not the only scriptural reference that can be used as a normative for multicultural congregations, and the intention was not to make it the only normative. It was a choice by the researchers in view of the specific setting that the meeting between Peter and the Roman centurion provide for intergroup contact between different cultures.

different, takes place within real-time and physical space, within which the art of hospitality is pivotal.

- Acts 10 does not give a methodical blueprint for congregational action plans as to how to engage with others who are ethnically and culturally different. It does, however, create sensitivity towards:
    - God's desire that transcends human prejudices.
    - Ethnic and cultural realities are not fences that enforce separation.
    - Hospitality opens numerous possibilities for engagement.
    - Social change and the engagement with others are an embodiment of the characteristics of relational triune God.

During the combined focus-group meeting, the group read Acts 10:1-43 after testing their agreement on the formulation of the A component. The focus-group meeting was transcribed *verbatim*, and the data were then coded using Atlas.ti. Coding was done inductively, and four codes that indicate a correlation with the normative D component in Acts 10 were delineated. These four codes were acceptance, biblical motivation, hospitality, and social change. It is necessary to discuss the four codes in more detail.

Acceptance came from phrases such as

> We are here to assist you (pointing to the researcher) first of all but then also to reflect on practically how we can improve on what is our current way of dealing with each other. And mixing and learning and strengthening each other because that is the whole idea I think (P1:78).

> For me I think the other thing of God is that he showed them that he had the same message for everyone. God don't have different messages for different people from different backgrounds or different religions. He had one message for all of us. And again, that says that we are one before God (P1:58).

Acceptance of people is not an option, but a deeply biblically motivated practice.

Growing awareness among the group of the biblical motivation as to why contact between different cultural groups is essential, was reflected in the following:

> They have one common goal that is that they all believe in God (P1:27).

> So what is different for me from our congregation is that ja we are together and we are in one building and we pray to one God and we have one purpose (P1:79).

> But because of the God fearing, helping people in need and praying to God, they are the principles of God. This is a good example for us to offer to [do] the same (P1:44).

Togetherness, or being with one another, was also expressed in very practical terms, and was labelled 'hospitality' in the coding process. Practical methods were offered in sentences such as:

> I think on the practical side we must all gathering like last Sunday (referring to the congregational meal where all the groups ate together) and some other times (P1:67).

> I think Nico it is going to be easier for us if we just at least meet regularly as the different groups in this congregation. Regardless of the languages barrier, just as long as we sit together then it is certainly it will help for this congregation. For meeting regularly is most important for us (P1:70).

Part of God's desire is the need to practise hospitality. For the group, the embodiment thereof lies in eating, meeting, and praying together.

Part of the process of grasping God's desire was expressed in what was coded as 'social change' or a desire for social change. It is expressed in sentences such as:

> So that is why somebody got this visions say the other group should also come inside (P1:37).

> And I think the success of the gathering last week where all ate together and enjoyed each other's company, was very successful I think (P1:106).

> I think that the three groups can also form only one group for the church from now onwards. That is that we will meet regularly and be closer to the culture of Hugenoot instead of being on the corner. That will help us as well (P1:76).

5.6 Tracking the possibility of a heart change

The empirical research leads to the formulation and understanding by the combined focus group of the A component; reading Acts 10:1-43 in the combined group contributed towards opening the group's formulation and understanding of God's desire for the congregation or the D component. If the question is raised regarding a change of heart in understanding God's desire, the research indicated that, in working with an ethnically diverse group, a heart change is possible if the diversity is embraced, contact between the groups is established, and the biblical text is read and studied jointly. The heart change is situated within a grasping of where we are (A component) and the need to move more

towards God's desire (D component). This can be achieved if the movement is put into motion by essential practices that can help make shifts, in the case of the congregation, towards being more inclusive.

If inclusivity is God's desire, according to Acts 10, then the following question arises: What practices will be essential to enhance inclusivity? The research identified the following practices for the congregation: contact and appreciation for diversity, grasping God's desire, and building cultural competencies. These essential practices will help this multicultural congregation and possibly others make shifts towards being more inclusive.

Is tracking such shifts possible? The research used social theory,[8] which taught that contact may decrease prejudice, if the right conditions are valid for the contact situation. If indicators for an evaluation framework are to be presented for a multicultural congregation, the intent would be to improve contact for inclusivity. The research moved to propose five indicators for a multicultural congregation to track the changes, namely culture, language, structure, space, and relationships. Each of these indicators is allocated two variables that mark the opposite positions that can be taken within the indicator, and each of the variables is identifiable via a list that describes the variable. The presupposition is that A indicates a position of departure or a mode of being that is expanded or broadened into B as a different mode of being. An in-between position can exist and is viewed as a progression away from A, but not yet B.

For the argument in this chapter, only the relational indicator will be used.[9] Proposing two variables of relationship, the research moved to use the terms 'them' as the A position that extends into B, and the term 'we' will be used. Indicated within the social theories used, further development of intergroup contact theory is Social Identity Theory (SIT), which proposes that groups give social actors a sense of social identity, a sense of belonging to the social world. The latter is then divided into 'them' and 'us', based on a process of social categorisation. This is known as in-group (us) and out-group (them). In short, social identity theory states that the in-group is likely to discriminate against the out-group, in order to enhance their self-image. Of importance is that in-groups are groups with which an individual or a group identify, and out-groups would be the ones with which an individual or group does not identify and against which an individual or group may even discriminate.

A (-) would be indicated where reference is made to 'them' in opposition to 'us', and in-group and out-group positioning. A (+) would be indicated if the identification of the group is shifting to 'we', as expressed in how they refer to themselves. The shift would be the forming of a new inclusive in-group

[8] For the purpose of the study, Intergroup Contact Theory, Social Identity Theory and Intercultural Competency Theory were used. Due to the scope of this chapter, these will not be discussed in detail. For a detailed discussion, see Mostert (2019).
[9] For a detailed discussion of each indicator, see Mostert (2019).

where ‘us’ and ‘them’ form a ‘we’. Hence, a shift is reported, although the research would not describe the shift as a huge or major shift towards a (+) ‘we’. This ‘we’, in the context of the Hugenoot congregation, is not a uniform ‘we’, where everyone looks and speaks the same, but an inclusive unity in diversity, ‘we’ reflecting the norms of relational, hospitable, and communal.

However, it does point to an area to which the leadership should pay attention, if it wishes to achieve greater inclusivity within the congregation. South Africa’s historical background dictates a strong differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and this will require direct (face-to-face) and indirect (mere presence) contact, in order to achieve better results regarding inclusivity (Hewstone 2009:14).

When congregational relationships are reviewed within the data, one cannot avoid the historical past of South Africa, which gave rise to in-group and out-group formations, with White being in and all other groups (Black, Indian and Coloured) being out. The harsh reality of apartheid South Africa was that these in- and out-group formations were nurtured and proclaimed to be the expected and accepted means of having relationships with people from different origin and background. In this regard, Resane (2016) describes this part of South African history and the social changes needed as

> the past and the present generations in South Africa need not be pedagogised or reminded of the evil systems of colonialism and apartheid that prevailed and ruled South Africa for about three-and-a half centuries.

This can be explained by the three relevant applications within social identity theory:

- In-group favouritism, which includes collective welfare (Brewer & Kramer 1986:543, 549; Simpson 2006:465; Ziebertz & Flunger 2010:4; Dovidio 2013:4; Burch-Brown & Baker 2016:790).
- Ethnocentrism, when one’s own ethnic origins (in-group) are believed to be far superior in all aspects compared to other ethnicities (out-group) (Brewer 1999:435-438; Axelrod & Hammond 2003; Bizumic 2014). It is embedded within the history of the Dutch Reformed Church’s approval of apartheid, as described by Adonis and Lubbe, respectively, that testifies of ethnocentrism which turned into a monster of spatial and relational segregation in the name of religion and sanctioned with biblical reference (Adonis 1982; Lubbe 2002; Punt 2009).
- Stereotyping is used to categorise sets of people based on an oversimplified image. Hogg (2001:187) calls it

> depersonalisation because people are not viewed as unique and multifaceted individuals but as matches to the relevant in-group or outgroup prototype.

It would be assumed that, coming from the long apartheid past, there should be a strong in-group versus an out-group in the congregation. SIT indicates that the in-group is likely to discriminate against the out-group, in order to enhance their self-image. A strong sense of 'us' versus 'them' would then be present. It is expected that this would be more representative of the view among the Afrikaans group than among the Sotho or Chinese group. The data obtained from the focus groups, under the indicator of 'relationships', can be presented schematically as follows:

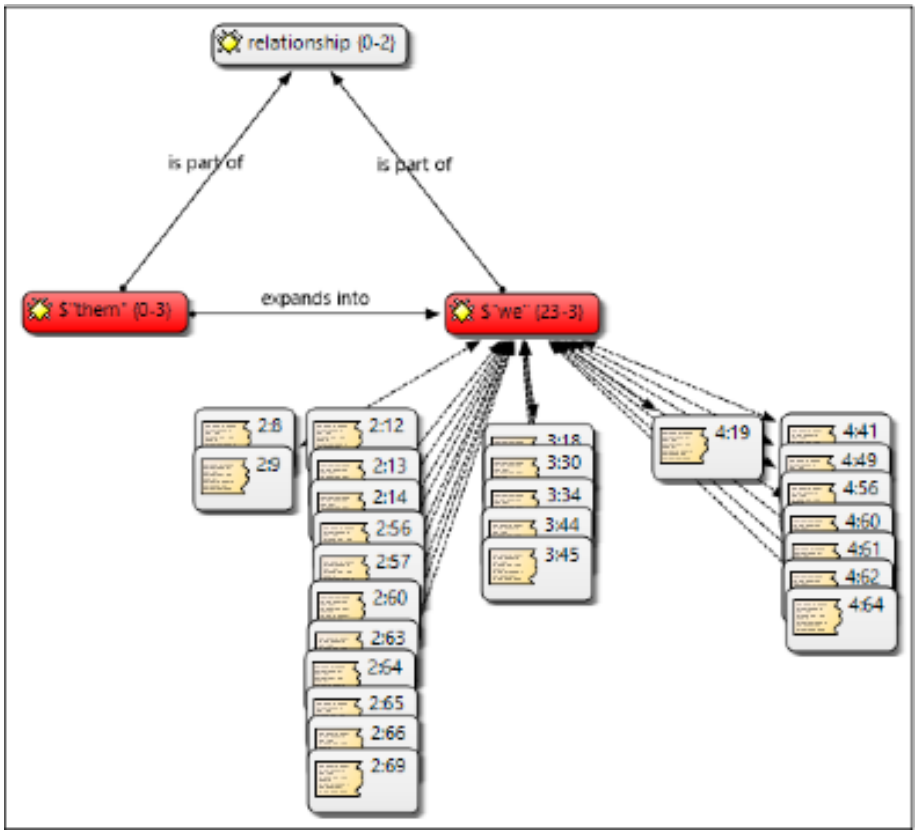

Figure 5.1: Indicator of relationships (Mostert 2019:245)

The data did not support the assumption. On the contrary, the data do reveal the presence of language and cultural groups, but the groups do not view themselves as in-groups and out-groups. They do identify with their culture and language group in terms of 'them' and 'we', but they also identify themselves as

part of the broader Hugenoot congregation group. This is supported by the indications of 'we', taken from the data, where remarks are found in quotations such as:

> We are just working on the same thing. Working for one thing. Working together (P2:34).
>
> What I have experienced here with other groups in the church is we are from different backgrounds. So we have the multicultural [grouping into] with the Chinese, the Sotho, and the Afrikaners (P3:16).
>
> I think my opinion is that we are aware of the other people in the church and their activities. We see them and we hear them, but I think much more opportunities could be created for interaction, both in terms of services on a Sunday as well as social activities (P4:12).

Because of the history of the racially skewed shaping of the South African society, it is expected that deep-rooted 'them' and 'we' perceptions will exist. This is traceable in data from all three of the groups, as the following examples illustrate:

> But in our church actually you see we also maintain how we (pointing to the other participants) are doing. Because we have in our church small group (pointing to other participants) and big group in the same church (P2:75).
>
> Because even at the Sotho side we are all [B]lacks but we have different cultures (P3:16).
>
> But also just to see what we can learn from them and contribute more and what they can learn from us in terms [of] being church-going members of this congregation (P4:18).

The data-reviewing process focused on tracking shifts towards a (+) 'we'. The data were coded and interpreted to provide indications that moving towards a congregational 'we' is more important than maintaining 'we' versus 'them'. The data did not reveal a discriminatory 'we' versus 'them'; thus, the data were coded with 'we'. The emphasis was on expressions that indicate a willingness to move or learn more, so that a different congregational setting can be achieved. Examples from the data are:

> In Hugenoot, our church, you (pointing to the researcher) do not really intervene to say you have to do like this, you to do like that (P2:75).
>
> There is no other group that takes control over the other groups (P3:16).

Hence, a shift was reported, although the research would not describe the shift as a huge or major shift towards a (+) 'we'. The leadership should pay attention to this to achieve greater inclusivity. The history of South Africa's implies a differentiation between 'us' and 'them' and this require direct (face-to-face) and indirect (mere presence) contact, in order to develop greater inclusivity. The data do reveal that a heart change is possible if the social actors are willing to engage in contact and in a different way of being together in a historically divided country.

5.7 Conclusion

It could be stated that it is possible, using an empirical methodology, to track specific shifts in the movement from the actual to the desired. These might be small shifts, but they are empirical, verifiable shifts. Working with the leadership of the congregation proved to be a starting point, if a change of heart is desired.

> Eschatological imagination is a productive imagination towards the possibility of a better life with and for others which wants to emerge in actuality. Where ideologies bind human beings to the existing reality, the eschatological imagination opens human beings toward the possibility of what can be and transformation towards the 'I-can' (Hermans 2020:14).

This eschatological imagination opens a movement to the desired to state that we can change our hearts to a more desired practice.

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Chapter 6
Congregational leadership through imitation and persuasive speech as critical drivers for transforming congregations and society

Joseph Pali & Eugene Baron[1]

6.1 Introduction

Churches in South Africa have been battling to capture the heart of its adherents. The contribution of this book, *A battle for the heart. How (not) to transform church and society* (2020), calls for scrutiny on the instruments that congregation leaders use and could use to transform the lives of its adherents. The main research question in this chapter is: How can an imitation of personal example and persuasive speech of a leader in a congregation contribute to the transformation of church and society?

This chapter addresses the focus of the book on two conceptual levels, in terms of how the 'heart' is and can be captured and transformed through imitation and persuasive speech of a leader. Leadership that is practised from a good heart has more impact than leadership controlled by programmes and intellectual aptitude. According to Anthony (2019:5), the word 'heart' appears over one thousand times in the Bible, of which eight hundred and fifty references to 'heart' are found in the Old Testament. The word 'heart' is the most important and common anthropomorphic term in Scripture. It can be used metaphorically, spiritually or as a real organ of a living being. Anthony (2019:4, 16) makes a remarkable comment when he argues that God's heart, as a model of the good heart, focuses on the well-being of humanity. We realise this when God grieves in his heart when we sin and rejoices in his heart when we repent and praise him.

In contrast, a human being's heart is rarely focused on God; it tends to deviate from the will of God. Jeremiah 17:9 mentions that the

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human heart is full of deceit and evil. As a result, it is even risky to rely on the heart in the practice of mission and transformation of church and society. The human heart is thus in need of constant corrections through divine intervention (Ps. 86:11; Jer. 32:39), in order that it may serve the kingdom of God well.

The other point on which this chapter links with the title of the book is transformation. Ramphele (2008:13) states that transformation is a profound change in form and substance. Form refers to structures, institutional arrangements, policies, and relationships, whereas substance may refer to values, attitudes and beliefs. Transformation is a gift and initiative from God; it aims to facilitate deep change in an individual, societal structures and their practices. Hence, transformation is spiritual and at the heart of the mission of the church in society. It must restore shalom in the broken relationship of humanity and God, humanity itself, and nature. Transformation becomes more effective when it prioritises humanity, whereby the inner person (that is, the heart) is filled with the Word and the Spirit of God, so that we embody the image of God in our context. We realise the transformed human beings through expressed divine wisdom, mature emotions, and responsible behaviour that conforms to the will of God. We encounter the real indicator of true transformation of human beings when they are moved by the values of the gospel towards confronting societal structures and practices that perpetuate injustices and strive towards the reconstruction of a society that is increasingly consonant with the vision and values of the kingdom of God.

God expects leadership and members of the congregations to be agents of divine transformation in their own context. As agents of divine transformation, both leadership and members of the congregations must help other human beings live as an image of God in their own context and transform social structures and practices to conform to the will of the kingdom of God. Sadly enough, both leadership and members of the congregations do not know how to engage in the transformation of their own institution such as a congregation as a local church, let alone transformation of the social structures and practices. To transform society, we do not as such need complex scientific programmes and theories; we need leadership that can persuade through communication and demonstrate through actions a life worthy of the kingdom of God in our own context. It is the intention of this chapter that the persuasive speech and imitation metaphor, as used by Paul, are the best tools that can be used to facilitate the transformation of the church and society.

Imitation of personal example and persuasive speech of a leader are leadership instruments that are mostly used in family and church contexts, while in other sectors of society they are regarded as manipulative (see Clarke 2008:183). In the family context, the personal example and the manner in which parents communicate with each other has a tremendous impact on how children will behave and communicate with their future spouse or members of society. In a congregational context, Wright (2009:3) argues that words and actions of congregational leaders[2] are very influential, and church members have the freedom of choice to listen to their words or learn from their actions. Hence, pastors with integrity are essential, if we need to facilitate the transformation of church and society.

The first section of this chapter engages influence tactics within a broader study of leadership and links these briefly with Pauline leadership tactics. The second section of the chapter discusses the imitation metaphor and Paul's employment of such a strategy to influence his followers. The authors place the above discussion subsequently in the context of the wider discourse on the transformation of church and society. Hence, the third section of this chapter focuses on the use of speech as a rhetorical skill for ecclesial leaders to facilitate change and transformation within the church and society as a 'missionary strategy'.

6.2 Influence process and tactics of leadership

Yukl (2002:141-143) argues that the essence of leadership is influence. The influence of leadership might trigger or cause myriad reactions. For example, followers may become resistant, indifferent and passionately decide to ignore the guidance and directives of the leadership. Nevertheless, in other cases, leadership influence can lead to commitment or compliance. For example, a follower will show commitment when he/she concedes with the request(s) and directives from the leader and enthusiastically and passionately implements these. However, when a follower is compliant, he/she is willing to carry out a request from a leader, but is not necessarily enthusiastic about it, but concedes to it, and makes a nominal effort to implement the request(s).

Yukl (2002:143-144) also argues that, in order to yield positive results, the leadership must express some *specific type of influences* to-

[2] This chapter understands 'congregational leaders' as pastors, deacons and elders collectively, but we will specially emphasise the pastors.

wards the follower. In the first instance, he suggests, a leader may provide an incentive or a tangible reward to motivate a follower to comply with his/her request. Secondly, the ideas of a leader may be relevant and consistent with the values, beliefs and needs of the follower; hence, the follower may internalise those ideas and show commitment, loyalty and support to their implementation. Lastly, leaders can yield positive results when the followers identify with them and subsequently imitate their behaviour, adopt their character and wish to imitate them.

These specific types of influence can materialise through the deployment of various *tactics to facilitate influence* on the followers. Yukl (2002:168)[3] suggests that rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, and collaboration are some of the most effective tactics that leaders can use to influence their followers to execute a request. In contrast, a personal appeal is effective primarily when a leader has friendly relations with his/her followers. In short, the use of influence tactics requires a leader to be strategic and innovative, in order to elicit the desired behaviour or action. Hence, Yukl (2002:168) argues that a number of factors affect the effectiveness of influence tactics and these are prevailing social norms and role expectations about the use of that tactic in a specific context. According to Yukl, leadership tactics of influence need to be a socially acceptable form of influence to the followers. In order to elicit the desired behaviour, the leadership needs to know how to use his/her position and power for effective implementation of that specific tactic of influence; the tactic must have adequate ability to affect the followers' attitude towards a request, and it must correlate with the legitimate and consistent values and needs of the followers.

In light of the above, Paul, in his leadership strategies, used his ideas to persuade his followers to identify with him; that is, to imitate him as their leader. In this chapter, we argue that Paul, as a missionary leader, used persuasive speech and appealed to the imitation of his example as strategies to influence and persuade his followers to execute his request(s). However, Paul's influence tactics were not unique to him, but part of the social norms and practices within his context. Furthermore, Paul received a considerable amount of criticism and opposition in his ministry, making it difficult to assess the outcome of his leadership influence in his congregations.

[3] Yukl mentions eleven of these influence tactics.

6.3 Paul's imitation metaphor

This section commences with a discussion of the imitation metaphor in the ancient community of Paul. It also discusses how Paul understood and used the imitation metaphor. In concluding this section, the authors discuss the challenges and the content of the Pauline imitation metaphor.

6.3.1 Imitation and antiquity

The use of the imitation metaphor is not unique to the Pauline community. It was common practice among the ancient Greeks and Jewish communities. Nasuti (1986:18) explains that the use of the notion *imitatio Dei* as used in the Old Testament implies that Yahweh expects Israelites as his nation to imitate Yahweh's actions (Ex. 31:12-17) and attributes (Lev. 19:2). The imitation metaphor was also employed in various sectors of the ancient community such as the family, education and art. According to Sierksma-Agteres (2016:122), in the family context, children were expected to imitate their parents. In education, students imitated the characters depicted in the literature or adopted the style and character of their teacher. In art, music, and poetry, imitation was used to portray the reality of a social event through art, mimicking a piece of music, or through rhyme in a poem.

The purpose of the imitation metaphor in the ancient community served as a salient condition for moral formation and for developing specific skills (Copan 2007:219). Dodd (1999:16) argues that moral formation was achieved by ethical emulation and patterning one's life after deities, people, and monarchs of the ancient era. However, Dodd also warns that people may use imitation to yield negative moral character when people have to imitate fraudulent and corrupt figures. In addition, Sierksma-Agteres (2016:122-123) asserts that moral formation was also attained through the imitation of literary examples and figures from mythology and national history, in order to achieve likeness between the one who imitates and the one who is imitated. In ancient communities, imitation was used as a means to inspire a person to acquire skills and competence by mimicking a piece of art or music (Dodd 1999:16). Those who were part of ancient communities were persuaded through the 'sayings' and memorable deeds of mythological and national historical figures.

In ancient communities, there were at least three objects of human imitation (Copan 2007:219), namely classical virtues, concrete actions of

the model, and a whole lifestyle.[4] Since antiquity, various figures have become subjects of imitation. Copan (2007:219) refers to five imitations. First, the imitation of supernatural powers such as God (Eph. 5:1), gods (Lev. 19:4, 26:1; Ezek. 20:18), and evil spirits (Prov. 4:14; 28:5). Secondly, the imitation of persons in antiquity, such as parents and teachers. Thirdly, the imitation of a group within an ancient community. Fourthly, the imitation of animals, which is common among African tribes and other indigenous groups worldwide, which adhere to the use of totems.[5] Fifthly, the imitation of living persons. Throughout history, the world has been blessed with virtuous leaders whose 'sayings' and actions were worth emulating. Prominent exemplary leaders in our contemporary era include Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and Nelson Mandela.

The use of imitation in the ancient community did not occur in a vacuum; prerequisite processes needed to be followed in order to facilitate imitation. Copan (2007:220) mentions one of those processes as "an attraction to the model". This occurs when a person, who is intrigued by the ideas or the personality of a leader, becomes emotionally attached to, and associates with them. A second process is where the person desires to imitate the model leader. This occurs when a person becomes attached to, and subsequently and uncritically associates with such a model leader. Thirdly, a process also occurs when a person comes in contact with the model leader, feels inspired by him/her and, therefore, decides to imitate such a model leader. Fourthly, a process might happen when the person reflects on a model leader, applies his/her mind and, after a 'rationalisation' process, decides whether to imitate the leader or not. Finally, it might happen when a person assimilates the qualities of a model leader in his/her life. In this case, the sayings and actions of the model leader are emulated, in order to internalise the model's character, with the ultimate purpose of becoming like the model and developing the model's skills and competence.

6.3.2 Paul and imitation

Various relational concepts are utilised to convey the implication of the imitation metaphor. These include imitator (*mimetes*), model (*tupos*),

[4] Copan (2007:219) calls this global imitation.

[5] The use of totems is identification with the quality attributes of a specific animal, which were internalised to develop one's skills and morality.

example (*deigma*), and pattern (*upogrammos*) (Clarke 2008:173). In contemporary leadership studies, the imitation metaphor as a means for leadership to influence his/her followers, has to do with the personal identification of the follower with the leader. Paul was conscious of the socially accepted norms within the Graeco-Roman communities. It is observable and evident in his discourse that he employs the metaphor of imitation (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1) to persuade and mobilise his followers towards a specific action or behaviour. Through the use of the imitation metaphor, Paul was able to influence his followers in a more positive manner as an individual and in congregations, because of his role as a spiritual father (1 Cor. 4:15-16) rather than as an apostle (Copan 2008:231). The kind of response to the Pauline imitation metaphor was dependent on the types of relationship and the content of imitation used by Paul (Clarke 2008:173).

6.3.3 Paul's employment of the imitation metaphor

The processes that the Pauline community followed in order to internalise the imitation of Paul is not apparent in his letters. Nevertheless, through a close analysis of the Pauline letters, one can infer that Paul persuaded some of his followers and members of the congregations through his preaching (1 Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:11) and character (2 Cor. 1:12; Phil. 1:27, 3:17), and they, therefore, became part of his ministry. In response to the above, it is evident that the vast majority of his followers reflected and conceded with his teachings and character, although there were others who also disagreed and transferred to other ministries (1 Cor. 1:10-17, 3:1-23). However, those who agreed with Paul assimilated his teachings and actions in the ministry.

In antiquity, the common usage of the imitation metaphor was for the purpose of moral formation and the development of certain skills and competencies. Paul used the imitation metaphor as a pedagogical technique (Dodd 1999:29). He wanted his followers to not only learn but also put into practice his teachings. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, 3:1-23, Paul taught the Christians in Corinth that, to God, both Paul and Apollos are servants and fellow workers, whom God used to proclaim the gospel and empower them. They should, therefore, attribute their spiritual growth and maturity to God (1 Cor. 3:6, 7) and not to either of them. Clarke (2008:174-176) argues that Paul used the imitation metaphor for the ethical correction of a specific community. This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 4:16, where Paul pleads with the Corinthians to imitate him and Apollos in their attempt to serve God. Although he criticised the Corin-

thians for polarising him and Apollos, Paul appealed to them to adopt an attitude of cooperation that characterises the life of the two of them. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, it is apparent that Paul sacrifices his privileges and rights, in order not to cause detriment to the work of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:12, 15). He thus implored the Corinthians to learn from his ac.

Paul uses the imitation metaphor to appeal to his followers to observe him as a worthy ethical example to mobilise them towards a specific course he wants them to pursue. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his behaviour and his colleagues when they were in Thessalonica, with the purpose of inspiring and persuading them not to idle, but to work diligently, so that they do not drain all the resources of their hospitality. Philippians 3:2-4 serves as evidence when Paul urges the followers in Philippi to follow his example and that of others, in contrast to those who place their confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:17-21).

In engaging the Pauline letters further, it is apparent that Paul also uses the imitation metaphor for inclusion and not for exclusion. Paul encountered criticism that he used the imitation of his example for wielding power and privileging his model of imitation at the expense of others (Clarke 2008:173, 177). However, this was not how Paul used the imitation metaphor to direct the focus on himself. In fact, Paul used other role models worthy of imitation to reinforce the ethical standards and to achieve his desired goal. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:15-18, Paul requested the community of Corinth to recognise, besides himself, other godly examples such as Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Archaicus. Paul is not reluctant to point to other leaders such as Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17) and other Christian communities (1 Thes. 2:14) who set equivalent examples of Christian behaviour. These historical figures, colleagues and Christian communities of Paul in ministry were appropriate models worthy of imitation to the Corinthians, not because of their social credentials, but because of their character. Therefore, in light of the above discussion, it would be unjust to argue that Paul disregarded other role models and privileged only his own model to act as a worthy example for imitators of the gospel.

Furthermore, the use of the Pauline metaphor of imitation was not limited to personal identification; it also extended to social and/or group identification. This implies that the object of imitation was not only limited to Paul, but included other figures (God, Christ, the myriad Old Testament figures), his prominent followers (Timothy and Titus), and his

prominent congregations (Thessalonica, Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi). This practice of expanding the impact of the imitation metaphor from an individual to a group contributed to the facilitation, momentum, depth and breadth, as well as the impact and influence of the imitation metaphor.

Moreover, in two particular pericopes, the centre of imitation is no longer Paul, but God (see 1 Cor. 11:1; Eph. 5:1). For example, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul pleads with the Corinthians that they should imitate him as he imitates Christ. In this context, Paul positions himself as equivalent to a replica or model of Christ who is worthy of imitation. One such example can be observed in Ephesians 5:1, where Paul requests the community in Ephesus to imitate God in everything they do. In these biblical texts, Paul argues that he is not the ultimate one that should be imitated. Clarke (2008:179-180) understands this as Paul putting his imitation and those of others on a secondary level, while the imitation of God and Christ is primary and should be the ultimate goal (see 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thes. 2:12; 2 Thes. 1: 5, 11-12, 2:14).

Clarke (2008:181) also contends that Paul used the imitation metaphor for social control and as the ultimate goal to which one should aspire. According to Clarke, the ultimate purpose he refers to is in Philippians 3:8-17. In this biblical text, Paul urges his readers to emulate him and others in search of the perfection that is found in Christ, which, to Paul, is a continuous journey. In his endeavour to be like Christ, Paul allows nothing to hinder that effort, more especially internal strife such as conflict and sexual immorality. To be like Christ creates an alternative community that influences society. Hence, Paul cautions his congregations that experience conflict (1 Cor. 3:1-4, 6:1-8) that they should not behave like those who are not followers of Christ, not spiritually mature, often controlled by their sinful nature, characterised by envy, quarrels, and support factionalism. In relation to sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Thes. 4:3-11), Paul advises his congregations that they should not behave like "people of the world" who indulge in sin, but like people of the kingdom of God who always strive to please God by living a holy life. In short, to Paul's understanding of the role of believers in relation to the world is that our words and actions must be pleasing to God or worthy of the gospel (1 Thes. 1:5; Phil. 1:27), so that the people of the world may respect believers when they observe their lifestyle (1 Thes. 4:1-3, 11-12; Phil. 4:5).

Paul also used the imitation metaphor to celebrate diversity (Clarke 2008:181). He does not confine 'imitation' to himself but includes others such as individuals, congregations, and God (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thes. 1:14; Eph. 5:1). This kind of practice helps expand the field of influence from one person (Paul) to other individuals who are worthy of imitation. The impact of the influence of these multitudes of individuals worthy of imitation contributes to diversity, as not everyone can be a replica of Paul. According to Clarke (2008:181), Paul used imitation to tackle dissension within his congregations. He used it to identify the difference, to protect diversity and emphasise unity, not necessarily conformity (Rom. 12:3; 1 Cor. 12:4-6), sameness in love, mind and accord (Phil. 1:27, 2:2; 1 Cor. 8:4-6).

6.3.4 Challenges of the Pauline imitation metaphor

A number of challenges contribute to the misunderstanding and misuse of Pauline imitation. First, Castelli (1991:174) argues that Paul uses imitation to pursue a power discourse supported by his overdeveloped egotism. This critique of Paul using imitation for a power discourse is realised in the discussion where Paul is understood as privileging his imitation model over others because of his position as the apostle or spiritual father (Clarke 2008:173). To accuse Paul of using the imitation metaphor, due to overdeveloped egotism, is preposterous, because Paul regularly sacrificed his privileges and emphasised the spirit of humility received or learnt from Christ.

Secondly, Pauline imitation is criticised for enforcing conformity at the expense of diversity (Copan 2007:232; Clarke 2008:173). This implies that Paul, through the emphasis on his imitations, disingenuously compelled sameness and prevalence of his style of ministry at the expense of diversity and ingenious approach to ministry. Even when Paul sent other leaders to his congregations, his critiques assumed that he sent his replica (for example, Timothy or Titus) to represent the original (Paul) (Clarke 2008:177).

Thirdly, Pauline imitation, in its its attempt to effect change, is criticised as self-seeking and manipulative (Castelli 1991:174; Clarke 2008:173). Through his imitation metaphor, Paul intended to achieve change in various contexts such as individuals, congregations, and society. However, that change was viewed as offsetting the influence of other leaders, so that his interests may prevail.

6.3.5 Content of imitation metaphor

There is a lot of debate on what to imitate in Pauline imitation. Copan (2007:223, 225) contends that the object of Pauline imitation was holistic and an emphasis on the Pauline virtues. Holistic imitation refers to an imitation of the totality of Paul's life, his actions, virtues, lifestyle, and emotions (Copan 2007:23). For example, in 1 Corinthians 4:16-17, Paul's imitation refers to his service and relationship with Christ. According to Ellington (2011:304-313), Pauline imitation in 1 Corinthians 11:1 is about persuading the Corinthians to embrace Paul's efforts to facilitate the proclamation of the gospel of the crucified Christ. Those efforts are to avoid being a stumbling block to the salvation of those for whom Christ died (1 Cor. 8:1-13) – giving up his privileges and rights as an apostle for the advancement of the gospel and salvation of others (1 Cor. 9:1-27). Lastly, Paul used an example of the weakness of the Israelites' forefathers to warn the Christians in Corinth that their role in the witness of the gospel must lead to an appropriate lifestyle and build those who are weak in faith (1 Cor. 10:1-23). In Philippians 4:9, imitation involves all of what Paul had taught and how he lived. In short, Copan argues that Pauline imitation involved Paul's public and private life. In support of this holistic imitation, Clarke (2008:177) states that Pauline imitation involves Paul's whole life and practice in specific contrast to others who, according to Paul, are not yet good models to be imitated.

Copan (2007:225) mentions that Pauline imitation also refers to the imitation of Pauline virtues, which involved lived out principles or incarnated values as applied by Paul in a specific context. According to Copan (2007:225), Pauline virtues involved ideal principles such as striving for perfection in Christ and integrating principles and values into the lifestyle of the individual. The specific action of the individual is to work out the principle. Lastly, according to Copan, Pauline virtues were founded in, and related to the gospel of Jesus Christ. For example, in 1 Corinthians 4:16, the imitation metaphor propagates the virtues of servanthood and stewardship over against selfish goals. 1 Corinthians 11:1 is about surrendering rights for the sake of the gospel, and Philippians 3:16 conveys a virtue of disciplining oneself for the sake of higher goals.

6.4 Paul and persuasive speech

While the second section of this chapter focused on the imitation of leaders, the third section focuses on communication as an instrument of per-

suasion and for congregational leadership. In this section, we discuss the world of Paul and the influence of persuasive communication, as well as Paul's reliance on persuasive speech to influence his followers. This section also discusses Paul's reservations about persuasive speech. Rybacki and Rybacki (1991:2) define rhetorical communication as

> a message with verbal and often visible symbols that are deliberately chosen to influence an audience whose members have the ability to change their beliefs or behaviours as a consequence of experiencing the message.

6.4.1 Rhetoric and the world of Paul

The notion of rhetoric is equivalent to the notion of persuasion. Rhetoric refers to the art of persuasion, a practice in the ancient Graeco-Roman communities that served as the immediate social context of the early Christian communities and that of Paul. Rhetoric was an instrument used by, mostly, Greek philosophers in ancient time. Because it became such a potent instrument, philosophers established clear rules and logic for the use of rhetoric. Paul employs rhetoric and persuasive speech as a strategy to influence his audience and members of the respective congregations to comply with and be transformed in their faith in Jesus Christ. He uses verbal communication and, in his speeches, intends to persuade his congregations through well-organised arguments, metaphors and other rhetorical strategies (ethos and pathos) to accept the gospel or to grow in their faith. Paul's use of persuasive speech forms part of the rhetorical practice that existed long before his time. Before Paul, Aristotle was one of the proponents of rhetoric.

6.4.2 Paul, the Gospel, and the purpose and uses of persuasive speech

Lawrie (2005) argues that every communication that aims 'to do something' is rhetoric, because it aims to persuade its audience. However, to ensure that 'something is done', rhetoricians have, throughout the centuries, focused on rhetorical strategies to persuade an audience.

In the quest to influence his followers and opponents, Paul used, in his rhetorical communication, strategies to convey his ideas and the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Biblical scholars argue as to whether Paul was in favour of rhetoric, especially in light of what he

states in 1 Corinthians 2:5, namely that he rejects the use of "wise and persuasive words". However, Clarke (2008:160-163) suggests that, upon a detailed analysis of the literary texts of the Pauline letters, it is evident that Paul was a good orator and communicator and that he made use of several rhetoric strategies to persuade his congregations. Paul employed those rhetorical strategies in his letters to the congregations when he presented the gospel. Clarke (2008:163) puts the matter of Paul's rejection of the use of "wise and persuasive words" to rest when he lists a few reasons why Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 2:5 cannot serve as a repudiation of the utilisation of rhetoric to persuade one's followers. One argument is that Paul was rather concerned that persuasive speech should not present the gospel in a diluted form, which, he contends, poses a danger for the presentation of the gospel (Clarke 2008:163). He argues that, in Graeco-Roman oratory, it became a tendency that a rhetorician would adapt a message to "create a reputation for oneself" (ornamentation). Clarke (2008:163) argues in a similar vein, "Paul's theology of proclamation, on the contrary, did not allow him to adapt the message of the crucified Christ in any way". He underscores that this does not mean that Paul did not present the gospel in a "persuasive and compelling fashion" (Clarke 2008:163). However, the matter of concern for Paul was that rhetoric should not be a means to self-promotion. Paul used his communication and rhetorical skills to teach, reprimand, persuade, motivate, and confront his followers and opponents that would serve the greater purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The danger is that some congregations in South Africa function within a 'communitarian ethos' where "what is good for the congregation" operates strongly within the congregation and the leaders will often do exceptionally well if they feed into the most common agreements and 'consensus' through their communication.

Paul's persuasive speech is based on the knowledge of the congregation and the people he knew personally. His persuasive speeches were constructed in terms of the components of rhetoric, namely pathos, ethos and logos. In his verbal communications, Paul would feed into the emotions of his audience (congregations), understanding their customs and manners (ethos) and use the *ethos* to convince them to change their behaviour. For instance, Paul appeals to the Corinthians' "sense of honour". He "shames them" into more appropriate behaviour" (1 Cor. 6) (Clarke 2008:171). However, he also appeals to *logos*, constructing good arguments, defending the gospel, and convincing, through good arguments and logic, his congregations that they need to change. Paul's emphasis on persuasive speech is also based on the use of "good arguments"

and, therefore, the teaching element in churches is of paramount importance to grow and transform the church and society (Clarke 2008: 183).

In the vast majority of cases, Clarke (2008:172) argues that Paul makes his appeals through "meekness and gentleness of Christ", although, at times, through rebuke and reprimands.

> Paul's goal [with persuasive speech] was to win people for Christ rather than merely to win their friendship. Indeed, he recognises that much of his message may indeed succeed in creating enemies … to Philemon, he appeals on the basis of love, but combines this with an emotive challenge (Phlm. 9:10) (Clarke 2008:172).

However, Paul's critique on persuasive speech is relevant for members of congregations nowadays to be vigilant and critical of rhetorical speeches. In this regard, Lawrie's (2005:9-10) list is helpful on what he argues are the dangers of rhetorical speeches:

- A persuasive speech can disguise blatant dishonesty or hypocrisy.
- Rhetoricians will, in some ways, try to please their audiences.
- They can create the impression of certainty when they are far from being sure or knowledgeable.
- Rhetoricians might not lie but might lack good substance.
- Rhetoricians might also mislead themselves. People can get so impressed by their own words that they start believing themselves.
- Rhetoricians might be easily heard, while others with other views who are not so eloquent and skilled in rhetorical skills' counter-arguments will not be easily heard.

It is evident that the essence of the Gospel is on the transformation of church and society and, therefore, the centrality of the 'cross' as the content of the message is crucial. The message of the 'cross' should be the content of the persuasive speech in congregations and should be persuasive in itself to speak to the pressing realities of the time, and the overcoming of the forces of evil in the world through the 'cross' is what the content of the persuasive communication should entail. The message should persuade people to become radical disciples of Jesus Christ. The message of the 'cross' should be the essence of the persuasive speech of congregational leadership, in order to bring forth change in church and society.

6.5 The application of the imitation metaphor and persuasive speech in the context of the transformation of heart, church and society

This section is about how imitation metaphor and persuasive speech may be used to engage in the transformation of church and society. It discusses these persuasive strategies and their positive and negative impacts on the South African society.

6.5.1 The employment of the imitation metaphor in contemporary society

Across various sectors of society, leaders are experiencing a challenge of loss of morals and integrity. The church is not immune to this. Recently in South Africa, the immorality of pastors reached such an alarming rate that the government proposed regulation of religious institutions. This regulation was prompted by the fact that most of the emerging churches do not have an oversee body to discipline pastors who transgress their religious rights. Many of these pastors from emerging churches claim to be accountable to none and independent. Again, the matter is complicated by the mixed feelings among church leaders who cannot commonly agree on the proposal of regulation of churches. Church leaders can learn from Paul that we need to allow nothing to hinder the advancement of the gospel. Hence, those pastors involved in immorality need to be disciplined for the sake of their own salvation.

Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:18) argue that the majority of the leaders in churches have deceived and swayed their church members to serve their unethical ends. This had dire consequences in that people from both inside and outside the congregations do not trust congregational leadership. For example, the recent development in the emerging churches in South Africa reveals that some pastors are preying on unsuspecting members of their congregations by abusing, exploiting and manipulating them for their selfish end. This is usually done by trampling on the body of their members, feeding them snakes and grass, and sexually molesting them in the name of religion. In this kind of context, Hermans' (2020:1) statement is relevant:

> The longings of the heart are susceptible to manipulation, often without the subjects being aware of it. This manipulation can come from examples given by others, promises of reward, or the prospect of gratification.

In the context of South Africa, these unsuspecting believers long for hope and better life promised in the preaching of the prosperity gospel. Regrettably, some of the pastors from these emerging churches, driven by self-aggrandisement, extort material wealth and violate the human dignity of these unsuspecting believers.

Pastors are not only faced with a challenge of immorality, but also with a challenge of how to contribute to change in churches and society. Speckman (2007:xxvi) put it eloquently when he mentions that some pastors and their congregation members do not know how to engage in human development in their congregations and are lacking in transformation theory of social involvement. Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:18, 23) argue that members of the congregations and society have domesticated the pastor who is supposed to be their transforming agent. In the congregational context, a pastor who is supposed to lead to a deeper change in a congregation is tempted to be a manager who maintains the status quo and provides spiritual services to passive congregational members. In his discussion on the challenges faced by the churches, Joubert (2020:1, 2) states that churches are not responding to the transformative power of their normative texts; instead, they prefer sameness in the church and to sustain consumptive worshippers who are passive receivers of spiritual services. Concerning involvement in society, Shawchuck and Heuser raised concern that society is not a haven for a pastor, because it threatens and resists any change by the pastor. In the context of South Africa, we often encounter nasty remarks against pastors from some politicians stating that pastors should mind the pulpit and leave politics to the politicians (Kumalo 2013:635-636). It is no wonder that many churches are poor in their societal engagement and busy with sustaining their survival.

In light of the above, have we lost any possibility of transforming a church and society? The answer is "No", especially in the context of Africa and South Africa, in particular. In the context of South Africa, Christianity is experiencing numerical growth. This implies that the vast majority of Christians have regular weekly contact with the church and pastors[6] are still the most trusted and influential leaders in society (Erasmus 2005:139; Ngaruiya 2017:29). This is in contrast with the world's Western countries, where pastors have hardly any influence in their congregations or the community at large (Shawchuck & Heuser 1993:78;

[6] Gitau (2017:49) mentions that over seventy per cent of African Christian leaders point to their parental figure as specially influencing their leadership.

Blackaby & Blackaby 2011:15). Briefly, in relation to transforming the church and society, especially in the context of Africa, the figure of pastor within a congregation and society still has a significant role to play in that regard. But how can that transformation be achieved?

To contribute towards the transformation of the congregations and society, many congregations in Western countries used, in vain, various tools and methods such as the life cycle of congregations or organisations and system theory. In relation to society, congregations are tempted to adopt development theories driven by political and economic motifs that make recipients underdeveloped and dependent (Speckman 2007:2). In Africa, Gitau (2017:59) mentions mentoring as a significant factor in shaping African leaders of influence. However, Shawchuck and Heuser (1993:78) argue that our example is an efficient tool to influence change in our contexts such as congregations and society. Hence,

> [i]f you do not like what you see in your congregation change it by changing yourself, because the secret of effective leadership is to manage yourself well … Influence of your example is a powerful motivation on the congregation attitude and performance (Shawchuck & Heuser 1993:78, 90).

In light of the above, change in congregations or in society needs to start with leadership. This change in leadership refers to the change of inner being which involves the heart that harbours the thoughts, emotions and morality of the leader, so that the doing of leadership, which implies the external behaviour or the actions of the leader, may be in line with the values of the gospel.

In support of the inner change of humanity (leadership), Hermans (2020:2) argues that the heart is the location of the problem of the Christian religion. Hence, the transformation of the heart is a necessity. It is in the heart where the battles for transformation start or fail. Heart is the centre of the being of humanity. It is a seat of wisdom and knowledge (1 Kgs 3:9, 4:29), morality (Ps. 58:2; Rom. 1:24), choice (2 Cor. 9:7), religious life (Rom. 10:9-10), and it even influences the type of communication we express to others (Matt. 12:34). Hence, it is from the heart where issues of life flow and the root of a human being's immorality originates (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21).

Therefore, in the process of transformation, God often targets the heart (Ezek. 36:26; Ps. 51:10) to fill it with his Spirit and ordinances

(Rom. 5:5; Hebr. 8:10). To deal with the immorality of leadership and how it relates to self, God and other creations of God, we need to deal first with sin in the heart. Through transformation of the heart by the Spirit and the Word of God, the external behaviour will improve. We observe this in Paul. Before he became an apostle of Christ or spiritual father of any of his followers, he encountered Christ who, through the Holy Spirit, transformed Paul's personality located in his heart. Before the conversion, Paul's inner being was that of a zealous Jew with a passion for killing for Jewish law (Acts 8:3, 9:1; Gal. 1:13, 14). After conversion, Paul experienced a radical and also continuous transformation of his inner being and actions that shifted towards Christ and the kingdom of God. This radical transformation of Paul created some tension among the Jews who knew Paul as zealous and passionate about the law (Acts 9:23-25, 13:50). This tension between Paul and some Jewish Christians was mostly about Paul's views on the role and interaction of faith and law in salvation. The consequence of this tension between Paul and some Jewish Christians complicated the process of how Paul should influence Jewish Christians to shift from resistance to commitment in the gospel he preaches. However, in his effort to win over his opponents to the true gospel, Paul used his rational ideas and words of which he was accused as an unskilled public speaker (2 Cor. 11:6). Moreover, Paul used another tool to influence his followers, namely the imitation of his example. Even on this one, Paul was still criticised as being not worthy of imitation, because of his previous history and doubt about his apostleship.

Wright (2009:3) argues that the essence of the influence of Christian leadership is through words and actions. As a rule, followers have a free will to listen to the words and observe the actions of a leader and make a choice of whether to internalise both for the sake of change or not. The alignment of the leader's actions and words is a necessity and leads us to the integrity of leadership. Hence, leadership with more integrity has the potential to effect a deep change in an individual or organisation. Put differently, to change organisation, congregations or society, we need to change the inner being (the heart) and the doing (external behaviour) of their leadership.

In light of the above, Paul's leadership had integrity, because he insisted on walking the talk and even challenged those whose behaviour deviates from their words (Gal. 2:11-13). To Paul, witnessing the gospel with words, power of the Holy Spirit and our lives (1Thes. 1:4-7) facilitates the imitation of the example of a leader. Moreover, it also trans-

forms the one who imitates to be the one who is now imitated in the advancement of the gospel. To expand the impact of the gospel and the deeper change it brings forth, Paul did not limit the imitation of personal example to himself, but even encouraged his followers to imitate those leaders who live among them, especially those with integrity. In short, there was a shift from mere personal identification with Paul to social (group) identification with several good leaders. According to Stevens and Collins (1993:xii), a pastor cannot do everything in the ministry, but he has the task to enable, facilitate and assist the lay people to fulfil their ministry and discover their God-given potential in the ministry. The pastor can achieve this by teaching, demonstrating, affirming and living the gospel, so that congregation members can learn and observe how to be agents of deep change in their own community.

Most important of all, the ultimate purpose of the imitation of personal example was grounded in moulding human lifestyle in the likeness of Christ and transforming the context; hence, imitation of Paul was grounded in the imitation of Christ. On this, we learn from 1 Corinthians 8:1-11:1 that the pattern of Christ's death for the weak influences Paul's behaviour to be appropriate for the advancement of the gospel and building of the weak believers. In his discussion of Luke 15:17, Joubert (2020:12) argues that

> *imitatio Dei* challenges us to a new intimacy with God and others, including the lost, the outcasts, the nobodies, the somebodies, the has-beens, the celebrities, the poor, the arrogant, the self-righteous, the non-believers, the potential believers, and so on.

In short, this implies that our deep and quality relationship with God influences our relationship with humanity and other creations of God. Our relationship with God, humanity and creations must be characterised by the love of those who are weak, marginalised and oppressed. However, as human beings, we tend to limit our love because of fear and difference (Holladay 2008:68, 69). Put differently, love prompts us to act appropriately and responsibly towards those in need, but our hate of others paralyses our capacity to act (Hermans 2020:6).

In summary, how can leadership contribute to the transformation of a church and society? Many theories and methods have been suggested to contribute to the transformation of the church and society. Unfortunately, many of these theories are known to be dysfunctional in the vast majority of contexts. The other reasons could be that many of these theo-

ries come from Western countries of the world, and many of the church leadership may not have acquired formal training to learn about those theories. For this reason, we should adhere to those approaches that are already in practice, but also biblical. Imitation metaphor is a biblical approach to transforming a church and society. In Africa, it is practised as a form of mentoring. Imitation metaphor may not be limited to the imitation of personal example of behaviour, but it also involves imitation of communication skills.

However, to practise imitation metaphor, the following is necessary. First, leadership must be transformed and be of integrity. Secondly, leadership must be courageous to withstand critique and live first the change it wants us to pursue. Thirdly, leadership must intentionally empower the laity to release and discover God-given potential within them, to fulfil the needs of ministry into which they are called. Fourthly, leadership must intentionally direct the laity about prioritising to imitate the actions of God in their own context.

6.5.2 The application of persuasive speech and congregational leadership

It would not be an overstatement to argue that recent developments in terms of church growth strategies include various rhetorical strategies employed by spiritual leaders. It has become a dangerous instrument that would allow vulnerable people to be influenced by ecclesial leaders in such a way that they believe the directives and pronouncements, even if these would harm their lives and society at large (see recent media publications on the drinking of petrol, eating grass, and so on).

There is no doubt that leaders' persuasive speeches have drawn so many people that it often also shifted the focus from the content of the gospel to the church leader's oratory and rhetorical skills (ornamentation). The church has become imagined as a place of 'entertainment' (see Baron & Maponya 2020). This is what Paul warned against when he conversed about the congregation that succumbs to "wise and persuasive words" that would become comfortable with a diluted message, in which the "crucified Christ" is no longer at the centre. Church members should also become critical of such persuasive messages that would touch the heart and the emotion (*pathos*), but that would be a diluted 'gospel'.

There is also the danger that church leaders might be dishonest and corrupt. However, through their eloquent speeches and sermons, they

can mislead the most vulnerable.[7] In most instances, church leaders would know their congregation members and be aware of their vulnerability and would feed into the existing prejudices and ignorance of their members. This is the downside of the use of persuasive speech in congregations. For instance, because their congregation members might already have some racial prejudices, the preacher could strengthen it through his preaching and prophecies, and such a congregation will not be challenged to change their views. The congregational leader might also 'play' on their feelings (*pathos*) and sustain their views and opinions through their persuasive sermons. Lawrie (2005) argues that, at times, unscrupulous persons may use cheap tricks and convince their audience, while those with integrity who communicate their message might not be persuaded and would resist transformation.

Some congregational leaders have no theological background, or do not engage in a responsible interpretation of the biblical texts. They, therefore, would not be able to give a credible account of their faith but would, through their eloquent preaching style and pronouncements (ornamentation), present their sermons. These addresses would make it 'sound' as if they have a good knowledge and have responsibly engaged the scriptures, that might not be the case. It remains a concern in the South African context that some congregational leaders have not been trained in, or exposed to some responsible theological reflection of the Bible and God, and still attract a large audience through their preaching and communication.

A number of church leaders would continue with messages of a malignant nature, but would be so convincing in their arguments that they have come to believe them themselves. However, a closer conversation would reveal that these leaders do not have sufficient proof, cannot give sufficient account of their hermeneutics, but still believe in their argument and, because of repetition, their argument is assumed by the leader and the congregation to be the truth. This shows a dangerous turn of events in congregations where there is no adequate critical engagement, especially with the 'long' and lasting traditions of the church, that becomes so entrenched in the structures and life of congregations that the 'sayings' and the 'maxims' of the congregational leaders are left unquestioned.

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[7] This reminded me of the common statement from township leadership: listen to my words and do not look at my actions. This means: what I say is important, but do not copy my actions.

Leaders of congregations have the 'microphone', the stage. They capture the members of a congregation on Sunday mornings. Some members of the congregation might be critical of the sermons and the messages of the leader of the congregation, but, unfortunately, they do not have the 'microphone'. Therefore, members of the congregation should be made aware of the complex relationship between the message of the 'gospel' and persuasive speech.

The verbal communication of congregational leaders remains crucial and serves as an important instrument of persuasion. Congregational leaders should, therefore, be continuous learners and be exposed to sound theological guidance and training to be able to be effective in presenting the gospel.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we discussed congregational leadership and persuasion through imitation and persuasive speech. Although this has been discussed separately, it does not function in a congregation as two distinct features and is mutually exclusive, but at times function in parallel. A leader engages in good rhetoric and persuasive speech, but the audience might not be convinced in light of their actions. However, it might also mean that a leader is effective in his/her persuasive speech and, irrespective of their actions, the congregation might still be persuaded to act. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is not to focus on the tensions and the complexity of the relationship between persuasion and imitation, but rather that these two persuasive instruments (rhetoric skill and imitation of example) should be used to transform churches and society, as illustrated in Paul's missionary strategy as a leader.

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Chapter 7
The heart of leadership: The shape and shaping of the king in the Psalter

Lodewyk Sutton[1]

7.1 Introduction

A well-known expression, "two things in life are certain: death and taxes", equally applies to change. A prominent question for churches at the beginning of the 21st century is how to transform the church, and together with that, society, in an ever-changing African and global environment?[2] Already in his chapter, Chris Hermans explained the battle of the heart in the "frame of contingency, free will and possibility", and the urgency for the transformation of the heart in "connection to affective fallibility". In his chapter, Stephan Joubert indicated the problem of the church becoming stagnant and how the church has lost its "influence as an agent of change and grace in this world". The battle of the heart

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[2] This question became relevant towards the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020, with the global pandemic of the virus named *COVID-19*, also known as *Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2* or *SARS-CoV-2* (National Institute for Communicable Diseases 2020:Online). COVID-19 was first reported by the World Health Organization at the end of December 2019 in the city of Wuhan in the Hubei province of China, after a number of cases of pneumonia were identified (National Institute for Communicable Diseases 2020:Online; for basic symptoms of COVID-19, see Molelekwa [2020:Online]). The question is no longer how to transform the church, but rather how to do and be church in a pandemic that is associated with death and nations going into "lockdowns". A safety measure that is implemented in an extreme emergency situation is called a lockdown. A lockdown typically implies that it is safer to be inside than outside and, therefore, people are restricted to their residences, due to some form of threat such as a bomb, shooter, warfare situation, or a health risk – for instance COVID-19 (Krishna 2020:Online). South Africa went into national lockdown for the first time on 26 March 2020, for a 21-day lockdown after the president at the time, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced this on 23 March 2020 (Shaban 2020:Online). The heads of nations and churches are being evaluated for their swift and decisive decisions on handling the pandemic and the changes accompanying nationwide lockdowns (see, for example, Robson's article [2020:Online]). Church leaders, referents, pastors and congregation members in this threat must submit to the regulations and rules of these lockdowns and changing circumstances.

continues in this chapter with the question: "What must be the heart of leadership?" so as to help the church be an agent of change in Africa and the world. Although the answer to this question can be generic, its application must be contextual. It is, therefore, essential to briefly mention the African context and an understanding of leadership in Africa.

To talk about leadership in Africa as a continent is to talk about its diversity, history, cultures, beliefs, and development. It is to speak about its post-colonial heritage and not to make the same mistakes and to have African leaders who have the "ability to find solutions to Africa's problems" (Pillay *et al.* 2013:105).[3] Leadership in Africa can be identified as a "group phenomenon" where leaders use influence to guide groups (or people) through a "course of actions or towards the achievement of certain goals", with a strong presence of "hierarchy" (Masango 2002:708). According to Masango (2002:708),

> [l]eadership has to do with someone who has commanding authority or influence within a group. In Africa, a leader is viewed as someone who is a servant to the clan, tribe, community or group. In other words, African people treat a leader by virtue of being a king, priest or ruler chosen by virtue of the office in order to serve the nation.

In the ancient Near East, the responsibility to lead the nation fell to the king. For Israel as a nation,[4] this was more complicated as they had YHWH as their divine king[5] and, at some point in their history, a human king (Judaic-Israelite kings) (see Brueggemann 1997:600-621). Israel as a nation experienced change with every new power that dominated them in the ancient Near East. One prominent theme on how Israel dealt with this change was through the transformation of their understanding of the king and his functions. One, therefore, needs to ask the questions: Who is the king? What does being the king mean? For the purpose of this chapter, these questions are approached from the viewpoint of the Book of Psalms and specifically from the perspective of the shape and shaping of the topic in the Psalter, after which an appropriation of the findings is made for the present day.

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[3] See also Adeyemo (2006:546) on leadership in Africa, the influence of colonisation and Christianity, *ubuntu*, and how many ideas of African leadership are "embedded in the Kikuyu legend about the despotic king Gikuyu".

[4] As a collective term.

[5] YHWH as the king and eternal ruler is an important theme in the Hebrew Bible (Ex. 15:18; Pss. 10:16, 29:10, 66:7, 74:12, 93:2, 146:10; Jer. 10:10; Mic. 4:7). YHWH's rule is over God's own people but also very importantly over God's representative human Israelite or Judean king (Num. 23:21; 1 Sam. 12:12; Pss. 44:4[5], 74:12, 145:1; Is. 33:22; Ezek. 20:33), over other nations (Ex. 15:18; 1 Chron. 16:31; 2 Chron. 20:6; Pss. 22:28, 47:2[3], 7-8[8-9], 93:1, 96:10, 97:1, 99:1, 146:10; Jer. 10:7, 10, 46:18, 48:15, 51:57; Mic. 4:7; Zech. 14:16; Mal. 1:14), and nature (Pss. 47, 93, 96-99, 145) (Ryken *et al.* 1998:479; see Routledge 2008:226-228).

Writing on the theme of the king and on Psalms, reflecting the king in the Book of Psalms, is a major undertaking and many contributions have been made over the past years. Three major contributions on this topic were made by Eaton (1986), Starbuck (1999), and Grant (2004). Each of these three contributions reflects in detail on themes of kingship in the Psalms and on individual and groups of Psalms dealing with the subject of the king. These works evaluate and discuss in detail the group identified by Gunkel (1998:99-120) as the "Royal Psalms".[6][7] It will, therefore, be a wasteful exercise to repeat all of their findings. For the purpose of this chapter, the focus will be on the transformation of the king in the Psalter to indicate the purpose (function) of the king in the shape and shaping of the Psalter. It is also not the purpose of this chapter to describe all of the functions[8] performed in the office of a king in the Psalter, unless they have a direct meaning in relation to the theme of the transformation of the king, or rather the shape and shaping of the king. This chapter first provides an overview of the king and the shaping of the king in ancient Israel, in order to provide a narrative. It then evaluates the shape and shaping of King David in the Psalter as well as the shaping of the king in the Royal Psalms. It identifies certain perspectives from Psalm 72, followed by a conclusion and appropriation of the findings.

7.2 The King in Ancient Israel (in the Psalms)

The Hebrew-Aramaic word מלך (*malek*) is one of the most commonly used words in the Hebrew Bible, occurring almost two thousand seven hundred times. The same is true of the term βασιλεύς in the New Testament. This can be translated as "be king", "rule", or "becoming king". As a noun, it can be translated as king (*melek*). In other forms, it can depict anything from royal power and dominion, to kingship. It thus falls within the sematic group of the office (1 Sam. 20:31; 1 Kgs. 2:12-15; 1 Chron. 12:24), act of ruling (Hos. 8:4), and rul-

[6] Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144. The Royal Psalms should not be viewed as a genre classification (form), but rather as an association between these Psalms, due to the similarity in content. For a discussion on reasons why the Royal Psalms should not be viewed as a classification or genre, see Grant (2008:375) and Eaton (1986:1-26).

[7] For the scope and purpose of this chapter, the group identified by Gunkel as the Royal Psalms will be used throughout as a recognised group. Research by Eaton (1986:1-26) has indicated convincingly that this group does not constitute the only Psalms that can be identified with the king and that there are many others that could fall into this category. Still, the overwhelming presence of kingship in these psalms must be acknowledged. For a discussion on criteria for indicating kingship or a royal background in the Psalms, see Eaton (1986).

[8] For a detailed discussion on the functions of the king in the Psalter, see the work of Eaton (1986).

ing over others (subjects – Judg. 9:2; 1 Sam. 8:11-17) and a specific territory (Nel 1997:956-958).[9]

One cannot deny that a prominent theme in ancient Near Eastern literature is that of the monarchy and, by extension, the king. It is important to understand how kingship is comprehended in Israel, as a result of the influence of other nations, especially that of the Egyptian and Sumerian-Akkadian kingship. Special attention is paid to the birth of the king, the infancy years, the enthronement, the life of the king as a ruler and the death and/or burial of the king. As a ruler, the king is remembered for how he treats his subjects and how relations with other nations are conducted in economic trade or battles (victories and defeats) (see Keel 1978:244; deClaissé-Walford 1997:57-66).[10]

According to Unger (1957:631), the main duties of the king were to be commander-in-chief of the armies, supreme judge, and absolute master over the lives of his subjects (imposing taxes and demanding service and labour from subjects). Israel's king was also viewed as the vice regent (1 Sam. 10:1, 16:13) and anointed of YHWH (1 Kgs. 1:39). Some texts give the idea that the king is the son of YHWH (2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:6, 7, 89:26, 27). Eaton (1986:1-26) sought motifs contained in the Psalter which, in his view, could only intelligibly be used in connection with the office of kingship. According to Eaton (1986:135-197), royal motifs associated with an unnamed protagonist in the Psalms of the individual may be listed in terms of the 'I' persona.[11]

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[9] For a further discussion on the etymology and use of מלך, see Nel (1997:956-965) and Unger (1957:631-632).

[10] For a more detailed discussion on the king and specifically the background of kingship in Israel (and the Psalms), see the works of Eaton (1986), Keel (1978:243-306) and Mowinckel (2004:42-80).

[11] Eaton (1986:135-197) identifies the following functions and/or ideals for the king in the Psalter: Davidic rule lies within God's kingdom (Ps. 89:19); the enemies of God as personal enemies of the king (Ps. 45:6); the laws of the kingdom are God's (Ps. 72:1); the king is drawn into God's aura (Ps. 91:1, 4); the king as God's son (Pss. 2:7, 89:27), servant (Ps. 89:4, 40), and covenant-partner (Pss. 16:10, 89:4, 35, 40); the king assisted by the personified covenant-graces (Ps. 89:29); the king aided by God's word (Ps. 18:31), name (Ps. 91:14), and spirit (Ps. 51:12-14); God's assurance to his king (Pss. 73:23, 80:18, 89:4, 20, 139:10); God gives his king abundant life (Ps. 21:2-7); the king's life benefits the people (Ps. 144:11-14); God's gifts balanced by demands on his king (Ps. 78:70-72); the king's warm response to God's grace (Ps. 18:2); the king's designations for God as his personal saviour (Ps. 89:27); the king as God's chief cultic minister (Pss. 21:6, 132:18) and witness to the world (Ps. 18:50); the king's work of atonement (Ps. 118:17) and admonisher of mankind (Ps. 2:10); the role of witness as a plea in royal prayers (Ps. 40:10); the king's witness is inspired (Ps. 51:16); sacrifices in relation to the king's witness (Ps. 69:31); the subject of the king's witness (Pss. 18:4, 40:2-3, 116:2); characteristic elements of the king's witness (Pss. 18:32, 40:5, 71:19, 118:8), and the king's grace of answered prayer (Pss. 3:4, 4:3, 57:3).

To establish a narrative for the shape and shaping of the Psalter, a narrative for the king of Israel must be drawn from the literature of the Hebrew Bible,[12] to establish a literary timeline of the history (background), in order to examine the development of the narrative of the king. For this narrative, it is important to understand that Israelite kingship differs from that of Egyptian and Sumerian-Akkadian kingship, in that it has very specific historical circumstances. The reason for this is that the human king of Israel was made king by the people; the people wanted a king, not YHWH (1 Sam. 11:15; 2 Sam. 2:4, 5:3; 1 Kgs. 12:1, 20) (Keel 1978:244). For Brueggemann (1997:600-601), the reasoning behind why the people wanted a king is an important subject, for three political reasons. First, Israel wanted to imitate the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5, 19-20); secondly, Israel wanted a king to be able to respond to military threat (1 Sam. 8:20), and thirdly, there were

> those who monopolized wealth and power and who wanted a strong central government in order to protect and legitimate their considerable economic and political advantage.

These political reasons explain the self-centred focus of the kings (1 Kgs. 12:1-19; Pss. 72, 82; Ezek. 34:2-6) and why they failed in their task as representatives and mediators of YHWH.

The narrative of the king in the Hebrew Bible can be presented as follows. The one true king of Israel is YHWH (Ex. 15:18), as there was no human king (Judg. 21:25); but this does not mean that Israel did not want a human king. In Judges 8:22, Gideon denies the request to become a ruler and confirms YHWH's kingship. Later, the elders approached Samuel on the subject of a king. The advantages and disadvantages of a human king are discussed (1 Sam. 8-12); a strong anti-royal perspective is evident (1 Sam. 8:11-17). Saul is appointed as the first human king of Israel (1 Sam. 9:1-10) and followed by David who becomes king. It is clear that the role of the king changes with David, who is indicated as the anointed king of YHWH, with whom YHWH establishes a covenant relationship (the house of David will always rule on the throne – 2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Ps. 89:2-4, 28-29). Initially, David only ruled over the southern tribes (2 Sam. 2:1-11), but later over the northern tribes (2 Sam. 5:1-5). David was followed by Solomon, after whom the United Kingdom (around 1020-922 BCE) was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (around 922 BCE), where the line of David continued. The northern kingdom came to an end, and with that its kings, around 722 BCE, with the invasion of the Assyrians. The same happened to the southern kingdom around 586 BCE, with the invasion of the Babylonians (2 Kgs. 25). The Babylonian exile was a devastating period in the time of Juda. This was the end of the hu-

[12] Due to the scope of this chapter, it is not possible to provide a detailed discussion on each of the genres and their context. Rather, an overview provides a historical timeline, as presented in the literature of the Hebrew Bible.

man kings. After this, the focus fell again on YHWH as king. In 539 BCE, the Persian Empire took over the rule, and the Jewish exiles started to return to Jerusalem. During this period, Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt (a time of restoration). The Persian empire was followed by the Greek empire (around 333 BCE), after which the Jewish rebellion took place (1 Macc. 2:19-22; 2 Macc. 11:24-25). In approximately 104-37 BCE, certain Maccabean high priests assumed the title of king. The Roman Empire conquered Jerusalem in 63 BCE (see deClaissé-Walford 2004:45-57; Rendtorff 2005:560-561; Boshoff *et al.* 2006; Routledge 2008:228-235; Banwell 2015:646-647).

7.3 The shaping of King David in the Psalter

The meta-narrative presented by scholars in canon-critical research on the shape and shaping of the Psalter is centred on the figure of King David. Book I (Pss. 1-41) of the Psalter presents the reign of King David over the united kingdom of Israel.[13] Book II (Pss. 42-72) of the Psalter recounts the reign of David and that of his son Solomon. Book III (Pss. 73-89) recounts the divided kingdom, with the destruction of the northern kingdom (Israel – around 722 BCE) by the Assyrians and the southern kingdom (Judah – around 586 BCE) by the Babylonians. Book IV (Pss. 90-106) recounts the hardship of the exiles, especially those under Babylonian rule, where they were seeking identity and meaning in this time. Book V (Pss. 107-150) focuses on the return to Jerusalem and the hope of restoration for the new Israel, with the new David (new king) and YHWH as the true king and sole ruler of Israel, the nations and earth (see deClaissé-Walford 2014a:1-11; 2014b:363-376; McCann Jr 2014:350-362; Sutton 2019:557).

Throughout the Psalms, David can be regarded as an individual and as a king figure. David becomes the essential ideal figure.[14] This is mostly noted in the Psalms that are attributed to him through the superscriptions "A Psalm for/by David", called the Davidic collections (Pss. 3-41, 51-72, 108-110, 138-145).[15] This heading occurs more than seventy-three times in the Psalms and, according to Eaton (1986:20), can be viewed as one of the indications for a

[13] For a further study on the topic and the development of canonical-critical research in the Book of Psalms, the topic of the shape and shaping of the Psalter, and the meta-narrative of the Psalter, see Wilson (1985); Howard (1997:1-18); deClaissé-Walford (1997; 2004; 2014a:1-11; 2014b:363-376); Zenger (1998:77-102; 2010); deClaissé-Walford *et al.* (2014:21-38); McCann Jr. (2014:350-362); Robertson (2015), and Willgren (2016).

[14] The topic of David as an ideal figure is very important. For the scope of this chapter, the discussion of David is limited. For a detailed discussion of David as an ideal king, see the works of Rendtorff (2005:561-570) and Routledge (2008:233-236); see Brueggemann (1997:600-621).

[15] On the topic of superscriptions and David, see deClaissé-Walford (2004:34-35) and Bellinger Jr. (2012:8-12).

royal psalmody. One can observe that the Davidic superscriptions in the Book of Psalms do not indicate Davidic authorship (Gerstenberger 2001:253; see Delitzsch 1973:173). Neither do they indicate any specific historical event in the life of King David. The superscriptions help incorporate David, by making him a foundation figure for the Davidic dynasty and restoration of that kingdom. They also establish the theme of hope after a time of war (the Babylonian exile). David is no longer the ideal king as proclaimed in Books I and II of the Psalter. He is no longer the historical figure or the individual David; rather, he must be viewed as a new David or as a "David *redivivus*". This David is the representative of YHWH given by God, for his people to rebuild the nation and to share the throne of God (Ps. 110:1). The Davidic superscription in Psalm 109 binds this Psalm with Psalms 108 and 110, making it a prayer of the king (of David – new David). This development in Davidic theology becomes a new ideology to help in a time of restoration and to give hope (Hossfeld & Zenger 2011:6, 146-147; see Tucker 2014:68-81).[16]

Eaton (1986:135-136) indicates that the Davidic king serves as representative, or under the kingship of YHWH, as God's instrument. Psalms 2 and 110 are, in his view, the king's ordination. The king is dependent on the aid of YHWH (Pss. 7:7, 18:7-20, 57:6, 59:6, 89:19, 144:5) and serves as the one who represents the case for the fatherless and the oppressed (the poor – Pss. 19:13, 10:18, 72, 94:6).

According to Hossfeld and Zenger (2011:6), Psalms 138-145 have a strong universal theme of royal rule, with a point of view situated in the transcendence and immanence of YHWH. These Psalms proclaim YHWH as the God for the poor and the God of justice. These Psalms were created and placed at the end of the Psalter by the redactors as a continuation of the Zion Psalter, so as to shape the Book of Psalms into the five-part 'Torah of David' that is analogous to the five-part 'Torah of Moses'. This is especially evident and marked in their end doxologies, Psalms 41:14, 72:18-19, 89:53, 106:48, and 145. It is evident from Hossfeld and Zenger's (2011:6) conclusion that the redactors placed Psalm 1, which is viewed as a Torah Psalm, at the beginning of the Psalter as a prologue,

> where the 'man' that is called blessed, the one who loves and meditates on the Torah, realizes the ideal image of the king described in Deuteronomy 17:18-19. On the other hand, through the expansion of Psalm 2:1-9 by the addition of Psalm 2:10-12, the 'son of God' to whom YHWH has handed over

[16] The superscriptions do not provide much value for an individual interpretation of Psalms, but rather show value in the diachronic reconstruction of the formation of the Psalter, and thus also for the shape and shaping of the Psalter. It should be noted that Willgren (2020:68) indicates that Davidic superscriptions are not reliable sources for demarcating earlier collections of Psalms.

> the mighty lordship over the kings and the nations – entirely accord with Psalm 138.

This is the image of the ideal representative. Grant (2005:115) also focuses on Deuteronomy 17:14-20[17] to explain that this kingship law becomes the blueprint to indicate that the king must be the paradigmatic Israelite believer. How does the king become this? By internalising the Torah of YHWH, so that it becomes part of his everyday life and rule. Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, and 118 indicate the ideal king, the ideal representative of this thought. It is unfortunate that the historical narratives indicate that the kings and Israel failed at this. In this instance, the shape and shaping of the figure of David in the Psalter could provide us with a last hopeful thought. As mentioned, the meta-narrative of the Psalms begins with David and brings the narrative to the new David, the David after war, after failure, indicating that, with YHWH, hope and restoration are possible. According to Brueggemann (1997:616),

> the amazing power of monarchy as mediator, and of the vision carried by it, is evident in the fact that the historical fissure, which was inescapable for Israel's interpreters, did not terminate the ideological power of the institution.

This power now lies with every Israelite, every person who is a representative of YHWH.

7.4 The Shaping of the Royal Psalms in the Psalter

When searching for some of the earliest texts from the monarchies of Israel and Judah (9th and 10th centuries), the Royal Psalms could offer possible fragments of texts reflecting a possible original clan-oriented civilisation's view on the importance and legitimations of the monarchy. The main problem is one of dating the material. Most of these Psalms went through multiple redactions and shaping over a long period of time. The biggest problem, however, is to determine where the earlier material stops and the reshaping begins (Carr 2011:386). Eaton (1986:20-26) indicates the difficulty in identifying Psalms that show royal content; thus, David identification does not suffice. The influence of other older royal ideologies must also be reckoned with, for example, Egypt or later Neo-Assyrian royal ideologies (Carr 2011:386). For the purpose of this chapter, the final shaping of the Royal Psalms in the Psalter is used as point of departure.

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[17] According to Deuteronomy 17:14-20, the king must meet several requirements: chosen by God; not be a foreigner; not accumulate horses (in other words, military strength); not accumulate many wives (as they may turn the heart; not accumulate wealth; write a copy of the law for himself, and read and obey the Torah or law (Ryken *et al.* 1998:477).

7.4.1 The shaping of the Royal Psalms

The shaping of the Royal Psalms became important in Wilson's (1986) research. He indicated that the Royal Psalms can be viewed at the seams of Books I-III in the Psalter, showing the significance of these in the editing of the Psalter. For Wilson, this placement of the Royal Psalms indicates a narrative that shows the rise and fall of King David. Psalm 2 indicates the inauguration of the Davidic covenant; Psalm 72 shows the transition of the Davidic covenant to the following Israelite kings; Psalm 89 is a lament indicating the rejection of the Davidic covenant by YHWH (Wilson 1986:85-94). What becomes important is that one can realise that the placement and editing of the Royal Psalms in the whole Psalter emphasise a post-exilic hope that a Davidic king will rule again after the exile (Grant 2008:376). In a later article, Wilson (2005:403-404) reviews his own article and confirms his findings and the importance of the Davidic kingship in the final sections of the Psalter, understood as an eschatological anticipation (of a messiah).[18]

More recently, Gottwald (2014) contributed an article on the theme of kingship in the book of Psalms, where he indicates the trajectory of the Royal Psalms. This trajectory contributes to this chapter's discussion on the shaping of the Royal Psalms. In his article, Gottwald works with a preferred post-exilic dating to show how kingship is understood in the Psalms after it went through its final redactional stages, after all the individual and collections of Psalms were grouped and edited, thus presenting an Israelite king in the final shaping of the Psalter. To demonstrate his point, Gottwald (2014:437) chose for this purpose Psalms 2, 18-21, 45, 72, 89, 110, 144, and 146 as the king is a clear subject of these Psalms.[19] For Gottwald (2014:439-441), this trajectory is noted specifically in Psalms 1-89 (Books I-III), where Psalms 2 and 89 are considered an *inclusio* to the original collection of Psalms 1-89, with the later addition of Psalms 90-150 (Books IV and V). In the beginning, the king (human) is portrayed as a king with great power and status (Ps. 2). As the downward trajectory continues, this power and status decline to the point where the king is depicted as almost irrelevant to Israelite society (Pss. 88-89). In Psalms 18, 20-21, the king only defeats his enemies with great difficulty; later, the king is competing with other kingdoms and needs to marry a foreign princess, in order to strength-

[18] Mitchell (1997:268-269) interprets the Royal Psalms, also with an eschatological messianic focus, using perspectives from Zechariah 9-14. According to him, Psalm 45 must be understood as the king who is depicted as a bridegroom coming to daughter Zion. Psalm 72 is then interpreted as the king's initial rule over all the earth, where Psalm 89 is then the premature termination of his kingdom, rule and life. Psalm 110 then represents the king appearing from above to come and destroy his enemies and rule over the world. Psalm 132 depicts the Davidic king as the victor of the battle and regent over Zion.

[19] For Gottwald (2014:437), these Psalms must be regarded as "Royal Psalms", as the king is the subject matter.

en the kingdom (Ps. 45). This is followed by the trouble prayer of Psalm 72, defending his people in Psalm 80, and ending with a defeated and traumatised king in Psalm 89 (the Babylonian exile) (Gottwald 2014:440). Although Gottwald does not mention this, the enthronement of YHWH as the true king must be noted in Psalms 93 and 95-99. For Gottwald (2014:440-441), an upward trajectory can be noted in Psalms 90-150, where Psalm 110 announces the victory and elevation of the king (with the help of YHWH the king). In Psalm 144, the king desperately asks for God's help in battle, showing that the reign of the human king has passed (see Ps. 146). In Psalms 148 and 149, YHWH is shown as the true one and only king, with all the kings and nations in the world bowing to YHWH.[20]

Gottwald (2014:438) then identifies three categories that, in his view, treat the functions and practices of the king. The first of these categories is *the king as a military and diplomatic leader*. Under this topic, Gottwald (2014:438) describes all the functions of the king in all the stages of warfare, from the beginning to the end, including the post-war rituals. He makes special reference to the fact that, in certain Psalms, the expected outcome after the war is that defeated subjects and kings will also come to worship YHWH. According to Grant (2004:107-109), the king as an exemplar then becomes a prominent theme of trust and dependence on YHWH (Ps. 21) in war, where even in military action other nations are focused on YHWH.

The second category that Gottwald (2014:438) identifies as important for kingship in the final shaping of the Psalter is *the king as the upholder of domestic peace and justice*. The theme of peace and justice is a dominant one and, as a result, a great deal of emphasis is placed on taking care of the poor.[21] Again, it is clear that one of the functions of the king as a representative is to keep justice and peace.

This is strengthened by the third category of Gottwald (2014:438), *the bond between God and king*. The relationship between YHWH and the king takes a prominent role in the Psalms; this relationship is dependent on the faithfulness of the king towards YHWH, but also expressed in the faithfulness of YHWH towards the king. The relationship is defined in terms of a covenant relationship and in the adoption of the king as "the son of God" (Pss. 2:2, 89:28), typical of ancient Near Eastern relations between divinities and their kings. In the Hebrew Bible, and specifically in the Psalms, this relationship is expressed most strongly in the Davidic dynasty, where there will always be a descendant of David on the throne. The king becomes the ultimate representative of God. According to Eaton (1986:146; see Routledge 2008:233-234), this makes "the king the sole representative of God's kingdom over all the nations".

[20] It is clear that Gottwald also follows the interpretative path of Wilson.
[21] Bremer (2017:101-116) addresses this major theme of the poor in the Psalms.

Grant (2004:282-284) interprets the shaping of the royal Psalms in the post-exilic period as a re-reading of these Psalms with the purpose of focusing attention on the king. These compositions are re-interpreted for the post-war context after the exile, with situations or contexts that were more common to all the people of Israel. The ideal king is a future king, an eschatological re-reading of the royal Psalms. Starbuck (1999:211-212) describes how this process of re-interpretation came about:

> The one-time representative for all of Israel is now represented through all Israel. It is not so much that the people collectively become 'king,' but rather, that the oracular promises pledged of old are now re-interpreted as promises to the entire community. This re-appropriation and reinterpretation is a most significant development of Israel's theological anthropology. It is also inexplicable from the standpoint of court-sponsored royal ideology. At the same time, the understanding that any Israelite could become a faithful office bearer was already implicit in the traditions which combined an unconditional royal grant of 'office' and 'dynasty' with a conditional approval of the individual filling the office.

The king as representative of YHWH is no longer a single "I"; rather, every person who must represent YHWH becomes an "I".

For this representative of YHWH, the king, that is every person (Ps. 8:6-9), now also in a throne communion with YHWH (Ps. 110:1), plays a significant part in this process of reinterpretation based on the fact that, even during the monarchic period, the king as "office-bearer" was meant to act as an example of commitment to YHWH for the people. Failure to follow the divine instruction would lead to removal from office (Grant 2004:283-284). It seems that the purpose of the office-bearers, in general, and of the king, in particular, was to act as an exemplar for the people – to be a model Israelite and an example to follow. In the final shaping of the Psalter, the readers and hearers of these texts are called upon to be an example of obedience to YHWH, especially in the time where there was no king. For Grant (2004:283-284), this aspect of the function of the king is important as

> [t]he hermeneutical re-interpretation of the royal psalms was not a fraught task, but one which would occur quite naturally to both redactor and reader. During the time of the monarchy the royal psalms were examples of prayer and piety, lament and thanksgiving associated with the king, but for the people as a whole. The king's example of life *coram Deo*, expressed in the psalms, was exemplary for the people. As the king expressed his absolute trust in YHWH, so the people could echo his words in prayer. As the king lamented over opposition, so

> the people could lament in the face of their own difficulties. The king in the psalms functions as a model for the people to follow, therefore this process of post-exilic re-interpretation of royal texts from the perspective of the people would have been quite natural.

7.4.2 The heart of the Davidic King: Perspectives from Psalm 72

Psalm 72 is considered to be in the genre of a royal petition (semantic field of Royal Psalms) or coronation hymn. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Psalm seems to be that of a cultic setting. The structure of the Psalm can be suggested as follows: introductory petition (v. 1) directed to YHWH for the king (or son of the king), whose rule is expanded on in verses 2-17 that can be further divided in petitions and requests (vv. 2-4, 5-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-17), followed by praise to YHWH (vv. 18-19), ending with a colophon (v. 20) (see Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:205-209; deClaissé-Walford *et al.* 2014:580). The idea is presented that the Psalm is a coronation hymn that provides instructions for the future king by the previous king, as the representative of YHWH. Petitions are made to YHWH to help the king and to provide the king with the necessary skills. In verses 1-4, YHWH is asked to give justice and righteousness to the king, and the ensuing verses focus on the king himself. The heart of what a king must do, is exclaimed in verses 4 and 12-14, where the king must provide justice and righteousness to the poor and needy (v. 4) and has a responsibility to rescue, have compassion, save and redeem those who are oppressed, namely the poor and the needy (vv. 12-14). As God's representative, the king "must act as God's image in the world" (see Houston 1999:362; deClaissé-Walford *et al.* 2014:578-579).

7.5 The transformation of the King in the Psalter

On the question of how to transform the church and society, the starting point for the king in the Psalms is "representational leadership". There is a strong sense in Scripture and not only in the Psalms that certain leaders represent a nation, and the focus is generally on Israel. This representation can be for the ill (Lev. 4:3), or on behalf of the nation with the effect of staying God's hand of judgement (Ex. 32). Perhaps this representation is noted most graphically in the prophetic literature of the prophet Jeremiah, who delivers a message to the nation that judgement is coming that cannot be stayed even by the intercession of righteous ones (Jer. 15:1). Leadership is offered as people stand and represent Israel, but still the most striking image of representational leadership is found in the tradition of kingship in Israel (Ryken *et al.* 1998:496-497).

The king becomes the symbol of change in the shape and shaping of the Psalter. The king, as representative of YHWH and the ideal exemplar for everyone of a life lived according to the Torah before YHWH, undergoes a transfor-

mation in the shape and shaping of the Psalter, where every Israelite becomes that representative. The ideal figure of King David in the shape and shaping of the Psalter becomes the symbol of hope and restoration after a time of war, to transform a broken society. This representative function is now every "I" in the community as the representative of YHWH and exemplar (see Eaton 1986:20-26). The biggest problem with the king is the motivation for monarchy not to represent YHWH, but those who had

> monopolized wealth and power and who wanted a strong central government in order to protect and legitimate their considerable economic and political advantage (Brueggemann 1997:601 – an inward focus).

The kings of Israel and Juda did not represent YHWH, but rather their own economic and political well-being. This failure is also noted in Psalm 82 (see Brueggemann 1997:601).

To transform society, Israel needs to represent YHWH as exemplar and work towards the well-being of everyone, there where they are. This is the same principle when we ask the question: How to or not to transform church and society? It starts with representative leadership, knowing who is represented – YHWH, and by implication, being the exemplar of the one being represented and working then to the well-being of those around us. Taking into account the plurality of leadership styles, the warning is to forget the representative role and become the representative of a group or seek power in leadership, not working to the well-being, the *shalom*, of others and those needing it most (Pss. 72, 82). The heart of leadership (for the king) is to care for those most in need – the poor. The focus is not on representing the poor, for the king represents YHWH, but to provide for the poor. YHWH is represented and God's interest is served by doing this.

7.6 Conclusion

Leadership in Africa, which can be identified as a "group phenomenon" and where "the leader is viewed as someone who is a servant to the clan, tribe, community or group" with the purpose to serve the nation, must then reorientate its focus away from power, dominance, wealth, hierarchy, and self-preservation. If the focus of leaders is self-preservation, the interests of the poor are then not served and, from a Christian perspective, YHWH is not represented. The heart of leadership for those representing YHWH is to serve those who need it most, even in the direst of situations. It appears that the kings of Israel never failed to undervalue the importance of being a representative of YHWH and were rather dominated by self-interest and power. This representative function now rests with every follower of YHWH and with every follower to be an agent of change

so as to transform the church and society in an ever-changing African and global environment.

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Chapter 8
Who has the authentic voice to change the heart of communities: the church or government?

Thomas Resane[1]

8.1 Introduction

History bears witness that the masses possess powerful voices. When the masses raise voices, societies demobilise and come to some kind of cul-de-sac. There are numerous national and international examples such as the Sharpeville shootings (1961); Soweto Students Uprisings (1976); Tiananmen Square (1989); Arab Spring (2010/2011), not to even mention what is currently happening in Hong Kong, and various mass massacres on the eve of the democratic South Africa (Boipatong, Mahikeng, and so on). Earlier in 2018, we observed the displacement of the North-West Provincial Government as the masses called for its downfall, due to corruption. Most of these are pivotal events in world history, whereby people express their dissatisfactions regarding the oppressive ideologies or structured social discriminations.

South Africa has a historical experience of protest action directed at the state. While the political context has changed, the social context has not. South Africa is wading on muddy and murky waters, trying to re-position herself to be the ideal territory clean of any form of bigotry or discrimination. The history of racial prejudices is difficult to erase from the memories of the masses. Subliminality of racism is a wading hawk above the populace and it keeps squawking about discrimination, bigotries, marginalisation, and normativity. Ours is a nation marred by scars of historical injustices. Most of the population is still writhing with salient and silent screams as the wounds keep opening whenever these gaping wounds are opened by racial slurs and utterances, touching on emotive issues such as land restitution, affirmative action, and so on. Unfortunately, these actions always arouse violence accompanied by aggression, anger, and some form of retaliation. Human beings, when violated, retaliate with violence. Violence is inherent in social dynamics, and it occurs in the form of reprisal, vendetta, the urge to take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Girard 2010:24).

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8.2 Communities' voices

Observations of the current scenarios, researches, and experiences point to the fact that the masses are voicing the cries from their hearts. Community protests or service delivery protests have become the order of the day. By community protests, in this instance, is meant

> collective action by a group of community members against a local municipality because of poor or inadequate provision of basic services, as well as a wider spectrum of concerns including government corruption, rampant crime and unemployment (Matebesi & Botes 2017:82).

Post-1994, the governing party enshrined the slogan '*Better life for all*' and it is on this slogan that residents in high-density areas such as townships, informal settlements, and villages cry for service delivery. The communities are crying for the provision of basic services such as housing, electricity, water and sanitation, refuse removal, the number of schools, nurseries, crèches and hospitals, particularly in high population density areas (Morudu 2017:2). Some people still do not understand the rationale behind the community protests. This may be due either to the lack or limited knowledge of socio-historical factors that continue to shape the South African demographics dynamics, or to the parochial lifestyle of those who reside in gated or boomed elite suburbs of the cities. Shutte (2001:223) paints this naïve phenomenon:

> The modern history of South Africa is a history of continuous inter-group and inter-cultural misunderstanding, leading to conflict and eventually disintegration and chaos in a state of permanent, sometimes open, sometimes hidden, war.

Many researchers agree that the factors contributing towards protests are corruption, poverty and unemployment, as well as a lack of institutional capacity (Manson & Mbenga 2014; Resane 2017; De Wet 2015). These issues, especially corruption, are a serious challenge. The high rate of unemployment, poor service delivery and limited resources are the results of corruption.

8.3 The government's incapacity

The current government's cadre deployment disregards qualifications, skills and knowledge in government institutions. This escalates the rate of corruption and the marginalisation of the skilled members of society. The issue of connectivity is also raised as tenders are determined by who you know, and one's willingness to join the corruption chain of bloating the allocated funds for the benefit of those signing the procurement processes. Government's international policy of creating a healthy environment for international investment is marred by a high rate of corruption in government hierarchies (Mafunisa 2000). The local

government's reputation for poor service delivery, inefficiency, incompetence, and high levels of corruption cripple service deliveries. Corruption impedes service delivery and has a number of negative consequences, *inter alia*, lower levels of investment and growth, the discouraging of direct foreign investment, and encouraging business to operate in the unofficial sector in violation of tax and regulatory laws. Corruption prompts the withdrawal of foreign donors, leading to social menaces such as unemployment and poverty.

According to Kaufmann and Vicente (2011:195), corruption has been at the centre of policy and research debates on the quality of state institutions. It has become an evil that uses political power to destroy others for the purpose of defending or preserving the integrity of one's sick self (Peck 1990a:277). Corruption in a state is an indication that the management of its public institutions is weak, and that tolerating corruption of some kind could lead to the spiralling of malfeasance to a systemic level. Indeed, corruption has enormous negative consequences for the ideal of an orderly and peaceful society. It breeds a destructive socio-economic environment with elements such as poverty, crime and displacement as its symptoms. It also corrupts the core of human relationships, value systems and vision of life (De Wet & Kruger 2013:1).

Poverty and unemployment inhibit the development of effective and efficient local governance. The vast majority of people, particularly youth, with some form of qualification, are not employed. The masses are angry at the government as they blame it for all these failures, menaces, and ills. The new dispensation in the country raised hopes for the alleviation of poverty, provision of better housing, better health and education facilities, access to adequate water, affordable and reliable electricity and proper sanitation, and the overall improvement of quality of life for the majority of the people. The excitement was short-lived and later replaced by growing signs of despair, due to the government's inability to render better life for all and the basic services promised to all citizens (Mashamaite 2014). Poverty is also a crucial factor that causes protests in communities, as many people are required to pay for basic services such as water and electricity, even though they cannot afford it.

Researchers also point to a lack of institutional capacity as a contributing factor towards community protests. Most of the officials in government institutions, especially the municipal entities, are not qualified for their positions. No wonder one comes across a top official with Grade 12 as the highest qualification, and some in management positions with diplomas. Government institutions ignore capable and qualified people, making the civil service suffer from scarce skills. This is exacerbated by the ruling elite's redeployment policy. Civil service opportunities are used as a payback mechanisation to reward 'comrades' for their allegiance to the political demagoguery. According to Managa (2012), lack of expertise has left many municipalities inadequately staffed, resulting in deteriorating service delivery over the years, and leaving many communities with inadequate access to basic services. It is unfortunate

that skills scarcity has resulted in overwhelming service-delivery backlogs that have prevented the government from addressing the problems effectively and efficiently. The cause of service delivery protest is poverty, the high rate of unemployment and maladministration of government resources such as the misuse or under-use of funds allocated for providing services, as well as a lack of capacity to complete projects aimed to assist the communities (Managa 2012).

These inhibiting factors slow down government's service delivery, which leads to people's unsettled emotions. Their unchanged lives are their unchanged hearts in need of re-dress. The slogan *Better life for all* carries some emotive baggage. When it was pronounced, it created a sense of fulfilment or attainment to be desired. It revived hopes and expectations. It created a yearning for better ideals, therefore lodged timeously into the hearts that were damping with gradual reduction of oscillation and vivacity. Instead, communities are in need, the government is demobilised due to incapacity, and the hearts of the people are slumped into indolence and lethargy. Is there any possibility that community protests and the government response would change the hearts of the people? The fact remains that the masses remain hardened in their hearts. I fully concur with Tshaka (2010:126) that:

> A capitalist system, which has created a dog-eat-dog culture, must accept at least partial blame for the cultural dislocation that we witness in some African communities.

Tshaka's insinuation sounds like a cry from the bleeding heart that experiences injustice perpetrated by the heartless elite in the high echelons of society. Peck (1990b:65) describes these heartless and malfunctional practices of the elite as the evil in the world, committed by the spiritual fat cats who think that they are "without sin because they are unwilling to suffer the discomfort of significant self-examination". Corruption for them is no more an evil, but a norm of self-enrichment at the expense of the poor.

The broken hearts have lost the spirit of *ubuntu* – the togetherness that glues communities into a strong bond and cohesion characterised by respect of persons, properties, and positions.

The government and the church are surrounded by the cries of communities in need. These cries are vividly audible, like the crying voices of the poor and the unemployed, who struggle to keep their dignity, despite being denied the most basic necessities of life. Other inaudible and barely heard cries are of those who have abandoned their hope and live lives of silent desperation. Some are cries of those who in illness or hunger or distress simply echo the groaning of a creation in travail (Thiemann 1991:98). Who should address this dire situation? The church or the government?

8.4 Authentic voice to change hearts

Biblically, the word 'heart' primarily refers to the ruling centre of the whole person, the spring of all desires. The heart is viewed as the seat of the will, intellect and feelings. 'Character', 'personality' and 'mind' are approximate modern terms for the theological meaning of heart. A preponderance of biblical passages speak of the 'heart' as the central, defining element of the human person. According to the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, in Hebrew, 'heart' *(Leb, Lebab)* is derived from an ancient Semitic root meaning 'throb', which suggests an original *pathematic* meaning. It occurs approximately eight hundred and fifty-five times in the Old Testament where it stands for all the aspects of a person. In Hebraic thought, the heart is comprehensive in its operations as the seat of the intellectual, affective, volitional, and religious life of a human being. Because of this ultimate and vital role, to know a person's heart is to know the actual person. It is the mirror image of a man or a woman.

According to the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, the references to 'heart' *(kardia)* demonstrate that it is

> the main organ of psychic and spiritual life, the place in man at which God bears witness to himself, … the whole of the inner being of man in contrast to his external side, … the one center in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct.

This means that the heart is the psychic centre of human affections, the source of spiritual life, and the seat of the intellect and the will. The heart is the spiritual nucleus of the person around which life orbits. It is part of the human being's spiritual make-up and the place where emotions and desires begin. In reality, the heart is that which drives the human will towards action. It is, therefore, legitimate to conclude that the human heart is primarily a spiritual organ that drives human behaviour. According to VanGemeren (1990:356), "the heart signifies love. It is an expression used to denote devotion and loyalty, regardless of the self-sacrifice (see Prov. 2:1-4)".

People as *imago Dei* carriers are animated subjectively from the core and throughout their being by that primary faculty of thought, affection, and will called 'heart'. Spykman (1992:227) states that "the *imago Dei* embraces our entire selfhood in all its variegated functions, centred and unified in the heart". Similarly, Barth (1960:436) affirms that "the heart is not merely *a* but *the* reality of man, both wholly of soul and wholly of body".

Generally, in their hearts, people are essentially good and can be coerced, victimised, or provoked into bad behaviour. Humanity has a heart problem; it, therefore, needs a heart transplant. Whenever the masses succumb to mob psychology and apply mob justice, it means that the heart has shifted towards evil that may be detrimental to a community's cries for change of the

status quo. However, the communities can come to sensible conclusions that the true community is the very opposite of a mob.

> Mob psychology is characterised by a lack of consciousness; community by an increase in consciousness. A mob is frightening; a community is a 'safe place.' Mobs are violent, uncivil. Genuine communities are mostly peaceful and profoundly civil. A community (as opposed to a cult) is always characterized by the room it makes for divergent opinion, and an individual member who feels even slightly bullied will often be the first to speak up (Peck 1994:355).

Whenever the masses slump into chaotic unrests and protests, it is a sign that the hearts have either been victimised or coerced into doing something unbecoming. The heart and the voice combine to express, through outrage, what has become inimical to comfort or decency. The inner sense of the heart is expressed through some vocal sound, that is, the voice in a safe space.

These voices from the communities raise pertinent questions: Are the communities in some uproar because of heart conditions? Is the government corrupt because of a displaced heart that has lost virtues such as servant leadership or passion to serve? Can the communities' actions (violent or non-violent) be justified? Which voices are authentic enough to change the hearts that seem to be prone to civil and industrial actions that always result in the destruction of properties and loss of lives? Can hearts be changed, if so by whom, and how? What and where is the voice of the church in this disarray? Ideally, the citizenry is yearning for the new community that can experience some form of cleansing and a transformation of the heart. In a real sense, community points to a concrete social manifestation of the people of God. It expresses and experiences the presence of the kingdom of God by participating in the *koinonia* of the suffering of Christ (Dau 2010:120). What communities go through, due to social injustices imposed by the *status quo,* is the embodiment of what Christ went through on the cross, which is one of the central pillars of Moltmann's theology, especially in his *The spirit of life* (1992a:130-137).

8.5 The institutionalisation of the prophetic office

The post-apartheid church opted for *brille par son absence*. During times of civil strife, conflicts and uprisings, the church's voice as a prophetic voice gets mystified into thin air. In the Old Testament times, the prophetic voices echoed in the dark when the nation was going through the dark tunnels of moral decadence. Most of the prophets risked their lives for calling the nation to its senses. They continued and remained ethically unashamed by declaring the justice and the righteousness of God, especially in times of national dissipated energy in areas of pure dedication, doctrine, and morale. As a result, they shaped the his-

tory of the nation, because they were real actors. Indeed, Israel's history is written from the perspective of the prophets (Wittenberg 2007:97).

The authenticity of the church's voice is through its prophetic discourses that challenge institutions, structures and systems to work towards the better life for people whose hearts have been seared with injustices in and from societal structures of justice. The prophetic discourse critiques, through confrontational language, the evil that is seen and/or experienced in society (Tenai & Mbewu 2020:4). According to Gustafson (1988:8), "[i]t is the word of the Lord proclaimed against the moral evil and apostasy of the world and societies". The church is called upon to critique and confront powers that alienate the disgruntled hearts of the protesting communities. These prophetic discourses must aim at bringing about change. Through prophetic discourses, the church must proclaim the dignity of the communities in protests, as they are created in the image of God. Prophetic discourses interrogate moral crises such as poverty, unemployment, moral degeneration, and all attempts at aborting social justice to people in need. Moltmann (1992a:xi) correctly points to the fact that:

> For every crisis calls the traditional and familiar answers into question. Anyone who only talks about the 'crisis' without recognizing the implicit opportunity is talking because he is afraid and without hope. Anyone who only wants to have new opportunities without accepting the crisis of previous answers is living in illusion.

One of the contributory factors to the silent voice of the church in chaotic situations is the divisive effect of political activism on the communal life of the church itself. For centuries, political matters have always divided the church. In South Africa, this has been demonstrated in the racial divisions in nearly all the missionary churches. These splits are still going on as a stigma to the image of the church in general. The healings are still not yet wholly experienced in the post-apartheid era. The political fights over polities, political activism, socialism, Africanism (culture and religious views) all have their impact on the organisational life and spiritual health of denominations, consequently disqualifying the church's authentic voice to speak in and to chaos. Despite all the historical shortcomings, the church, through its leaders, must always be available to defend the faith within or outside the church, either *verbatim* or in writing (Afolabi 2018:170).

Sundberg (2000:27) correctly refers to the fact that "there are political issues that the church must engage, even if such engagement is costly". The fight against injustice during and after apartheid led and is still leading to incarceration, criticisms, and isolation. While the "prophetic" mantle may never have sat comfortably upon the shoulders of the institutional church, the church has nevertheless needed prophets to call it to repentance and change (Sundberg 2000:27). Churches continue to reflect more of class structure and economic

status than confessional commitment in the values they hold and the political choices they make. This is wrong. The ecclesial voice is the prophetic voice mandated to bring the communities to sanity that leads to change of heart. This role is and has been quelled by the democratic state's pseudo-assimilation of church leaders into the civil service, in order to tame communities of faith from criticising the government (Makofane & Botha 2019:91). This is sad.

The fundamental problem is the institutionalisation of the prophetic office. This is when the church becomes wrapped in the political system and ends up losing its saltiness or prophetic role. Since the colonial and apartheid eras, ecclesiastical formations have sought not only to appeal to the conscience of individual members, but also to make denominational organisations the official agents of political and social change. One can think, in this instance, of Boesak, Tutu, Naudé, Tlhagale, Chikane, and many others who were banished, banned, incarcerated, or forced into exile. Most of these clergymen were inspired, to a certain degree, by black consciousness, which had non-violence as a *modus operandi* for voicing their concerns. Biko (1978:151) states that black consciousness was committed to achieving their goals through non-violent means. Their programmes always maintained a peaceful approach to the oppressive system. They understood the legal limitations of their operation, putting their lives in danger by being banned and arrested (Mokoena 2017:1). They transgressed their denominational barriers by asking their ecclesial leaders and members to vote on specific resolutions of action in councils, synods, and conventions. Some of them even set up lobbying offices, in order to enforce conformity to policies by pastors and congregations.

Churches' voices can be effective when there is widespread support in the constituency for such action. The South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) became known for consultation and united actions in matters of common interest that promoted social justice, as per the dictates of the biblical doctrines. The post-apartheid church is in some form of disarray, disintegration, and diminution; hence, voiceless in the sea of communities' discontentment and government incapacity. The ferocious battles within denominations threaten and undermine their effectiveness as authentic voices. They should realise that there is the potential of building ecumenical solidarity, when Christians of different confessions and denominations suffer together for Christ (Sauer 2010:71). The bedrock of a community is a commitment, a willingness for people to 'hang in there' together when the going gets rough (Peck 1994:339).

Christians in South Africa are divided politically rather than doctrinally. For example, the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Presbyterians, the Baptists and the Congregationalists find more agreement with each other than they do with conservatives of their own confessions. This tension is inevitable and an ongoing thorn in the flesh for the prophetic office of the church. For a church to have the authentic voice, she

needs some form of a cultural realignment concerning political issues. This realignment takes the form of ecumenical cooperation across the denominational divisions where vocalisation within the communities' disgruntlement can lead to a change of hearts. Reagon (1983:360) argues that the only way to address the most pressing political issues successfully is to join forces across differences, and this requires resisting the impulse to seclude ourselves with similar others.

The voices of the masses are in the majority, not the churchless masses. The vast majority of South African communities subscribe to the Christian faith in some way or another. People affiliate with denominations that vary immensely in theological traditions. Hence, they need the support of their churches. It is true that

> [t]he church has a role to play in modern society, because the church is led by people from the communities, who have been a part of communities for as long as they have lived and are, in fact, the character inspired by the experiences gathered from communities (Modise 2016:125).

These masses in civil uprisings need the clear support of their churches. During the chaos, the voiceless church cannot be effective in the sociopolitical realm.

> The church should become accessible and offer itself as a platform for conducive and transparent discourse for norming and forming where trust can be cushioned (Resane 2019:140).

It is with a great regret that some churches are tempted to demonise their opposition and demand conformity at all costs. The fact remains that the church should be in the world to take the world seriously, by listening attentively and carefully to the voices of the local community, and to listen to the common language of the community (Meylahn 2011:141-142). It is not to become the religion that tries to control political thought and action by indolence, lest it becomes a very dangerous performance history (Sundberg 2000:28). The voice of the church should be audible, but distinctive. It should not be a voice that promotes or encourages chaos. It should be the voice that plays a constructive role in the current social transition in South Africa only insofar as capable of patiently listening to and be shaped by people's rage (Urbaniak 2017:9-11). This voice should come from the heart as a message of *shalom*. This voice should not be dictated upon by the voices of the masses. "To depend on the *vox populi* for credibility and vindication is a dangerous path of losing the prophetic role in the nation" (Resane & Buitendag 2008:1545). The church's voice should rather be the audibility of her identity and thus her role or relevance within the community. The church's prophetic speaking should also be regarded as policy-making (Koopman 2010). Her voice should be concrete and become the foundation of community policy.

8.6 Conclusion

Communities are in uproar. Their voices echo through the streets of the communities. The basic problem is the lack of service delivery, services that were promised with the slogan *Better life for all.* Poverty, unemployment, discontentment regarding the *status quo*, are all consequences of the government's lack of capacity to deliver the promises. Redeployment system and corruption are the bottom-line roots for these voices. There are communities, government, and church voices. Which one is authentic enough to change the hearts of the people? My thesis is that the authenticity of the voice of the church becomes acceptable by disgruntled communities when churches become more prophetic and pastoral, thereby contributing social capital, time, allegiance, and talents to the development of communities (Kumalo 2014:229), rather than becoming parochial, self-centred, and institutionalising the prophetic office. It is unfortunate that the church serves communities worst in situations of conflict and strife (Volf 1996:36). The voice of the church should call for prioritising being socially engaged and consciously embrace theologies that enable communities to peacefully contribute in the social bonding for economic and political development. Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God and social involvement are not two separate mandates; they are intrinsically linked (Pali 2019:203). The church can form new and better communities, where church people fully participate without being limited by denominationalism.

The church should continue to fight against corruption, by shifting its traditional proclamation towards the anti-corruption advocacy, from the normal traditional approach to the utilisation of the pulpit not only for gospel preaching, but also for the dissemination of anti-corruption messages. This means that the gospel would include anti-corruption messages where corruption would be considered and categorised as sin and not simply as a socio-economic evil (Jere 2018:7). This would be Christ's *incarnate* love action by sacrificing the use of the pulpit even in addressing corruption, which is the issue of the heart. This would form part of the Christian approach to anti-corruption, which would be a *kenotic* step towards dealing with the human heart. Only *kenotic* actions touch the things of the heart as this comes from the inner being of human beings (Jere 2018:7).

The question remains as to the authority of the church's voice to change the hearts of disgruntled communities. When hearts are changed, lives take new shapes towards human kindness and goodness. New changed hearts result into harmony, both personally and communally. Passiveness and indolence are the common reaction of the church when communities erupt in civil uproars. During community chaos, it should be, as Kuzmič (2004:42) states, that "solidarity with those who suffer is a Christian imperative". When the church preaches and practices justice and shows mercy, the kingdom of God becomes a reality (Palmer 2015:131). The mission of the church in a chaotic world is through the voice from the heart and love in action.

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Chapter 9
Embracing the dignity of difference in South Africa: possibilitators to opening up church and society

Lucius Botes[1]

> Ring the bells that still can ring
> Forget your perfect offering
> There is a crack in everything
> That's how the light gets in (Leonard Cohen: Anthem)

9.1 Introduction

Forty years ago, in 1980, sitting next to my parents during the first-year welcoming, I enrolled in the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, for my Bachelor in Theology (1983) together with an honours in Sociology. However, at that time, the campus of the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS) was a very different place. There were fewer than seven thousand students on a single campus;[2] it was a predominantly White Afrikaans and mono-cultural university;[3] in the 1980s, over 50% of the qualifications did not exist and the UOFS was a place where only a *diktaat* (study guide) and textbook were sufficient.[4] One could say that I am currently stepping on a campus, the University of the Free State, that is transformed and is still transforming.

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I sincerely want to thank my lifelong friends for comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this chapter. In alphabetical order: Ad Gilde (businessperson *cum* economist, avid cyclist and South African wine connoisseur); Sytse Strijbos (culture and technology philosopher, engineer and theologian), and Hans Zink (sociologist, counsellor and lover of life, in particular life in South Africa).
[2] Nowadays, there are over thirty thousand students at three different campuses.
[3] The UOFS is currently very diverse, with people from different cultural and language backgrounds, including some two thousand five hundred international students. White students are a small minority.
[4] Nowadays, it is augmented with blended learning on Black Board and other electronic learning, web-based learning and computer-assisted ways of learning.

In this chapter, I argue that embracing the dignity of difference and embracing difference with dignity are important imperatives to change church and society for the better. The South African religious landscape is diverse. However, in the General Household Survey of 2013, some 84.2% of South Africans are associated with the Christian faith (Schoeman 2017). The role of institutional Christian faith (the church) in South African society is thus very relevant.

I start off with sharing three catastrophes in South Africa as examples of how not to transform society. I highlight the dilemma of binary us-and-them thinking, which, I argue, holds the essence of othering, stereotypical thought, prejudice and eventual discriminating and incrementing behaviour. I then share two empirical cases that could illuminate the challenges of transformation in South Africa. The chapter concludes with the notion of *develo-tsepo*. How it is only through opening-up *(develo)* to the other and faith, hope and trust *(tsepo)* that we will have more possibilities to transform church and society for the better.

I have a slight problem with the 'battle' metaphor in the suggested title for this book, as it implies a violent contest where there are winners and losers. I would rather rephrase it as 'possibilitator for the heart', transforming both church and society for the better. I discuss this point at the end of this chapter.

9.2 How not to transform: three catastrophes with lasting impacts for building a new South Africa

South Africa had at least three catastrophic macro-events, which I would like to call *stormations*[5] that had devastating ramifications for all levels of the South African society and communities of how not to transform and that changed the face of the socio-economic and political landscape of South Africa indefinitely. With the seventy-five-year commemoration of the end of the Nazi concentration camps, one could even refer to South Africa's two dominant holocaust events that shaped the nature, direction and future of social transformation and social co-existence in South Africa. The one is the Great South African War and the other is the institutionalisation of grand apartheid and state capture as Black entitlement, which went wrong.

During the Great South African War in South Africa (1899-1901), some twenty-six thousand White civilians died in the forty-five British concentration camps and fourteen thousand Black civilians died in their separate sixty-six concentration camps. This is besides the twenty-eight thousand soldiers who lost their lives. A number of historians have indicated how the dignity of many White Afrikaners and Black South Africans has been taken away during this first great war on South African soil, which planted the seed for the emergence

[5] A 'stormation' occurs when socially engineered transformation went wrong.

of Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism, Black consciousness and apartheid.

One year prior to his assassination (in 1992), I was privileged, through my involvement with the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (IDASA), to host Chris Hani in Bloemfontein and walk the Anglo-Boer War Museum with him. At the end of the walkabout, he asked the then curator of the museum: Where is the wing commemorating Black South Africans who suffered and died during the war? He emphasised the fact that it was not only a White men's war. Needless to say, this was followed up some years later with a Sol Plaatje wing at the Museum. Some twenty years later, in 2012, I walked the Anglo-Boer War Museum again, this time with the famous Prof. Mahmood Mamdani, on hosting him during an African day celebration. Mamdani was the famous professor who resigned from the University of Cape Town for his position on the decoloniality of knowledge. He is famous for, *inter alia*, his books *When victims become killers* and *Citizens and subjects*. At the end of the walk, he remarked that it is strange that people never learn from history.

Another cataclysmic event was the institutionalisation of segregation called apartheid. Both these "battles for the heart" (British imperialism – concentration camp atrocities and White Afrikaner domination, which resulted in apartheid) were crimes against humanity and examples of how not to transform society or at least how not to battle for the hearts, minds and bodies of people. These unethical, inhuman and destructive social engineering plans were largely built on the disregard for the other and on positions of adversity. Both these battles for the heart of South Africa were fought on the premise of uncertainty and fear of the other. Many of us still remember the warnings of the *Rooi gevaar* (Communist threat) and the *Swart gevaar* (the threat of Black majority democratic rule) in the 1960s to 1980s, which followed these catastrophes and echoed Mamdani's notion of how victims become killers.

The third catastrophe emerged during the regime of President Zuma (2009-2018). This is generally referred to as state capture, where it is alleged that the former president and some key ministers and high-profile bureaucrats mismanaged South Africa, by using their privilege and power to pillage state resources, which benefited only a small group of extremely rich people such as the notorious Gupta family to receive preferential government procurement contracts in exchange for financial and other benefits. During the current Zondo Commission hearings, South Africans were shocked to hear how billions of Rands were mismanaged by the new African Nationalist power elite and their allies. Well-known chief economist of Standard Bank, Goolam Ballim (2018), calculated that the Zuma era (end of an error) cost South Africa one trillion Rand, due to mismanagement, corruption and lack of leadership. An economist from the University of Cape Town (UCT) (4 May 2018) indicated that it will take at least a generation (twelve to twenty years) to escape the devastating impact of the Zuma clique who stole a fortune of the South African people dur-

ing the state capture years. This could have added one million jobs to the labour market and sustain at least five million people (if we accept that the average household size for South Africa is five people).

As a result of state capture, many state-owned enterprises such as Eskom, SAA, PRASA, SABC, and so on are also on the brink of financial collapse, with serious consequences for South Africa's economy. These have also largely contributed to the fact that many people have lost their hope in the state and its structures to bring services to the people, and it has seriously eroded the legitimacy of South Africa's constitutional democracy. This all happened at the time when the South African economy was struggling to perform, hitting the poorest of the poor the hardest and intensifying the impacts of inequality. The people of South Africa could rightly ask: Who will protect us against the corruption and mismanagement of their new political elite? Why did the ANC re-elect Zuma? Did the ruling party now change from the African National Congress to the African National Corruption? Why did the growth to a more mature democracy not happen? Questions are also asked as to whether those found guilty of state capture should not be charged and found guilty as socio-economic hijackers or economic terrorists.

South Africa has indeed a racialised past that reverberates into the present. The emphasis was on the differences of cultures and peoples and not to embrace the common humanity of tribes and ethnic groups. This often resulted in a de-humanised society with many wounded, angry and painful communities.

9.3 The world is more than Us and Them

To make unpretentious sense of the world, too many people like to think in binaries. Us and them, White and Black, male and female, body and soul, gay and heterosexual, and so on; yet, the world is much more multifaceted and multilayered. Since early socialisation, we were taught to make sense of the world through categorisation. We should unlearn viewing in binary, because it does not only ignore the complexity of most of the socio-economic phenomena, but often leads to reductionism. A reductionist world view often provides a very narrow and one-dimensional view of social reality. Thus, no Twitter views of the world, but rather encyclopaedic views realising that we work with nested variables – the one in the other and related to the other. Someone lately described the Facebook experience as "alone together". My take on the challenge of transforming the church, society and for that matter any other institution is not to pursue it by being alone together, but by interacting with each other together. We need more ethical basics in our relations, interactions and institutions. In fact, the very essence of social capital is the notion that there are networks of social trust (see Putnam 2000) and togetherness of the different groups in South Africa.

To opt for a binary – the one or the other – I would argue could be the beginning of othering, stereotyping, prejudice and eventually, at its worst, exclusion and discrimination. How we engage with the identity of others and our own individual identity is vital. Lately, there has been a great deal of tension between politics of identity (think of the Trump and Brexit regimes) and politics of common humanity.

9.4 *De-velo-pment*: transformation as change for the better can only happen when we open up

In her ground-breaking PhD entitled "Engaging with the soil and soul of a community: Rethinking development, healing and transformation in South Africa" Van der Watt (2016) indicates how *de-velo* in development is about a journey of unveiling and discovery. She traced the root of the word 'development' back to the Latin verb *velo*, which means "to veil, cover, cover up, enfold, wrap, envelop, hide, conceal, clothe in". The Afrikaans *ont-wikkeling* also refers to a process of taking something out of whatever it has been swaddled/swathed in. Development is, in essence, a process of un-veiling and enfolding, which should result in a journey of reflection (Van der Watt 2018).

From Kearney's (2010) very interesting book *Anatheism: Returning to God after God*, I deduced that sympathetic imagination is an important ingredient for dealing with otherness (see Sands 2018). The ability to put ourselves in the shoes of the other is perhaps the most important commandment of our time to make transformation – change for the better – possible (possibilitate) and to prevent othering, prejudice and alienation. This is how we unveil and uncover to rediscover the other. The challenge for us remains: How do we improve our inclination, ability and skills to put ourselves in the shoes of the other and to hear and understand the stories, in order to re-imagine a better future. Hermans (2020) refers in this regard to *generative imagination*, while Joubert (2020) reminds us that these are indeed the *emotional disposition and actions of God.*

In many ways, the narratives and reflections concerning the stranger and the moral imperative to embrace the stranger are strong in both the Old and the New Testament. In fact, Jesus himself was a religious foreigner to the mainline religious leaders of his time. Jesus' ministry was aimed at the pariah and the non-fits in society; it was characterised by the unconditional acceptance of the other. This is why his call to love the other as you love yourself and the command to forgive seventy times seventy are in this sense legitimate. From an ethical point of view, Jesus has indeed walked the talk.

9.5 Learning from two case studies

I was recently involved in diversity training for a private hospital group in South Africa. In the human resources manager's words:

> Many of the nursing and support staff were still struggling to cope with issues of diversity particularly around race, language, honorifics, etc. 25 years into South Africa's democracy.

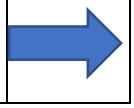
In drafting a workshop training programme and manual on diversity, I relied heavily on some of the recorded patient experiences, but I also interviewed some key people. This reminded me of the words of Ghorashi and Ponzoni (2013:162) that "[d]iversity is one of the most pressing and challenging issues of our time".

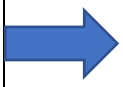
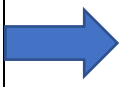
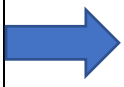
I want to share two case studies that I believe may cast some light on the challenges we are facing to grapple with diversity, in order to transform society for the better.

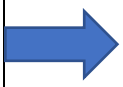
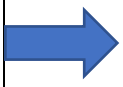
First is the comparison of a Playing for Peace study, which I conducted in 2005 with Grade seven learners in KwaZulu-Natal (Botes and Pelser, 2005), with hospital support staff and nurses from a private hospital where I did some work in 2019. I let the hospital workshop participants complete the same questionnaire some fifteen years later. Some one hundred and ninety-nine staff participated in the survey and the outcomes are depicted in Table 1.

Table 9.1: Comparing racial divides and cultural understanding: 2005 versus 2019

Statements		PFP children 2005		Hospital staff 2019		Tendency	
	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	
1. It is a good thing that South Africa is made up of people from different racial groups	88 96.7	1 1.1	2 2.2	182 93.3	9 4.6	4 2.1	

2. I feel comfort-able when I am with people from different race groups	79 85.9	10 10.9	3 3.2	128 66.3	54 28.0	11 5.7	
3. I believe that some race groups are not equal to others	27 30.0	19 21.1	44 48.9	105 54.1	24 12.4	65 33.5	
4. I like mixing with people from other race groups	86 93.4	3 3.3	3 3.3	152 78.4	31 16.0	11 5.7	
5. I would prefer to mix only with people of my own race group	13 14.1	5 5.4	74 80.5	22 11.3	12 6.2	161 82.6	
6. I would not mind sharing a bathroom with someone from another race	64 68.8	17 18.3	12 12.9	162 83.1	21 10.8	12 6.2	
7. I enjoy playing sports with people from	87 95.6	3 3.3	1 1.1	168 88.0	14 7.3	9 4.7	

another race							
8. I will go to the movies with some-body of another race group	75 81.5	9 9.8	8 8.7	160 82.1	19 9.7	16 8.2	
9. I would like to become friends with people of other race groups	89 96.7	2 2.2	1 1.1	177 91.2	12 6.2	5 2.6	
10. I will date someone from another race group	47 52.2	26 28.9	17 18.9	67 34.9	46 24.0	79 41.1	
11. The different racial groups in South Africa will get along better if they have more contact with each other	74 79.6	15 16.1	4 4.3	143 73.7	33 17.0	18 9.3	
12. My circle of friends only includes members of my own race	15 16.1	12 12.9	66 71.0	58 29.9	14 7.2	122 62.9	

13. It is wrong for two people of different races to marry each other	15 16.1	12 12.9	66 71.0	42 21.6	24 12.4	128 66.0	
14. It is not acceptable to tell a joke about a person of another race	68 73.9	7 7.6	17 18.5	131 67.2	20 10.3	43 22.2	

In all the statements on race and racial prejudice/stereotypes, the hospital staff reported higher levels of stereotypical thought and prejudice compared to the group of Grade seven learners some fifteen years ago in 2005. Only on statement 6 regarding sharing a bathroom did the hospital personnel express fewer stereotypes. However, after sixteen months of diversity training of two hundred and fifty people in this hospital, management indicated that the training did indeed have the necessary effect of very few patient-to-staff complaints on issues of diversity and very few complaints or grievances among staff members were reported.

Secondly, I asked the workshop participants, at the end of the diversity training, what they regarded as the biggest diversity challenge in their workplace. Each one had an opportunity to select three from a list of diversity categories in the workplace (that is, race, language, culture, class, religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and foreigner). Table 2 reflects the results of these selected diversity categories.

Table 9.2: Self-selected important diversity categories for the workplace

Diversity category	N-values									Total
Race	16	18	13	10	16	9	14	6	17	125
Language	16	21	7	13	9	10	11	6	17	118
Culture	9	/	/	4	11	7	11	5	10	67
Class	5	4	9	3	7	2	2	0	4	40
Religion	1	4	7	4	3	5	5	1	0	32
Age	1	4	4	5	2	3	2	0	5	27
Ability	1	5	5	8	0	2	0	1	1	23
Gender	0	0	9	0	2	4	0	0	0	15
Sexual orientation	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Foreigner	/	1	0	/	/	/	/	0	/	1

It is clear from the findings in Table 2 that the five most cited diversity categories in the workplace for nursing and support staff were race, language, culture, class and religion, followed by disability and gender.

Both these case studies (Tables 1 and 2) illustrate that work on greater tolerance for the other and learning to embrace the other with dignity is far from over in South Africa. This reminds me of the words of Mathews Posa (at that time, one of the ANC National Executives) of what he shared with me while presenting a paper as extraordinary appointment at the UFS Business School, in 2007: Nelson Mandela urged him and fellow ANC leaders never to stop building national cohesion and reconciliation. Posa experienced it as a strange request at that time, but perhaps if we look back, we can see the prophetic truth in the expressed desire of Mandela to strive for tolerance, to reconcile in bringing many cultures into one rainbow nation. We cannot deny the shortcomings of our young democracy in dealing with diversity.

It is important that we do not shy away from these diversity categories and their accompanying, often difficult, dialogues. Often people relate to potential discussions of these diversity categories in the same way. They know about them, but dare not speak about them, for fear of possible difficult dialogues that can easily become verbal brawls and a recipe for losing family and friends. However, fear of verbal conflicts and furious debates should not prevent us from engaging in difficult dialogues. In fact, verbal battles of the heart are always better than real physical conflict. Only through dialogue and discussion will we be able to co-create a better church and society. Acts of command, con-

trol and compliance are not the ways of positive change and of embracing our differences with dignity.

9.6 Embracing the other can only happen if and when we acknowledge our own limitations and wrongdoings

A few days ago, in February 2020, the former President of South Africa, F.W. de Klerk made the controversial and unnecessary remark that apartheid was not a crime against humanity. A remark he regretted and apologised for a few days later. It often frustrates me that some White South Africans are still apologetic about apartheid and some cannot even see any wrongdoing of this system, longing back for the ostensible peace and good old times before the dawn of the so-called 'new South Africa'. Some would even justify their nostalgia for the past as an era not riddled by potholes, non-service delivery, state capture, bankrupt state-owned enterprises, increasing crime and violence, and so on. Some would go further, arguing that *Bantu Education* had a lot of good; colonialism was not so bad, and group areas and separation according to race delivered a much better society, and so on. I would argue that, if this is our position where we come from, it will almost be impossible to build networks of social trust, so desperately needed in a society full of distrust. With this mentality, we are lost any way and opening up to build trust will be very difficult, if not impossible. I would even argue that such attitudes and perceptions will continue to fuel mistrust and lack of co-operation. It also frustrates me that some Black South Africans cannot see or do not want to acknowledge the dangers of their own ideologies of entitlement. Many are blaming apartheid for everything, not acknowledging how state capture and mismanagement contributed largely to the socio-economic deficit of the country, with the new power elite who looted the state coffins.

9.7 Why possibilitators matter more than battles

South Africa needs to become again a place where we are recognised for our human embrace. In fact, during South Africa's CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) years, where we negotiated a constitutional democracy, we already demonstrated that we can embrace our diversity with dignity … and we became the beacon of hope to the world on how to solve deep and historical conflicts through dialogue.

One evening, while dining out in Bloemfontein, a waiter named Temba (isiXhosa for 'trust') reminded me that Tsepo (Sesotho for 'trust') is not only used interchangeably for faith, hope and trust, which I have used proudly in a development ethics book chapter on partnership building I wrote some fifteen years ago, but also for confidence and belief. I guess the possibilitators for transformation are indeed faith, hope, trust, confidence, and belief.

The Bible is full of narratives about how caring for the stranger and unconditional love should be the key characteristics of Christian believers. Hospitality for the stranger and loving your neighbour as you love yourself still remain the greatest and perhaps most difficult command for those purporting to step in the footsteps of Jesus as God's human incarnation. We will also find this basic ethics in other religions. An ethics of care for the stranger and embracing the vulnerable still remain the essence of Christian theology. This is where the ethically exemplary church could play a major role in building social trust among people. As an institution founded on God's love and driven by God's relentless care for humanity and creation, the church could and should be that catalyst in society of building networks of trust, the essence of social capital. How? By providing a space for people to talk about and reflect on these issues of diversity and potential conflict. Building social capital can only happen through bridging and bonding, within society as a whole, not only within the Christian community.

Perhaps embracing our differences with dignity and realising the dignity of our differences are the essence of how church and society could be transformed for the better. In other words, we need to embrace each other with faith, hope and trust, in order to find confidence in our mutual humanity. Through this conscious acting we can build social capital and expand the networks of trust in a world of distrust. We also need, in the words of Hermans (2020), our generative imagination with increased abilities to imagine a better preferred future and then work towards this common goal. This is the essence of a possibilitator.

9.8 Why diversity should be viewed as an asset and not a liability

In his now well-known book *The dignity of difference* (2002), Jonathan Sacks offers support for the concept as a new theology, a construct of common understanding and tolerance, but also questions whether relying heavily on dignity of difference may underestimate the politics and economics of violent conflicts. The dignity of difference emphasises the failure of political science and economics to resolve conflict and appeals for more focus on religion. I argue that in the current globalised world, fewer people would belong to one identity or one community only. Identities are important, but they are not always predetermined; they are not always final. People hesitate and oscillate between identities or embrace several identities. Multi-identity individuals live in multi-identity communities. However, there is also the risk of arbitrariness and personal uprooting.

I recently had a cousin who completed her master's entitled *Contending identities: The narratives of belonging of tertiary educated second-generation migrant youth in the Netherlands* at the Institute for Social Studies at Rotterdam University (Du Plooy 2019). Buys (2018) refers to these people as bridge builders. Her study reminds us of the importance of reviewing diversity as a social

asset and not as a liability. We need to stop thinking that diversity is a liability and view it as an asset. Promoting appreciation for pluralism is an imperative to build a more tolerant, moderate and peaceful society. I have already argued my criticism of binary thought. We cannot cultivate and should never accept radical populist thought – the intended and unintended costs are too high.

Maya Angelou, well-known advocate for Afro-American rights, also refers to "in diversity there is beauty and there is strength". She proposed a new meaning for the word 'diversity':

> Different
> Individuals
> Valuing
> Each
> Other
> Irrespective
> of Skin,
> Intellect,
> Talents
> or Years.

Perhaps following Angelou's advice, South Africans can learn how to deal with our deep historic differences so that we do not get stuck in disputes, in the words of Achille Mbembe (2011): "Our democracy is still founded on deep entrenched forms of racial dispossession and inequality inherited from a past of racial brutality", but be re-fuelled with the notions of entitlement, greed and state capture of a new political elite. The challenge for ordinary people and civil society to transform for a better way of life remains enormous. According to Mbembe (2011), the post-apartheid period is one of recreating democracy as a community of life. Each and every one of us are all challenged to be active for this tolerant, peaceful, moderate and trusting society – we need it in South Africa.

9.9 A challenge for transformation is always a challenge of seeking alternative development

In my field of specialisation (development studies or development sociology), we noted the emergence of alternative development and even post-development over the past thirty years. These were largely in reaction to the linear and limited views of development as going for modernity, technological advancement, going for growth, becoming developed like the West, and so on. This was followed by an ongoing mantra of sustainable human development, which resonates nowadays if we look at global programmes for transformation such as the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030). However, the challenge remains: How do we escape these

dreams of prosperity following the enlightenment. In development thought, notions of participatory development (Chambers), human-scale development and fundamental human-needs (Max-Neef), human development (Ul Haq), asset-based community development (ABCD), community-driven development (Khanya-AICDD), and the capabilities approach (Nussbaum & Sen) are all attempts to recover the human-centredness of development and the agency of people in any transformation drive. Indeed, whoever wants to embrace difference with dignity should consider planet, people, and profit. Balancing the challenges to deal with environmental, social, economic and political justice may all be small steps in learning how to embrace difference with dignity.

In an attempt to answer the question as to how to take better care of ourselves and other people in South Africa nowadays, I want to conclude with a reference to a piece of writing that dates from 1784, when Immanuel Kant wrote the paper *Was ist Aufkläring?* What is the Enlightenment? and a text that well-known post-modern philosopher Michel Foucault seriously revisited. This again reminds us of the work of Kearney with his existential questions: *Where I speak from? Where have you been? Where are you now? Where are you going?* (see Sands 2018), analysing the actuality to which we belong. What is our actuality? Who are we? What do we have to be? Do we want to be the human beings we are? Change for the better (transformation) always starts with a deep reflection on the current situation and a reimagined future through stories and possibilities.

The ultimate criteria for positive change or transformation and opening up are that people have more power in their lives, more options; that they become unstuck in whatever kind of poverty has been constraining their lives; that they have more control over the resources and decisions affecting their lives; that the marginalised gain some control over their own affairs to face an environment that is usually unsympathetic to their plight. Some would indeed state that this is only possible when we deal with mono-cultural societies such as Japan, Poland, Ukraine and some isolated Swiss cantons, to name a few. But opening up in search for alternative development is the ongoing challenge of embracing diversity with dignity and realising the dignity of difference.

9.10 We need more silence to transfigure and to change

In this chapter, I indicated that a change of heart could only come as a result of deep reflection. However, perhaps we need more silence in our lives to achieve such reflection. The world has become a noisy and busy place. We need a retreat of the mind and a quietness of heart to recover and to be able to change for the better. As the philosopher and writer Johann Rossouw (2020) so aptly reminds us:

> What changes people for the better is in the fourth place a good argument, in the third place a moving story/narrative, in the second place a good example and in the first place participation in liturgy.

He then suggested that each one of these should shift a place lower in the individual ladder of change and that it all should start with silence.[6] One could, however, argue that silence could also move in-between story and argument to inform decisions to change. Wherever we put silence on the ladder of personal change, silence restores our senses and provides the ability to change and to transfigure (Ross 2014). Contemplation, meditation and conscious reflection for a better future and for a better church and society should become part of our daily life. Silence, reflection, thinking and serenity mostly leads to more realistic wisdom and less blind actionism.

9.11 Conclusion

This short chapter attempted to reflect on some of the pertinent questions to deal with diversity as a key actuality in contemporary South Africa. Only if we engage with these challenges of diversity in a manner of open-mindedness, moving beyond us-and-them dialogues and relentlessly building mutual trust, in our embrace of difference, will we experience the dignity of difference. True transformation can only happen where sustainable human development flourishes and where we have learned and where we will have to learn to open up to one another, where we display care towards the other, include the stranger and embrace the other.

> Motho ke motho ka batho
> I become me through you.
> I want
> the I that is I
> to stay
> but where does it begin
> this being-I?
> at the place
> where the I is like you?
> Ek wil
> die ek wat ek is
> bly
> maar waar
> begin die issende ek?

[6] Personal e-mail exchange after listening to my paper, 26 February 2020.

op die plek
waar die ek soos jy is
of daar waar die ek anders as jy is? (Antjie Krog).

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Chapter 10
Conflicting spiritualities or transforming religions? Religious intersections at Mantsopa Cave in Modderpoort

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10.1 Introduction

According to Meiring and Meiring (2015:viii), "South Africa is a land of many religions". This means that South Africa is the home of various religious orientations and expressions. Among these many religions, one can find Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion (ATR), Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, the Baha'i Faith, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Jainism, and other religious movements (Kruger *et al.* 2012:11). These religions co-exist and are closely practised against each other. Due to their variance and uniqueness, these religious traditions are allowed to interact and to be practised on the basis of religious freedom and tolerance, a religious right provisioned by the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa 1996).

Because these religions co-exist within the same space, mutual recognition and reverence are fundamental. Highlighting the importance of tolerance and reverence in social ethics, Van der Luft (2004:233) stated:

> [R]eligion is not only belief and devotion, but also practice. Belief and devotion are private or internal dimensions of religion, and can safely be unbounded; but practice is a public or external dimension, and any believer's right or justification to practice religion ends wherever it conflicts with another believer's practice or with more nearly universal values of ethics, morality, comportment, decency, or culture as encoded in law, philosophy, or common human consensus.

This means that religious freedom and tolerance are extremely valued within multi-religious and pluralistic societies. It is a commodity that entitles all forms of religion to co-exist amenably, in one space, without prejudgements and dissension.

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Currently, the South African religious landscape puts Christianity at the forefront of all other religions, with a majority of 84.2% of the overall population (Statistics South Africa 2013). Other religions such as the ATR, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and so on fall under the 8.8% margin, while roughly 7% of the rest of the population does not affiliate with any faith in particular (Schoeman 2017:3). What is interesting about these statistical figures is that the ATR is still not considered a majority in South Africa, which is its sphere of influence. This makes these statistical data very controversial.

It is unlikely that Christianity can make up 84.2% of the overall religious population of South Africa, because indigenous converts to Christianity do not often utterly abandon their traditional religion. As Mbiti (1975:13) noted, their religion "remains with them for several generations and sometimes for centuries". It appears that Glyn Leonard, a scholar who once worked among the natives of South Nigeria, observed a similar aspect about the religiosity of Africans. He asserted that

> [t]he religion of these natives is their existence and their existence is their religion. The entire organisation of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it (Leonard 1906:429).

This implies that sometimes claiming allegiance to Christianity does not mean the utter breakaway from traditional belief systems and the African socioculturral heritage for indigenous converts. Rather, they tend to juxtapose Christianity and ATR together. This, in part, is evidenced by the religious activities that occur at the sacred cave of *Mantsopa* at Modderpoort, located near the Lesotho border, roughly 14km from the Eastern Free State city of Ladybrand.

This sacred site brings together three different religious traditions: the San (Bushmen), with their recorded art or rock paintings; the African religious heritage, as African religionists use that sacred site for spiritual nourishment, and the Christian tradition, as an early Anglican church and cemetery were found there. It is remarkable to note how this particular site brings together these different religious traditions under one roof, and how each tradition lays some claim to this historical site. More significant is the enquiry into the nature of Christianity – as a battle for the heart, which may or may not transform the church and society in line with the border theme of this project.

10.2 Coinciding legacies – the San, African religionist and Christian

Modderpoort, also known as *'Lekhalong la Bo Tau'*, is a geographical site in the Eastern part of the Free State province. According to Hodgson (2003:212), Modderpoort is an Afrikaans name meaning 'the gate of mud', while its seSotho name *'Lekhalong la Bo Tau'* means 'the pass or cave of the lions'. It is referred to as 'the pass or cave of the lions' either because lions used to live in the *poort*

or because of the totem of the Bataung who lived alongside the Bushmen (San) at Mekoatleng (Hodgson 2003:212).

By far the oldest religion in South Africa is the ATR. The oldest form of this religion is that of the San (Bushmen), which dates back a thousand years (Kruger *et al.* 2012:13). This was a religion of small bands of hunter-gatherers. As hunter-gatherers, the San mastered the skill of hunting, primarily using bows and arrows and advanced stone-working techniques (Mokhtar 1981:571). Their way of life had a cultural sophistication and economic viability of its own. Mokhtar (1981:571) states that it largely

> depended on a degree of mobility, with seasonal camps but no permanent settlements, as the groups followed the game or exploited the vegetable resources of a territory, and this would have restrained population growth and perhaps inhibited change.

Since they frequently depended on mobility, the San were always on the move. Their lifestyle required that they have no permanent settlements but seasonal camps, as they followed the prey or exploited the vegetable resources of a territory. As hunter-gathering pilgrims, the San shared some of their beliefs and cultural practices by means of artwork or rock paintings (Kruger *et al.* 2012:13). In line with this artistic practice, one can find rock art or rock paintings on the canvas of a large shelter in the Platberg Mountain, including hunting camps marked with stone tools, at Modderpoort (Murimbika 2010:13; Norton 1910:143-146).

These artistic relics depict scenes of spiritual activity, where healers ascend to the spiritual realm. The existence of such ancient relics has since given rise to claims that Modderpoort is the place of rock art, which is now one of its tourist attractions. Thus, the rock art or rock paintings at Modderpoort depict some presence of an ancient culture, that of the San, which involved some sacred or religious practices.

In the 18th century, as the San's presence was beginning to wane off, the Bataung occupied the place (Ellenberger 1912:83). The Bataung, as one of the various Basotho tribes, named this sacred site *'Lekhalong la Bo Tau'*, meaning 'the pass or cave of the lions' (Hodgson 2003:212). This was prior to the *lifaqane* war (1818-1828), which later caused some great upheavals and the migrations of the Bataung, with other neighbouring Basotho tribes such as the Bakoena and the Bahlakoana, around that area (Sekese 1892:2; Ellenberger 1912:67). After the *lifaqane* war, some Basotho tribes, including the Bataung ba Ramokhele, the Bakoena, the Bahlakoana and others, returned to occupy the area.

Unfortunately, these groups again migrated during the *Seqiti* war (1865-1868), when the Free State forces occupied the area (Gill 2009). They ultimate-

ly returned to this area. It is worth noting about these upheavals, particularly that of the *lifaqane*, that a particular woman, Mantsopa, was at this time preparing to take centre stage in the history of Modderpoort. Her life was drastically affected by the *lifaqane*, which had subsequently affected her area around the time of her initiation. She had taken the name Mantsopa after the birth of her eldest son, Ntsopa, which is a customary practice among the Sotho tribes. Her birth name was *Koena-li-fule* (Ambrose 2010:4).

Mantsopa was an African religionist, known as a healer, rainmaker and diviner. She was also an adviser to King Moshoeshoe: "Moshoeshoe never went anywhere without first consulting Mantsopa" (Hodgson 2003:218). Mantsopa was well known for her prophecies, which reached prominence in 1851, when she accurately predicted the outcome of the Battle of *Viervoet* between a British force of 1,330 led by Major Warden and the Basothos (Casalis 1861:286-287). In the late-18th century, she moved to Modderpoort where she stayed until her death in 1906, at the age of 111 years. According to Setiloane (1976:208),

> [l]ittle girls of pre-puberty age used to be sent to go and beg her for rain. She would fill their pots with water from a creek nearby, and sent them home with an injunction not to look behind them, but to hurry to cross the Caledon to the side on which their home was because then rain would be following hard on their footsteps, and, if they tarried, the river would fill up and be uncrossable. Sure enough, as they arrived at the river the first drops of heavy rain would begin to fall, and by the time they reached home at Mokgethwaneng [near Berea] they would be soaking wet with rain.

According to Mantsopa tradition, "the cave was hers; 'it was the place where she used to confer with the spirits of her ancestors. She gave it to the missionaries.'" (Hodgson 2003:227). Before her death, Mantsopa is said to have given over the Modderpoort cave to the Anglican Brothers. Her followers interpreted this as her approval of the Christian church.

> Mantsopa gave the fathers the cave, and so she approved of the church. Therefore, people who follow after her must also approve of the church. They identify her as opening the way. Many of the things she prophesied came true after she died and so when the church came with its prophetic message, she was more and more believed (Hodgson 2003:227).

For this generosity and for approving of the Christian church, Mantsopa was oddly buried in a small cemetery outside the sandstone church, reserved for Whites, along the Anglican Brothers. The Anglican Brothers arrived in Modderpoort in 1866 after the Peace of Sorghum (*Khotso ea Mabele*), which was a result of the *Seqiti* war (1865-1868) (Gill 2009). The 'conquered territory', as it came to be known, was surveyed and handed out as farms:

> Two of the farms, Modderpoort and Modderpoortspruit (collectively known as Modderpoort) were offered to a man named Green, as a reward for fighting against the Basotho, but he was not keen to embark on a farming enterprise. Instead they were purchased in 1867 by Bishop Edward Twells of the Anglican Diocese of Bloemfontein, for development as a mission station. Twells established here the Missionary Brotherhood of St Augustine of Hippo (Society of St Augustine or SSA) as a self-supporting community, consisting of a brotherhood of five, led by Canon Henry Beckett. They took up residence in 1869 and until they had completed a priory in 1871, they had no option but to live in a cave on the property (Colman 2009:4).

This cave was not only used for two years as a home for the Anglican Brothers, but it was also consecrated as an Anglican church. It was used for church services until a Gothic stone church was completed in 1872. The Modderpoort cave remains a consecrated church to this day (Colman 2009:4). From this brief overview of Modderpoort, one observes, at least, three different legacies – the San, African religionists and Christians, which coincide in one place. The intersection of these different legacies is the motif that led to or prompted this enquiry. Do these different legacies suggest conflicting spiritualities, or are they to be interpreted as the development of religious hybridity, which is an intentional borrowing from one religious or cultural tradition to another?

10.3 Religious intersections in Modderpoort

The sacred site of Modderpoort reveals that, sometimes, different religious or cultural traditions can exist amenably side-by-side, borrowing from each other and/or even permeating each other. The rock paintings left behind by the San; the presence of the ancestors, which Mantsopa harnessed for her spiritual powers, and the consecration of the cave as an Anglican church all seem to allude to a greater reality than meets the eye. All three traditions attribute and attest to the sacredness of the cave. It appears that the cave served as a point of contact between the deities that occupy the place. By this, I do not imply that the San, African religionists and Christians worship the same God, nor do I suggest that they worship different gods.

I mean that whatever power(s) is (are) present or is (are) being evoked at that sacred site (Cave Church) seems to be reacting positively towards all religious traditions. Apart from the fact that the San left the place a long time ago, due to their hunter-gathering activities, both the African religionists and Anglican Church members continue to make pilgrimages to this sacred site. Hodgson (2003:226) described these interactions as follows:

> The St Augustine's Day celebrations became popular in the 1950s during the time of the Modderpoort schools, but really took off with the mission's centenary in 1969, attended by the Archbishop of Cape Town. Since then a great open-air Sung Eucharist has been held annually on the Sunday nearest St Augustine's feast day (28 August). An altar was usually set up either at the cave's entrance or across the field, perhaps with a semi-circular altar 'rail' of tightly bound bundles of Lucerne flanked by rows of wooden benches. The white group, comprising SSM brethren, the diocesan bishop and a few local farmers, see it as a thanksgiving service for the mission's founding in the name of St Augustine, whereas the thousands of African pilgrims are there to honour Mantsopa and to seek her blessings. The pilgrims call it Mantsopa's Sunday or Cave Sunday and come from throughout the Free State as well as from Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, travelling on foot, by bicycle, horse-drawn vehicle, tractor-drawn wagon, car, lorry, bus and train.

These religious intersections appear to have brought African religionists and Christians together. They allude to the transformation of religion and the unshackling of monolithic traditions. Hodgson (2003:227), for instance, noted that

> [t]he Rev Andrew Losaba, former moderator of the Methodist Church, regard[ed] Mantsopa as a black prophet who was literally speaking to God and sending a message to God.

He attested that

> [t]his woman [Mantsopa], and Ntsikana [another *Xhosa* prophet-diviner], are the most outstanding black people who proved to me that the blacks had contact with God all the time.

Even though Mantsopa appears to have juxtaposed the African religion with Christianity, so was Ntsikana among *amaXhosa;* yet she received high recognition and regard from the missionaries.

This form of religious intersectionality, therefore, does not seem to suggest conflicts or spiritual contestations. Rather, it speaks of a new realism where different traditions seem to accommodate and reinforce each other. However, some scholars and theologians regard this religious interchange as syncretism (Adamo 2011:16). According to Droogers and Greenfield (2001:27-28), the term syncretism

> was first used by Plutarch to describe the temporary coming together of the quarrelling inhabitants of Crete in the face of a common enemy […]. The Greek word from which the English

> "syncretism" is derived refers to people joining together, in this case in battle. Erasmus later employed it metaphorically to refer to an agreement between people with seemingly disparate opinions. The new reference centered on ideas and beliefs. Seventeenth-century theologians then gave it a negative connotation by using it for what to them was the undesirable reconciliation of Christian theological differences. Syncretism for them became a threat to "true" religion.

Religious syncretism, in this sense, came to mean the blending of different (sometimes contradictory) forms of religious beliefs and practices (Sanou 2013:133). For this negative apprehension of syncretism, Shmidt (2013:27-28) contends that

> [a] person who draws from two or more belief systems at the same time is guilty of syncretism. He or she is reaching for the best of two religious worlds.

This implies that the mixing of two or more belief systems is viewed as wrong, thereby characterising syncretism as illicit. This debate, however, tends to take a different turn outside the theological framework.

It begins with the understanding of the term 'syncretism'. Mullins (2001:809-810), for instance, states that

> [i]n the social sciences, this is a neutral and objective term that is used to describe the mixing of religions as a result of culture contact.

However, in theological or missiological discourses, the term 'syncretism' "is generally used as a pejorative term to designate movements that are regarded as heretical or sub-Christian" (Mullins 2001:809-810). While this term means "the replacement or dilution of the essential truths of the gospel through the incorporation of non-Christian elements" for Christians (Moreau 2000:924-925), it means the "combination of elements from two or more religious traditions, ideologies, or value systems" within the social sciences (Mullins 2001:809-810).

Whether one prefers to use the term 'syncretism' in a theological or socio-scientific context, the fact is that different religious and cultural traditions are already mixing. This is embodied by the religious and cultural interchanges that occur at Modderpoort. This appears to be a general representation of a developed level of intersectionalities within the religious landscape in Africa, particularly in South Africa. As Gilroy (cited in Hutnyk 2005:83) attested:

> Whether the process of mixture is presented as fatal or redemptive, we must be prepared to give up the illusion that cultural and ethnic purity has ever existed, let alone provided a foundation for civil society.

This assertion contends that there are neither 'pure' cultures, nor 'pure' religious traditions, but both cultural and religious traditions do intersect.

It only becomes a question of how much we are willing to accommodate these intersections at some point in time. In my view, this is where the idea of hybridity comes into play. Hybridity features significantly where two or more cultural or religious traditions intersect and have resulted into an altogether new hybrid. Bhabha (1994:211) described this process as follows:

> [T]he importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity [...] is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom.

The emergence of the 'third space' is what characterises hybridity – the interbreeding of cultures or religious traditions. It regards the adoption of

> a strategic and less-biased measurement to address the confluence of progressive religious ideas and practices towards the formation of a new or transformed religious or spiritual mutation (Nel 2017:5).

It appears that the notion of hybridity, therefore, intends to define the mutant religious form, irrespective of the causes of enforcement, rejection of old ideas or the natural adoption of productive ideas and practices (Nel 2017:5). There are many instances of this form of mutation. For instance, one may allude to the mixed forms of African Christianity, Jewish Christianity, New Age Christianity, and so on. These examples embody the intersectionalities of religious or cultural traditions.

10.4 A battle for the heart

Due to the nature of the intersections that occur at Modderpoort and their suggestive indication of hybridity rather than exclusivism, it is worth exploring how such a religious hybrid may or may not transform the church and society. From the account provided so far, it is apparent that both African religionists and Christians use and share the same sacred space at Mantsopa cave. Even though it is a home for African religionists, the cave was sanctified and continues to be used by the Anglican Church (Colman 2009:4; Hodgson 2003:226). This is an indication of a new realism – the transformed embodiment of Christianity in Africa. By this, I suggest that the intersection of Christianity and African religion has been an underlying trend, which slowly developed over several centuries.

Three primary reasons account for this interbreeding. First, Christianity has dominated the African way of life to such an extent that the indigenous people had no alternative but to incorporate Christian elements into their traditional practices (Hirst 2005:4). Christianity has been with them for so long that "it can rightly be described as an indigenous, traditional and African religion" (Mbiti 1969:223). In this sense, indigenous people found it difficult to choose between Christianity and their African traditional heritage. Mugambi (2002:519-520) depicts this intricate dichotomy as follows:

> On the one hand, they accepted the norms introduced by the missionaries who saw nothing valuable in African culture. On the other hand, the converts could not deny their own cultural identity. They could not substitute their denominational belonging for their cultural and religious heritage. Yet they could not become Europeans or Americans merely by adopting some aspects of the missionaries' outward norms of conduct.

The strain of having to choose between Christianity and their African culture caused some issues in the appreciation of the Christian faith. The main concern was: "What should be the proper relationship between [the] Christian identity and a Christian's cultural identity?" (Mugambi 2002:520). Challenged by this question, suggestions of inculturation, the Africanisation of Christianity, the contextualisation of Christianity and other relative approaches emerged. These were proposed as relative approaches to end the dichotomy between Christianity and the African cultural heritage (Nwibo 2010:36; Mbiti 1977:83).

Secondly, the intersection of Christianity and African religion is motivated by the lack of communication between Christianity and the African heritage (Bediako 1994:15). Oden (2007:93) noted that

> [m]any African Christians today have a deep conviction that they must think in terms that are indigenously African because this is what has been most neglected.

This lack of communication between Christianity and African heritage has called for the transformation of Christianity. Increasingly more African theologians argue that Christianity must be contextual, and this deep-seated conviction has become a solid foundation of African theology (Nwibo 2010:36).

The last reason derives from the Africans' search for an identity. Galgalo (2012:5) noted that "[t]here is a paradox at the heart of African Christianity. It is vibrant and growing but at the same time shallow and superficial". It is characterised by the struggle for authenticity, uniqueness and identity (Oden 2007:93). It is a form of resistance against early missionary activities and their presentation of Christianity in western apparel, on the one hand, and a search for self-actualisation in a convoluted interplay between the African religious

and cultural identity, on the other. This interplay has made it difficult for Africans to answer questions such as: How do African Christians practise their Christianity, within the African context, without betraying their heritage? Alternatively: Is it the betrayal of their African heritage that makes them authentically Christian?

Of course, there are various views on this enquiry. Distinctions may be drawn between 'African Christians', on the one hand, and 'Christian Africans', on the other. However, the two expressions 'African Christian' and 'Christian African' seem to imply different connotations. The concept 'African Christian' seems to denote a Christian convert who is fully aware of the religious-cultural demands that are aligned to the African identity. The notion 'Christian African' seems to imply a convert who is primarily Christian, but who also happens to be African (Galgalo 2012:5). An African Christian, therefore, may be a Christian convert living in a world that is referenced by the religious-cultural underpinnings of his/her African heritage and acknowledges them as his/her own. A Christian African, on the other hand, may be a Christian convert who upholds the teachings of Scripture without giving due regard to his/her religious-cultural heritage and leaves it behind as if it is not his/her own. The fact that he/she is an African happens to be a mere coincidence, which has no bearing on his/her Christian status (Galgalo 2012:5). This is where the battle for the heart occurs: not knowing what matters most – Christianity or the African cultural heritage. This is the reason why some African scholars advocate for hybridity – a mixing of Christianity and the African cultural heritage (Mugambi 2002:519-520). It is a battle for the heart, because Christianity alone, separated from culture, becomes an alien religion, while the African cultural heritage is not enough to reconcile humanity with God.

Hybridity, in this instance, becomes an important tool that can facilitate some form of communication between Christianity and the African cultural heritage. This is what the sacred cave of Mantsopa brings to the fore. It caters for all. The God of heaven, who shines the sun on both the good and the evil and who sends his rain to the just and unjust (Matthew 5:45), seems to be bringing unity through the cave. With this overview in mind, I posit that the cave church at Modderpoort has transformed the conventional way of doing church. It is not often that one finds different religious traditions sharing and equally valuing the same sacred space. This is a misnomer in contemporary times. Given our historical context, where South Africa is full of examples of religious divisions, instances of hatred against others, and the sanctioning of violence under the name of God (De Gruchy 1979:13; Nurnberger & Tooke 1988:16-18), it can be said that the Mantsopa cave is an appropriate example of religious tolerance. It promotes unity rather than discord.

10.5 Conclusion

As a sacred site, Modderpoort permits and facilitates religious blending. Three cultural and religious traditions coincide side-by-side within the same space. At the cave, one can find traces of the presence of the San through their artistic work or rock paintings. The cave was also used by a bridging figure, Mantsopa, who links African religionists and some African Christians to their ancestors. Lastly, the cave was consecrated by the Anglican Brothers and used as a place of worship. Unto this day, the sacred site continues to unite different religious traditions that intersect in ways suggesting hybridity, rather than syncretism. Hybridity, therefore, has become an important tool that enables communication between Christianity and the African cultural heritage. As a result, the cave continues to be a point of contact for different religious and cultural groups. Whether the cave is used by seekers of blessings, in order to attract wealth and material possessions; by religious practitioners, for spiritual vitality and nourishment, or by various worshippers for immediate needs such as healing, childbearing, finding work, passing exams, overcoming misfortunes, exorcism, and so on, the point remains that the church cave has transformed the conventional way of doing church. Moreover, the cave represents a new dimension, where various cultures and religious traditions intentionally borrow or mutually reinforce one another.

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