CHALLENGES FACING THE AFRICAN CHURCH: SOUTH AFRICAN THEOLOGIANS SPEAK OUT

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER ARTIUM

in the Faculty of Theology
Department of Science of Religion and Missiology
University of Pretoria

PROMOTER: Prof PGJ Meiring

April 2005

To Lezelle, Natasha and Ivan in appreciation for your patience,
unselfish support and understanding in bringing
this dissertation to completion.

Acknowledgements

This study has been completed with an acute knowledge of a person's own shortcomings. It would, therefore, be appropriate to honour and thank a number of people who assisted in bringing this dissertation to completion. In acknowledging some by name, it would be difficult to express my appreciation to those who are in focus in this study. As far as is humanly possible, I acknowledge and thank the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His grace that He bestowed on me throughout this study, but above all, for creating this phenomenal African church that has stimulated my thinking and has given me great pleasure as I researched one minute area of its existence.

I am indebted to the following:

Professor Piet Meiring who, as my promoter, patiently guided me throughout this dissertation.

The Board of Wycliffe Bible Translators, South Africa, for making it possible, and for encouraging me to complete this study.

SIL International for their financial contribution that placed this study within my reach.

Kathy Marais for proofreading my dissertation.

My colleagues for their understanding and support throughout this study.

My wife, Lezelle, and children, Natasha and Ivan, without whose understanding and support I would not have been able to finish this study.

The subjects of my study who supplied resources, friendship and hospitality. Thank you that I could stand on your shoulders. You helped me to crystallise my thoughts.

A number of the theological faculty personnel for their unselfish assistance in the process of this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   <u>Is the church speaking?</u>

For decades, Africa has tried to rid itself of the, most often, oppressive powers that have dominated the continent. Throughout the 20th century, and in the case of South Africa even further back in history, the church has played a vocal role in engaging the powers that refused Africans the right to be part of their own heritage.

Although various sectors of the church had a different view on how to engage these oppressive powers, to a great extent the church cried out against them. The church wrote poems, hymns, apologetic and prophetic material. The church sought theological answers to the crisis. It took part in mass action. The church marched with the rest of Africa to a glorious victory over these powers. In 2004 the first decade of democracy in South Africa was celebrated.

However, a number of challenging issues facing the very existence of the African continent did not disappear. Instead, over a number of years, these issues have surfaced, if not to a greater extent, at least in the full view of the whole world. If left unchallenged, these issues could have just as much, or an even greater devastating effect on Africa. But it seems that the same vigorous voice of the church that spoke out against, for example, colonialism and apartheid, has now become silent. Or has it?

1.2   <u>Goal of study</u>

We have heard the many voices that spoke out against issues relating to colonialism and apartheid and their devastating effect on the African continent. Many African voices have spoken, and we have taken note of them. But now we need to hear what the church in South Africa is saying

about the current devastating issues that Africa is facing. The church may never become silent. Bühlmann encourages the church to be "proclaiming courageously what Christ is doing in the world; not narrowly concentrating on saving 'souls' but struggling for justice in the world and salvation of the whole man" (1977:17).

The goal of this study is to determine if the church, with focus on the church in South Africa, is taking serious cognisance of these challenging issues. If the church has become silent, the goal of this study is to help the voice of the church to be awakened. If, on the other hand, the church is taking note of these issues, the goal is to find out what it is saying about these issues. We want to know what theological contribution the church is making in addressing these painful realities of our time.

As a further goal, this study will lay the foundation for further study on this matter.

1.3   Problem statement

My opinion is that while addressing issues relating to colonialism and apartheid, other vastly important issues that also needed to be addressed were overshadowed. Many of the current issues that Africa is facing, if they were addressed, were addressed as part and parcel of the colonialism and apartheid problems. Even when these issues are addressed now, they are often spoken of as legacies of the past oppressive systems. Whatever the causes of these current issues that Africa is facing, whether they are legacies of the past oppressive systems, or whether they developed independently of them, these are pressing issues that need to be addressed by the church. The church needs to give a theological answer to these issues.

This study will acknowledge that there are voices calling from South Africa, voices speaking out against our current challenging issues. These voices are, however, fragmented, and they are hesitantly uttered in a whisper. We are still waiting for voices from South Africa to cry out louder and stronger against the issues that are devastating the people of

our continent. There is still a great need for its theological voices to address Africa's challenging issues.

1.4   <u>Motivation of importance of study</u>

The church in Africa, over the past few decades, has experienced an explosive growth. The church has grown to such an extent that it is rightly regarded as one of the new centres of gravity of Christianity. We should also note that the poor and those who are marginalised largely make up the church in Africa. It is normally these groups of people that are more intensely affected by the challenging issues facing Africa. These groups of people seldom have the means or voice to speak for themselves.

It is, therefore, the responsibility of the church to address the issues that are plaguing the church. Bühlmann suggests some good advice when saying, "… the more the Church pursues its mission in the world the better it will be able to overcome its internal problems" (1977:17). The church should, however, never address the issues devastating society only for the sake of those who are linked to the church, but for the sake of the total community. Bosch vividly reminds us that the church is the only institution in the world that exists for the sake of those who do not belong to it (1995:375). It is the church for others. The church is not the kingdom of God. It is on earth the seed and the beginning of that kingdom. His kingdom comes wherever Christ overcomes the power of evil. Although this happens most visibly in the church, it also happens in society, since Christ is also the Lord of the world. (Bosch 1995:377).

The church in Africa cannot afford to wait for the church of the West to address the continent's issues. Neither can the church hand over the solution to the continent's issues to other institutions, as if the church is living apart from the complexities of the issues. Living in the situation, the church needs to provide theological insight. The church needs to realise that it cannot only focus on life after death, as is seemingly often the case, but it should take serious note of the conditions of life before death. The church's mission is more than calling people into the waiting

room to wait on the world hereafter. Those who are called are affected by all conditions of this world. They are subject to social, economic and political conditions in this world. There is, thus, a convergence between liberating individuals and peoples in history and proclaiming the final coming of God's reign (Bosch 1995:377). "All around us people are looking for new meaning in life. This is the moment where the Christian church and the Christian mission may once again, humbly yet resolutely, present the vision of the reign of God…" (Bosch 1995:361).

In this regard it would be important to take note of the African world view as Tutu (1995a:xvi) spells it out

> The African world view rejects the popular dichotomies between the sacred and the secular, the material and the spiritual. All life is religious, all life is sacred, all life is of a piece. The spiritual is real and permeates all existence so that the ancestral spirits, the living dead, are all around us, concerned to promote the well-being of those who are bound together with them in the bundle of life

The importance of this study would be to assist South African theologians to, once again, take serious note of the issues facing the continent, and stimulate them to take up their prophetic responsibility. In the apartheid era it was easy to rally against a common enemy, as Tutu puts it, "It was easy to galvanise people into action. The objective was straightforward – we were opposed to injustice and so we were against apartheid. Our work was made relatively easy because we had a common enemy. Nothing unites a disparate group so effectively as having to face a common enemy" (1995c:95). Now that South Africa is in the process of forging a new dispensation, and a 'common enemy' is not present, Tutu has been prompted to say that, "Clearly we are suffering from an identity crisis" (1995c:96).

It is important to heed what the church is saying in order for the church to evaluate its position on Africa's challenging issues. It is also

necessary to take note of issues that are not being addressed at all, or are not being addressed sufficiently by the church, in order for the church to relevantly deal with the issues. It will hopefully stimulate the church to continue to look at the way it is functioning in order to be effective in ministering to the needs of society. Bosch suggests that if any structures of the church hinder it from rendering a relevant service to the world, such structures should be called heretical. The church's offices, orders and institutions should be organised in such a way that they serve society and do not separate the believer from the historical (1995:378).

What will be the value of the church giving its opinion on the issues tearing our continent apart? Will anybody listen? One of the important reasons why the church needs to make its voice heard on these destructive issues is because of the trust that is put in the church. Siaki points out that in a national survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2000, a question was asked about the trust people have in certain institutions. The church was mentioned amongst these institutions. The conclusion that Siaki comes to is that "The church is the most trusted institution in South Africa" (2002:39). When the church speaks out, it will not be a lonely cry in the wilderness. With this kind of trust in the church, it can be assumed that South Africans are waiting for the church to speak out and help them find, if not solutions, at least some sense in life amidst difficult questions that they have to address. Walls (cf Jenkins 2002:78; 2002:3) indicates the importance of the church in Africa when referring to the Southern churches and states that

> It means that the Christians of the southern continent are now the representative Christians, the people by whom the quality of the 21st and 22nd Century Christianity will be judged, the people who will set the norms, the standard Christians. And the quality of 21st Century Christianity will depend on them

It is, however, not only the quality of Christianity that will be judged according to the standards Christians set, but they carry a huge responsibility on how they affect the total world they live in.

This study would further assist the church to openly dialogue, not only with itself, but also with other institutions in addressing and finding solutions to hard-pressing issues.

1.5   Research methods and motivation thereof

There is a vast range of issues facing contemporary Africa. It will not be possible to address each and every one. As Conradie rightly points out, "The social agenda of the church in South Africa is already filled to the brim with more challenges than the church has the capacity or the resources to address" (2002:180). This study will, however, identify a number of the relevant issues that are often spoken about, and arrange them under three main areas of concern. This study will then focus on these areas of concern which will encompass many of the issues facing Africa. The three areas that will be highlighted will include challenges in the establishing of the church in Africa as African church, challenges relating to social, economic, and political issues and challenges facing the church in a multi-religious society.

The intention of this study is not to find solutions to these issues or to describe all the various facets relating to them. The goal is to identify these issues, sufficiently define areas of concern, and determine what South African theologians are saying about these issues. In order to assist us in this, we are going to look at five South African theologians who stand in different traditions of the church in South Africa. These theologians were not chosen at random, but have already done so, or are proving to provide leadership in their respective traditions. We will look at the work of two of South Africa's more senior theologians. We will also focus on new theologians. The different theologians selected for this study are Archbishops Tutu and Tlhagale, Professor Maluleke, Bishop Mofokeng and Doctor Khathide. They, respectively, stand in the Anglican, Catholic, Reformed, AIC and Pentecostal traditions.

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This study acknowledges that any statements they have made on any issue covered in this study, are not necessarily representative of the traditions that they stand in. We will, however, accept that they have been influenced and formed by their traditions, and that their statements can be interpreted in the light thereof.

The purpose of this study is not to evaluate their statements and writings to make a comparative conclusion, but it is to determine what a broad representation of the church is saying about the issues referred to. This study also acknowledges that what is said by the theologians chosen for this study, are not the only statements made by the church on these issues.

For the purpose of this study, it will not be necessary to do any empirical study. This study will, thus, not follow a quantitive research method. It is not intended either to interview any of the persons concerned.

A conceptual methodology will be followed. Various literatures will be researched to identify and evaluate the problem statement. Background literature will be looked into to give an indication of the issues facing Africa and its responses to it. Special attention will, however, be given to the mentioned theologians to determine what they have written on the subject.

The research will lead to a finding that will assist not only the church, but also the people of Africa.

It should also be recognised that the issues facing Africa are very evident in South Africa. Although all the issues do not manifest themselves in equal proportions or in the same way throughout Africa, there are sufficient similarities in order to refer to these problematic issues as relating both to South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

1.6 Value of the church traditions focused on

There are obviously a number of church traditions that could have been chosen for this study. The church traditions chosen were done so because of the prominence they have in South Africa. They are also generally recognised as making a valuable contribution to the lives of communities throughout Africa. In analysing the 1996 South African census information, Hendriks & Erasmus indicate, "…whereas the basic 1911-1996 market share movement of the typical mainline denominational families … is basically downwards, three other groups are steadily expanding their market share. The AICs, …[T]he other two are the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal/Charismatic group" (2002:29). Siaki analyses the same data from a different perspective but comes to the same conclusion, when indicating that in South Africa the only three Christian groups that have since 1960 consistently experienced growth are the AICs, Pentecostals and the Roman Catholics (2002:33). It is, therefore, important to look at what these three traditions have to say about the challenging issues facing South Africa.

The African Indigenous Churches, known as AICs are also generally referred to as the African Independent or African Initiated Churches. There are many churches that are grouped in this church tradition. Referring to the 1996 South African census, Hendriks & Erasmus remark about the variety and number of these churches that "The StatsSA Religion: Summary code list contains at least 4500 names that were found in the census forms" (2002:21). They are normally comprised of small, independent churches. The AICs represent a fair portion of the South African society. Hendriks & Erasmus point out that the 1996 South African census indicates that 42.9% of all Black Christians residing in South Africa belong to AICs (2002:22).

These churches have to a varying degree made a momentous contribution in addressing destabilising issues of the past. "In many ways, the leaders of these first Black churches played an important role in the Black community and their struggle against colonialism, imperialism and later, apartheid" (Hendriks & Erasmus 2002:21).

As a result of the divisions in the AICs, being made up of thousands of 'independent units', it becomes problematic not only in studying the AICs, as many blanket statements have been made about the total AIC when only studying a sample of the church, but also when the church speaks about itself. Mofokeng acknowledges this tension by stating, "However, on our side there is the problem of representation – who speaks authoritatively on behalf of our African Indigenous Churches? We do not want any outsiders to speak for us, we want to 'speak for ourselves'… But how can we speak for ourselves when we are so divided?" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:18).

The value that the Catholic tradition contributes as well as their importance to the African continent should not be underestimated. Siaki (2002:33) suggests

> The Catholic Church has always had a strong emphasis on missionary activity and has continuously dedicated resources and personnel to expanding the church. The rich history of their missionary orders and movements account for much of the proliferation of Catholics around the world and in Africa

A further church tradition that should be taken cognisance of is the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church is one of the largest Christian traditions in South Africa. Its impact on the African continent is even more influential than that, as Siaki adds, "It is also fourth in the [Anglican] (Africa) market share (Nigeria being largest). Africa will probably lead all continents for the Anglican Communion with an estimated 42% of all Anglicans by the year 2010" (2002:34).

The final church tradition to be focused on in this study is that of the reformed tradition. Since the first westerners inhabited the southern point of Africa, the reformed tradition has had an immense impact on the development of South Africa. The reformed tradition has played a major role in the history of this country, and although it has indicated a decline

since 1980, it still fulfills an undeniable role in South Africa. Referring to the Dutch Reformed Church, Siaki indicates, "The welfare work of the church extends to all population groups in all parts of the country and outside" (2002:33). It must be taken into consideration that the reformed tradition is reflected in various denominations in South Africa.

1.7 Definitions

1.7.1 African church

The African church could be defined in a number of ways. For the purpose of this study, we are going to concentrate on the church in South Africa. This in itself is not without complications. The church in South Africa is made up of, amongst others, the AICs (African Indigenous Churches). These are churches which, to a large extent, developed without the influence of Western churches. The Western church, in the context of this study, refers generally to churches of which the original roots are not found in Africa. These churches, although regarded by some as foreign or mission churches, have Africans in leadership or at least as members. For this reason, these churches need to be highlighted as well. The African component of the church, in both the AICs and Western churches, for the purpose of this study will be regarded as the African church. Western South African churches that have, to a large extent, lost their ties with their roots of origin, will also be affected by a number of issues touched on in this study, especially issues in chapters three and four. The issues touched on in chapter two are not as relevant. The study will not focus on this component of the church as African church, but it will be indirectly present throughout.

1.7.2   Current issues

Referring to current issues, it is understandable that various researchers will formulate what they perceive to be the current issues that should be dealt with. The current issues, therefore, would differ from one researcher to another. The current issues discussed in this study are in a sense confined to the subjects' views being looked at. Therefore, the current issues referred to in this study would by definition be limited solely to the issues that the theologians perceived to be relevant to discuss.

1.7.3   Globalisation

In general, when issues of globalisation are discussed, they are done so in the context of a Western agenda. In the context of this study the focus on globalisation will centre on catholicity and context. It is accepted that these concepts have an effect on each other. What is regarded as catholicity, or universal value, will have a particular effect on specific contexts, and these effects will differ. Developments that take place in specific contexts, should seek to make a contribution to other contexts, for the benefit of these other contexts, and in that sense gain catholicity. These two concepts, catholicity and context, must be seen in balance, or creative tension, if we are to speak of a definition of globalisation that will be mutually beneficent for all humanity.

1.7.4   African identity

The quest for identity is not only an African phenomenon, but would be true of virtually any community. The search for an African identity, however, has been hampered by numerous factors that include slavery, colonialism and, in the context of South Africa, apartheid. It is a search for an identity in a context where Africans have been made to believe that their culture is inadequate. African identity is not a mere search for identity in the context of the church, or in terms of being black, but should be seen in a broader context. In the context of this study, the search for an African identity will include the wider spectrum of such a

search, even that of Africans living on other continents, who yearn to identify themselves with this quest.

1.7.5   Inculturation

Inculturation could be seen as a model of contextualisation. Contextualisation was a term originally used for the process of educating and incorporating people into ministry within their own unique contexts. In the words of Bosch, "Inculturation is one of the patterns in which the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifests itself" (1991:447). Inculturation is thus viewed as the attempt to translate the Christian faith into a specific culture, and for the purpose of this study, into the culture of the African church.

1.8   Structure of dissertation

1.8.1   Challenges in establishing the church in Africa as African church

The quest for establishing the church in Africa as a truly African church acknowledges the fact that the church is already well established in Africa. But what are the issues at stake, according to our selection of theologians, in establishing the church as an authentic African church? In this chapter, four main areas that are viewed as challenges for the church will be pointed out. There are a number of hindrances to deal with in the basic quest in establishing the church as African church. In this regard, the African identity is one of the central keys that need to be taken into account. The African culture forms the foundation of, and is clearly seen in the expression of the African church. The spirit world forms an essential part, not only of the African culture, but also the African church. Amongst others, the question of ancestral worship or veneration will come into focus. Another area of importance covers some of the theological developments taking place in the African church.

1.8.2 Challenges relating to social, economic and political issues

The African church is finding itself in the middle of social, economic and political issues. It cannot take a position aloof from these issues, not only because it has a responsibility resulting from its very nature to address these issues, but also because the majority of its membership find themselves caught up in the effects of poverty. As the title of this chapter indicates, we will look at a number of areas regarding the social, economic and political issues that the selected theologians have identified as affecting the African church.

1.8.3 Challenges facing the church in a multi-religious society

The African church is finding itself in the middle of a multi-religious society. Though Christianity is still the majority religion in South Africa, the African church will need to find answers regarding its position towards other religions. The church will have to address issues of tolerance towards people of other religions. The church will also need to guard against religious extremes, and position itself against such extremes. More often than not the Africa Traditional Religions are overlooked in the discussion on multi-religious societies. The African church cannot ignore their presence and the effect that they have on the African church.

1.8.4 Finding

Our finding will indicate that the African church is speaking. A number of areas will be identified in terms of what the selected theologians are saying, as well as how various audiences are hearing them.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING THE CHURCH IN AFRICA AS AFRICAN CHURCH

2.1   Introduction

Acknowledging that the church in Africa is well established, it is still necessary to note that, to a large extent, the church is in the process of establishing itself as an African church, and has to continue to validate itself as truly African and not some foreign religion.

The first section of this chapter will deal with the quest of the African church to establish itself as truly African. As with all non-African religions, Christianity is relatively new to the African continent. To a large extent all new religions to Africa have imposed themselves on the African culture without acknowledging the validity of the African culture. In a real sense Christianity was brought and presented to Africa in Western clothing. Not only did this portray wrong impressions of what Christianity is about, but it also often viewed itself in its Western culture as superior to the African way of life. African churches that tried to rid themselves of the Western garb often found themselves in isolation and had to endure harsh criticism. It has always been a struggle for them to find recognition – not necessarily from the Western churches, but from Africans who are members of Western churches. The African identity is one of the keys in establishing the church as a truly African church. Part of the search for this African identity is the need for Africans to find theological answers that will address the real needs of Africans. This expression of an African theology raises some hermeneutical questions, as the human experience is regarded as a valid hermeneutical approach. In owning Christianity as an African religion, this section cannot be completed without first looking at what the selected theologians are saying about inculturation.

In the quest for the church to establish itself as a truly African church, it must be noted that the African culture forms the foundation for expressing itself. In this section, some issues relating to characteristics, cultural expressions and the growth of the church will be looked at so as to understand how the church is expressing itself in African culture. The uniqueness of the African church is that it has a special contribution to make not only to the global church, but to the globe as a whole. For this reason, this section closes with a response to globalisation.

One area that seems to be in contention with the quest of the church to establish itself as African church is the debate on the spirit world. This was alluded to in the previous section, but because of the magnitude of this topic, especially the question of ancestral worship or veneration, it will be addressed as a separate section in this chapter.

In the first section of this chapter the need for an African theology was expressed. Some of the current developments in the African theology need to be pointed out, not only as new developments, but also as a continuation of old themes. For this reason, in the last section of this chapter some of these theological developments will be sketched.

This will then conclude the discussion on the challenges in establishing the church in Africa as a truly African church.

2.2   The quest for establishing the church as African church

2.2.1   Hindrances in establishing the African church

2.2.1.1   Imposition of new religions

Africa has always had an almost childlike faith in a supreme being. The expression of faith is what drives Bühlmann to say that "Beneath it all, there is the African's deeply religious pre-disposition. His sense of God, on whom he knows he is completely dependent, is the light by which he sees, the air he breathes, the skin in which he lives – not merely the clothes that cover him partly" (1977:152). Over the ages new belief

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systems made their presence known in Africa. Contrary to the proponents of these belief systems, mainly Christian and Islam, Africa did not merely exchange their ancient belief systems for the new. Africa had to find a way to deal with these new imposing belief systems. According to Tlhagale, "Africa from time immemorial, has had to deal with reconciling African belief systems with the imposition of new religions that are brought in by other cultures and in the process strive to find what works" (City Press, p 22).

It was not merely a simple process of sampling bits of the different belief systems to find out what worked. At large, the various belief systems were imposed as superior systems on Africa. In general, these belief systems were imposed on Africa hand in hand with other ideologies and exploitative systems such as colonialism. "Most western missionaries in the early days found it difficult if not virtually impossible to distinguish between the Christian faith and western civilization" (Tutu 1975:29). Even for the recipients of these endeavours it was difficult to understand the difference between the Christian faith and its proclaimer's often adverse agenda. For Tutu, an obvious result of this was that "… it was logical to pursue a policy of the root and branch condemnation of all things – African, which had to be supplanted by their obviously superior Western counterpart" (Tutu 1975:29). Tlhagale holds the opinion that colonialism did not create space for the African culture, of which its belief system played a vital part. "The dominant group did not recognise that African culture had its own wisdom, insights and values that informed the lives of Africans" (City Press, p 22).

The African spirit world is an important and indispensable dimension of the African religious reality. According to Khathide it "… offers a serious challenge to Christian theology if the church hopes to present the whole counsel of God in Africa in a meaningful and impactful way" (2003a:289). This belief in God and in the spirits of their ancestors is such an integral part of the African belief system, that Bühlmann indicates that "Anyone denying this would not be considered normal in Africa" (1977:152). For Khathide, the understanding of the spirit world has, however, been complicated by Christianity and Islam which have

had the most influence on the continent, although other oriental religious beliefs are increasingly making inroads on the continent as well. What these imposing religions, and especially Christianity, need to realise is that "In all of this, the African cultural and religious heritage is the foundation upon which all invading religious traditions are superimposed" (Khathide 2003a:290). These religions are not introduced into a vacuum.

2.2.1.2   Ridding African Christianity of its Western garb

Although Africa has embraced Christianity to such an extent that it is widely regarded as one of Christianity's new centres of gravity, the expression of Christianity in Africa might not always be recognised or accepted by the West. One of the reasons for this is that Africa is trying to rid Christianity of its Western garb. If Christianity is to be superimposed, to use Khathide's term (see 2003a:290), on the African culture, as it was superimposed on the non-Judaist cultures of its time, Africa has never and will increasingly not be satisfied with expressing Christianity in a Western form. Tlhagale is clear in indicating that faith, referring to Christianity, was brought to South Africa "… through the medium of western/Christian culture compromising the messenger, steeped in a foreign culture, language, symbols and rituals" (City Press, p 22). Because of this, inculturation has become a plea from the African heart for recognition. For Khathide, this foreign image of the Christian faith needs to be replaced by a version of faith that is truly Christian and African at the same time. "The challenge to the African is to follow Christ in his call to discipleship, thus forsaking everything that is contrary to biblical revelation, and yet not losing the identity of Africanness" (2000b:5).

Given the difficulties for the African Indigenous Churches to receive recognition, as well as the efforts over the years to express their Christian faith in familiar African culture, it is no wonder that Mofokeng expresses strong views on this issue. In order for the church to effectively be established in South Africa as an African church, Mofokeng argues that the African church needs to throw off its white

mask. What Western Christians brought to South Africa, according to Mofokeng, was hardly the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "It was Western culture, Western 'civilisation', Western customs and dress, and Western values. They themselves often said that they had come to 'civilise' the 'uncivilised' pagans of Africa" (2001:1). In practice this meant that the westerners taught Africans to think and act and speak and dress like westerners. It was a case of African people wearing Western masks. Even more serious than mere outward appearance, was the mask of Western respectability. Those who refused this mask were destined for eternal damnation. About this mask Mofokeng says, "The traditional African way of life was said to be pagan or even from the devil. It could not lead to salvation and therefore we were led to believe that all our ancestors had been damned. Only by putting on this white mask, could we ourselves be saved from eternal damnation" (2001:2). If the church in Africa is going to continue to be truly African and be able to address the issues of Africa from an African perspective, it will have to continue to liberate itself from the yoke of Western Christianity. As in the past "Liberation from the yoke of white Christianity and liberation from the yoke of white political domination went hand in hand as black people began to throw off their masks and to act as independent and free people" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:3).

Giving a critique on a number of theories regarding the connection between Africa, missionaries and colonialism, Maluleke comes to the conclusion that, "The bottom line is African Christian thinkers must cease to be obsessed with missionaries and colonialists in their diagnoses of what happened in Africa" (1998b:338). This view of Maluleke must not be seen as contrary to the other views mentioned. Maluleke's concern is that an obsession with missionaries and colonialists can detract from finding relevant answers to questions asked by Africa.

2.2.1.3 <u>The struggle for recognition</u>

Africans in the Mission or Western churches as well as the African Indigenous Churches always had to struggle for recognition. Maluleke

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points out that in the later part of the twentieth century, "… the churches of Africa would not even have been called 'churches'… they were seen as and simply called 'missions'" (2002a:327).

Those in the Mission or Western churches were, in general, not treated on merit, but merely according to their skin colour. For the African Indigenous Churches the struggle for recognition was fought on various levels. The history of the African Indigenous Churches can be characterised by this struggle. According to Mofokeng, "The history of the African Independent or Indigenous Churches has been a history of struggle – for independence, for recognition and for unity" (2001:16). One of the levels of this struggle is to be recognised as a Christian church. There can be various reasons for not recognising the African Indigenous Churches as Christian churches, but the fact for Mofokeng is that "To this day there are some who believe that we are not Christians at all, but pagans who practice African traditional religion mixed with some elements of Christianity…" (2001:16).

The discrepancy in this harsh evaluation of the African Indigenous Churches is that "… the mainline or foreign churches are now desperately searching for what they call the inculturation or Africanisation of their churches" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:17). The discrepancy lies in the fact that for years black people in the African Indigenous Churches were given derogatory names by those Africans who remained in what Mofokeng terms foreign churches, for sticking to and upholding their culture. These Africans, claims Mofokeng, "… began to realise their mistake and are now talking about the inculturation or Africanisation of their foreign churches" (2001:17). What they regarded as a 'heathen' culture with its African customs, norms and traditions, is now being treated as 'holy' (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:17).

In calling for recognition of the African Indigenous Churches, Mofokeng maintains that they have always observed the sacred Word of God, without mixing it with African culture in their churches. The African identity plays a major role in the understanding and acceptance of the African Indigenous Churches. For Mofokeng, "We are simply African

Christians who have preserved our African identity. Just as there is nothing wrong with being an English Christian or a Christian with any other identity, so also there is nothing strange about being an African Christian" (2001:17). In line with Bühlmann's conclusion, Mofokeng stresses the fact that "God created us Africans with all we need to survive. Our African culture connects us with God. This means that we are Africans before being Christians. To deny our Africanness would be to forfeit our God-given lifestyle and to adopt an imposed culture" (cf Bühlmann 1977:152; 2001:17).

2.2.2   <u>African identity as key in establishing the African church</u>

2.2.2.1 <u>African identity</u>

The question of African identity is clearly an important facet for the African church to grapple with to be effective in its establishment and legitimacy on the African continent. In examining the question of identity as a key to understanding the concerns of Christian theology in modern Africa, Maluleke acknowledges that "… African theologians have needed to come to terms with and give a coherent definition of what it meant to be an African Christian – which is, in other words, the question of identity" (2001c:28).

The quest for constructing a definition of an African identity seems to be more complicated than one would expect. A number of reasons for this could be put forward. It needs to be acknowledged that an African identity cannot be constructed, as Maluleke puts it, "*ex nihilo*" (2001c:28). The imposition of new religions, as well as a history of colonial, missionary and other interventions prevents such a definition. It is impossible to bridge the gap between now and the dawn of foreign engagement with the African culture.

Pioneer missionaries who tried to understand the African identity, probably due to personal motives, added to the complication of understanding it. They were never really able to comprehend the true meaning of the African identity. Maluleke contends that "… the concerns

of these pioneers were not in the first instance directed at understanding the African for either the African's or understanding's sake, but for the benefit of the work of colonials and missionaries" (2001c:29).

A further complication in putting forward a definition of African identity can be laid at the door of African theologians themselves. Being overly concerned with negative aspects of African theology's interest in African traditional religion, has resulted in a failure on the part of African theologians to comprehend and appreciate the deeper motive for a coherent and self-respecting African identity (Maluleke 2001c:28).

Given the complications in the quest for an African identity, Maluleke stresses that "… it was African theologians themselves who managed to foreground questions of identity in a way that none of the pioneer missionary thinkers could" (Maluleke 2001c:28). The reason for this is, according to Maluleke's suggestion, that when Africans entered the discussion it was questions of identity and integrity that propelled them and only secondarily those of Christian mission and colonial presence (2001c:29). The motivation for African theologians in the quest for an African identity lies in the notion of self-respect.

The quest for identity, and in this respect an African identity, is not something unique to Africa. In giving understanding about the quest for a coherent identity, Maluleke points out the similarities of the issues that the early Christians had to deal with, and that which the African theologians have to deal with in order to understand the African Christian identity. "The quest for a coherent identity is therefore not something peculiar to Africans – but it is something quite normal in the history of both the Christian faith and Christian theology" (Maluleke 2001c:29). Referring to the early church and current African theological thinking, Maluleke indicates that both groups of thinkers have faced, for example, the challenge of synthesis. They have both had to synthesize "'the various and disparate sources which make up the total religious experience of Christians'; a pluralistic religious, nationalistic and ideological context; and indigenization or a total rejection of previous culture" (Maluleke 2001c:31).

The quest for an African identity must be viewed not only in the quest for identity in Africa, but in the broader context that includes Africans living elsewhere, for example, African Americans. Maluleke gives insight into this when he points out that "This quest can be traced back to the earliest notions of pan-Africanism (in the mid-nineteenth century) and negritude (in the early twentieth century) as well as the philosophies of African personality" (2001c:31). Maluleke calls for a quest that will be a continuum with such previous developments as these. "Although the quest for an African identity may have changed tenor and tone, it has not disappeared from critical African thought" (2001c:31). In echoing the commonalities between those living on the continent and those of African decent, Tutu builds on the pan-Africanism and negritude theme by adding, "We cannot deny too that most of us have had an identical history of exploitation through colonialism and neo-colonialism, that when we were first evangelized often we came through the process having learned to despise things black and African because these were usually condemned by others" (1975:26). One of the major obstacles that the African church and Africa in general will have to overcome in its quest for its African identity is what Tutu regards as the worst crime committed against those of African decent. "The worst crime that can be laid at the door of the white man … is not our economic, social and political exploitation, however reprehensible that might be, no, it is that his policy succeeded in filling most of us with a self-disgust and self-hatred" (Tutu 1975:26).

Although the Christian church has rightly embarked on this quest for African identity, Maluleke reminds the church that the quest for a coherent African identity is not merely a Christian quest but "… rather the Christian theologian's voice in it is part of a larger choir of voices" (2001c:32).

Even though Christianity and Islam, as well as other imposing religions on the African continent, in a sense can be seen as masking the African identity, an African identity cannot be found detached from these religions. Maluleke indicates that "… it is clear that the agony of African

questions of identity is rooted in the tragic encounter between Africa, Europe and America in all its dimensions. Outside this encounter the quest for African identity might not have been so agonizing and not nearly so elaborate and so self-conscious" (2001c:36). African identity cannot be found merely by ridding Christianity of its Western garb (Cf Tutu 1975:29) and by a show of confidence in Christianity as a non-Western religion (Maluleke 2001c:38). African theologians will have to seriously deal with questions that have to do with the objective and nature of Christianity's relation to traditional religions. They will also have to deal with the significance of the Christian presence in Africa today (Maluleke 2001c:38).

One of the dangers in the quest for an African identity is that it can be based on a form of racism. In critiquing the African quest for identity, Maluleke asks the question, "Are certain kinds of African theology premised on some uncritical pan-Africanism or racialism and if so is there a potential for some form of racism being propagated under one or the other form of African theology?" (2001c:37). Maluleke is, however, convinced that African theologians are taking great care to avoid falling into such a trap (2001c:37). Maluleke is, however, concerned with some aspects of South African black theology, and agrees that much careful discussion needs to go into this as "… there is much room for misunderstanding here that a whole lot more time and space needs to be allocated to this matter…" (2001c:38). The black church, by taking heed of Maluleke's concern not to fall into the trap of racism, should not shy away from, but needs to celebrate being black. It is something that the African church should not want to escape from. "Our blackness is an intractable ontological surd. You cannot will it away. It is a brute fact of existence and it conditions that existence as surely as being male or female, only more so" (Tutu 1975:25). Why would Africa want to escape from its blackness? "For it is not a lamentable fact. No, far from it. It is not a lamentable fact because I believe that it affords us the glorious privilege and opportunity to further the gospel of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, - the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that is possible to no other group …" (1975:25).

2.2.2.2 <u>Hermeneutical questions</u>

One of the key issues that the African church needs to continually grapple with in its effort to establish itself as an African church is its hermeneutical approach. Western theology that is basically functioning from a methodology of using scripture and tradition as departure point does not offer sufficient answers to the African context. Proponents of contextual theology view this approach as inadequate. "Contextual theologians, on the other hand, are persuaded that the human experience, in addition to scripture and tradition, should be taken as a serious informing source to Christian theology" (Khathide 2003a:6). Given the Biblical tradition and the tradition of the church contextualising itself from a Judaist movement to a Greco-Roman cultural world, Khathide finds it disturbing that the African church for so long has, to a large extent, not given heed to this principle. He lays the blame for this at the door of the New Testament scholarship that has generally not seen a pressing need to contextualise (2003a:8). The result is that, for example, African Indigenous Churches, have generally reverted to the Old Testament because of the rituals and symbolisms found there. Although the New Testament sufficiently addresses, for example, the issue of the spirit world, it does not seem to carry the same weight or interest in its usage by the African Indigenous Churches, as that of the Old Testament (2003a:8).

The hermeneutical question would be to what extent weight should be given to human experience in relation to scripture. Mofokeng argues that there is no tension between their view of human experience and scripture. "We in the African Indigenous Churches believe that there is no contradiction between our spiritual culture and what is revealed to us in the Bible about the Holy Spirit" (2001:26). Even though emphasis is placed on human experience, it is not done to the detriment of the place of scripture in the life of the church. The Bible plays an important role in the life of the African Indigenous Churches. Though many have been led to believe that AICs are not Biblical Christians, Mofokeng says that this is not the truth. "We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and that from beginning to end it is inspired by the Holy Spirit" (2001:26).

Mofokeng further says, "We do not ever put human traditions above, or even alongside of, the written Word of God. We find that many of our African traditional beliefs are confirmed in the Bible…" (2001:27). In holding this high view of scripture, something that Western scholars might even shy away from, Mofokeng emphasises, "The Bible was written for all nations and all peoples. It speaks to everybody's needs no matter what their nationality, tribe, language, customs and culture may be" (2001:27).

Clarifying the importance of scripture in the life of the African Indigenous Churches Mofokeng, however, also emphasises the importance of their cultural experiences. "Long before Africans were able to read the written Word of God in the Bible, they acknowledged God as the Creator. They believed that God provided them with all they needed, and that in observing the traditional customs and cultural practices of their people they were obeying and worshiping God" (2001:27). Maluleke adds that "… appeals to the Bible as the sole source and criterion for work have not stemmed the tide of innovation and contest – rather biblical hermeneutics has itself become a fierce 'site of struggle' in African theologizing" (Maluleke 2002a:329).

Although Khathide holds an open view on the human experience as a valid hermeneutic approach, there are times when the wide array of human experiences, for example, the view of the spirit world, calls for an answer from scripture and not merely human experience. "The burgeoning fascination with spirits and associated topics is something that Christian theology cannot avoid indefinitely. This requires a response that is based on biblical revelation" (2003a:11).

2.2.2.3   <u>Expression of the need for an African theology</u>

In responding to the numerous indications that the centre of gravity of the Christian church is now rapidly moving from the West to the Third World, Khathide rightly contends that "Such a demographic shift in the Christian population in the world would naturally dictate also a change in the Christian theological reflection" (2003a:2). To a large extent, the

Western theologies have failed to address the questions asked by Africa. Khathide echoes this view when he makes the analysis that "Many Christians in the Third World have a perception that orthodox Christian theology has failed to address burning issues facing them" (Khathide 2003a:2). Tutu responds to this by adding that "The white man's largely cerebral religion was hardly touching the depths of his African soul, he was being given answers, and often splendid answers to questions that he had not asked" (cf Khathide 2003a:3, 1975:27). These inappropriate theologies have led to the emergence of local theologies in the Third World, including Africa. "Realising the inadequacies of orthodox theology … and in response to the changing theological landscape in the Third World, there has arisen a need on both sides of the theological spectrum (i.e. orthodox theology and local theologies) to demonstrate the ability of the Christian faith to meet the different needs of the Third World people" (Khathide 2003a:3). In order for Third World congregations not to be mere copies of the Western religious experience, for Khathide, the local theologies, in their different emphases, "… have sought to make the Christian faith meaningful in the context of exploitation, degration and human humiliation…" (2003a:4). Orthodox or Western theology continued to fail to give answers to circumstances that Africans are confronted with on a daily basis. It is this failure of Western and other theologies that prompts Maluleke to express, "If ever there was a time when we needed Black and African Theology, it is now. The other theologies have proven themselves incapable of exploring and articulating either the continuous *silences* or *silencings* of the poor and black people, especially black women" (1997a:339).

The issues that the African church is grappling with are not merely foreign issues that they are trying to find answers to. "When Christians discuss poverty and the cry of the poor in Africa, they are not merely discussing events, processes and ideologies that take shape outside of the church and of Christianity" (Maluleke 1998b:325). They are part and parcel of the issues. Maluleke argues that churches are not always willing to engage in these issues, as the Christian thinkers often extricate themselves, the churches, Christianity or Jesus Christ from the problems

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of the world (1998b:326). "Closely related to this is that Christians, like churches, are seldom willing to subject either themselves, their theology, their versions of Christianity and their churches to critical scrutiny" (Maluleke 1998b:326). Maluleke holds the view that it will not be helpful to just plunge into the practical alleviation of the problems facing the world, without the right tools and the right theoretical and theological starting points. This would result in "… our discussion – be they about poverty, AIDS, war or dictatorship in Africa – may simply serve to describe and re-describe without offering any new insights or real 'way-forward' proposals" (1998b:327).

2.2.2.4   Inculturation

Inculturation became a plea from the African heart for recognition because, according to Tlhagale, "… faith in South Africa was brought through the medium of western/Christian culture compromising the messenger, steeped in a foreign culture, language, symbols and rituals" (City Press, p 22).

Tlhagale holds the view that the African culture can still be maintained amidst the presence of the Christian faith. As for example, "Faith in God as the all-powerful father, as the all-merciful mother, as the creator and foundation of all being, has dethroned the ancestor from the human-made pedestal" (City Press, p 22), certain aspects in the belief in the power of ancestors has been radically adjusted. They still, however, remain an important part of the African culture. Referring to a number of practices such as traditional healers, magic, forseeing the future, witches, *serity* versus *sehihi* (dignity versus bad luck), Tlhagale says, "I have listed examples of rites that are open to change while retaining the essential meaning of the rites" (City Press, p 22). Tlhagale further calls for the need to look at the idiomatic expressions of the local languages as we seek to translate words and concepts (City Press, p 22), and not merely dismiss them as irrelevant.

For Khathide, the question of inculturation is important because "The challenge to the African is to follow Christ in his call to discipleship, thus

forsaking everything that is contrary to biblical revelation, and yet not losing the identity of Africanness" (Khathide 2003a:5). Acknowledging the danger, and as especially the African Indigenous Churches are often accused of, this indigenisation which is a form of contextualisation, maintains Khathide, "… is not meant a movement toward syncretistic tendencies" (2003a:5).

2.3   The African culture as foundation and expression of the African church

2.3.1   Characteristics of the African church

Various characteristics of the African church have been put forward. There are, however, some characteristics of the African church that are very similar to the early church. Even though the Western church might claim that these characteristics are also true of the Western church, and probably others as well, these characteristics are emphasised in the African church.

Mofokeng highlights some of these characteristics when stating, "The Zionists and other African churches, on the other hand, have a more typically African emphasis on the community rather than the individual and on this life rather than only the next life. Salvation and healing are gifts that God gives to his people here and now" (2001:15).

It is important to note the emphasis on the community rather than the individual. Where the modernist and post-modernist world is increasingly focusing on the rights of the individual, the African church's focus is on the community. Even the ancestors, according to Tlhagale, are not referred to as individuals, "… ancestors are always referred to in the plural. They are a collective. Once the proper burial rites or rites of incorporation (*ukubuyisa*) have been performed, the deceased become members of the collective" (City Press, p 22). Tlhagale points out that this belief is at odds with the Christian belief that maintains the subjective identities of individuals after death (City Press, p 22). Even though Tlhagale's contribution relates to life after death, it is important to note the emphasis placed on the community or collective, rather than the

individual. This focus on the community has implications for the African church as this view is contrary to the modern, shifting to a post-modern world view.

A further characteristic of the African church as stated by Mofokeng, is the focus on this life rather than the next. The one example mentioned is that salvation and healing are gifts that God gives to his people here and now. In the light of extreme poverty this focus proves to be extremely relevant. The cost of modern medical services is often beyond the reach of the poor. The church's emphasis on the now, especially its belief in healing as a gift of God, serves as a vital ministry to many. It is also most likely that with a focus on this life rather than the next, the African church is more likely to respond to social needs and political challenges than those whose focus is on life after death. On this Mofokeng adds, "They recognise that 'the Spirit blows where it wills' and that salvation and healing must extend to social ills and community problems. Members of these Churches will therefore be very active in resisting apartheid and other forms of injustice" (2001:15).

Making a distinction between streams in the African church, as this is not necessarily the case in all African churches, Mofokeng highlights a further characteristic of the African church, namely "The African Spiritual Churches, on the other hand, are not elitists…. Women are much more active and often play leading roles in African Churches" (Mofokeng 2001:15). As a woman, Mofokeng's appointment as bishop is one indication of this characteristic. Women are in the majority in all the African churches. Although this is not a prevalent practice in all African churches, Mofokeng points out, "… in our churches, unlike many others, you frequently find women prophets, healers, deacons, priests, bishops, and archbishops. Gender is not as much of an issue as it is in the mainline churches" (2001:47).

2.3.2 Cultural expressions

2.3.2.1 Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit plays a vital and central role in the life of the African church. Mofokeng maintains that the theology of the African Indigenous Churches centres on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual culture of Africa makes it easy for the African Indigenous Churches to appreciate the central role of the Holy Spirit in Christian doctrine (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:23).

As part of the African heritage, Africans have always been aware of the world of spirits. The African church has the ability to identify a variety of spirits. Mofokeng states, "We recognise in the world around us that there are spirits of various kinds: evil spirits, good spirits, the spirits of our ancestors, the spirits of **imimoya/meya** of human beings, and above all the Almighty and Supernatural Spirit, the Spirit of God or Holy Spirit" (2001:23).

Referring to the Holy Spirit, Mofokeng says, "In Africa the Almighty Spirit was there healing us long before the missionaries landed on our shores" (2001:23). This statement, as other statements by Mofokeng, recognises the Holy Spirit as an identifiable being that is the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God, however, stands in very close relation to the rest of the spirit world, and Mofokeng immediately shifts focus to customs related to the world of spirits. "From birth to death our lives are, and have always been, marked by customs related to the world of spirits" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:24). Explaining the process of a child growing up, and how such a child is constantly made aware of the spirit world, Mofokeng concludes, "Thus the African child grows up in an atmosphere of sharing, caring, and togetherness rather than in the typically Western atmosphere of individualism and isolation" (2001:24).

An area that many sections of the Christian church will find difficult to understand is this statement by Mofokeng, "Traditionally the main source of strength and solidarity for Africans has been dependence upon the

Spirit of God through the spirits of our ancestors" (see Khathide 2003a:343; 2001:25). Responding to the difficulty of westerners to understand this view, Mofokeng herself replies that "Some have said that we have replaced our traditional veneration of ancestors spirits with a new worship of the Holy Spirit, and that we therefore see the Holy Spirit as a kind of ancestor spirit. This is not true. We have always believed in God and we have never confused the Spirit of God with the spirit of our ancestors" (2001:30).

Mofokeng warns against the moving away from this African culture, "When the African shuns his or her culture the good spirits and ancestor spirits turn away from him or her, and then they are left with no power to fight the evil spirits. Our traditions, customs, values and norms are our source of life and strength. Without them we are powerless and dead" (2001:25). Once again, though Mofokeng does not explicitly mention the Holy Spirit in this warning, it does seem that the Holy Spirit is included, as Mofokeng concludes, "We in the African Indigenous Churches believe that there is no contradiction between our spiritual culture and what is revealed to us in the Bible about the Holy Spirit" (2001:25).

The relationship with the Holy Spirit is, therefore, not merely seen as part of a religious exercise, but the Holy Spirit is an integral part of the African church's cultural expression.

2.3.2.2 <u>Worship and structure</u>

Cultural expressions are also found in the worship practices of the African church. Tlhagale indicates to us that though sacrifices were always present in the African worship experience, prayer did not normally accompany it. The presence of Christianity, however, brought a new meaning to the prayer life of the African, "… it was the advent of Christianity that taught Africans to pray in a more elaborate and spontaneous form" (City Press, p 22). The Western church will, once again, at least raise an eyebrow as Tlhagale continues to speak on prayer. "Prayers continue to be directed to the dead, but above all to God, on behalf of the living as well as the dead" (City Press, p 22). This

view on prayer as cultural expression will, however, assist the African church in establishing itself firmly in Africa.

Preaching forms an integral part of the African church service. In contrast with mainline churches, everybody in the congregation is entitled to preach the Word of God. Mofokeng explains, "Someone reads from the Scriptures and comments on the text. He or she then invites everyone to take part in the preaching: men, women and youth" (2001:39). In this context the minister fulfils the role of a facilitator. The other members of the congregation have the same right to preach as the minister.

The African church cannot exist without music. "'Music was born in Africa,' they say. In our culture singing and dancing is a source of inspiration, our way of coping with hard work, with pain and suffering, as it is also our way of celebrating, rejoicing and praying. In our churches music is the heart and soul of our liturgy" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:41). In the African church liturgical music is not merely the singing of a hymn after the reading or the sermon or the prayers. It has a much deeper meaning than that. "It is the experience of being caught up in a rhythm that possesses you, so that you not only sing the praises of the Lord spontaneously and in harmony, but your worship of God expresses itself at the same time in bodily movements like swaying, dancing, clapping or humming" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:41). Of greater importance than the outward practice and expression of singing, Mofokeng holds the view that "It is a total experience that unites you with the others in the group in an all-embracing movement of the Spirit" (2001:41). Musical instruments are seldom used. If musical instruments are used, it would normally be the use of drums. "We do sometimes have drums, but the drum, like our clapping of hands or stamping of feet, is more a matter of emphasising the beat than indicating the tune or melody of the song" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:41). By stating this, Mofokeng stamps out the illusion that the use of drums in the African church has got some spiritual connotation.

Referring to the number of meaningful symbols that the African Indigenous Churches are well known for, Mofokeng says, "Some of the symbols seen in the mainline churches like statues and rosaries are not used in our churches. We have the cross but without the body of Christ hanging on it" (2001:42).

Marriage also forms part of the worship and structure of the African church. Marriage is referred to as a sacrament. "This sacrament is more complicated because it involves not only the church, but also the decision of two individuals, the parents and the two families" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:44). The African traditional rites that accompany the marriage are of importance to the African church. Mofokeng stresses this when concurring that "For the African Indigenous Churches it makes no difference whether the marrying couple were married by foreign Western rites or not. They still have to marry through their African traditional rites" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:44). Marriage is not regarded in the African church as a temporary arrangement. Both the church and the culture have a vital role to play in the securing of the marriage. "Involving the church and the culture assures the marrying couple that marriage is serious and permanent" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:44).

Various rites are performed in the African churches. Referring to rites and cleansing, Mofokeng says, "These rites are used to cleanse a person from different kinds of sin or defilement" (2001:44). Mofokeng explains the necessity of these rites by referring to a traditional rite of cleansing for anyone who had killed another person and, therefore, had blood on their hands. "Soldiers coming back from a war were cleansed in this way as well as anyone who had murdered another person. They had to be cleansed from **iqungu** or the angel of death" (2001:45). Once again, in emphasising the characteristic of the African church's focus on the community rather than the individual, Mofokeng concludes, "Cleansing rites are performed not only on individuals but also on whole congregations and communities" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:45).

Death is seen as an integral part of the African life. It is not normally viewed in a negative light, as Africans believe that death is a sign of

acquiring a higher call above that of the living. As a result of this high view of death, Mofokeng explains, "… the members of our churches treat death with great respect and reverence. All Africans share this belief and show the same reverence and respect for the dead" (2001:46). Apart from a number of African traditional rituals that take place in the mourning process, as well as some African cultural rituals that are performed during the burial, "… the rest of our funeral services are conducted and carried out in the same way as in any other Christian church" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:46).

2.3.3   Growth of the church

2.3.3.1   Unity

Being independent is one of the characteristics of the African church. For this reason they are often referred to as the African Independent Churches. Mofokeng alludes to one of the dangers of being independent. "In the process of becoming free and independent, we became very divided and even, at times isolated from one another. Much of our struggle in recent times has been for unity and co-operation amongst the Indigenous Churches themselves" (2001:18). This independence that results in splits and divisions is not a worry to the church as such. To a large exten, these splits and divisions have given impetus to the growth of the African church, as local expressions of the church helped it to be relevant to its particular communities. "In some respects they can even be seen as healthy. In some cases there are very good reasons for them…" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:18).

One of the ways of dealing with these splits and divisions in the African Indigenous Churches is that they are coming together in "associations".

Although there are numerous attempts, of which many are successful, to work closer together as Indigenous Churches, Mofokeng comments on those who purposefully cause divisions because of ulterior motives. "There is a growing sense that we need to find more effective ways of

working together and of preventing our African Christian tradition from being hijacked by impostors, charlatans or power-seekers" (2001:22).

2.3.3.2 Theological training

One of the areas that such associations have identified as an important way of contributing to unity is that of theological training. For example, in1965 one such association, namely, the African Independent Churches Association (AICA) was formed. "The top priority of AICA was the raising of funds to enable us to build our own theological seminary and to set up a correspondence course to deepen the theology of our ministers" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:19). The underlying desire of establishing such a theological training programme was not only for the training in theology, but it was an acknowledgement that the African grassroots theology would be underscored and developed in a wider context in the African Indigenous Churches (cf. Ngada 1985:11). The need soon developed to have a training process built, not on the Western style, but based on an African style. "Although its method emphasises learning together rather than learning alone and, therefore, it relies more upon workshops and discussions than upon reading, SCRTTI [name of training course as named by the students] has also developed its own correspondence course" (Mofokeng 2001:22).

2.3.3.3 Theological connection to grassroots

One of the dangers in the development of theology is that it can be done in isolation of the grassroots. Where African theology is rapidly developing from the context of Africa, and has an effect on global theology, it is important for African theology to connect with the people or grassroots. Maluleke debates that the time is overripe for theology to connect with the people. "If the nature of theological connection to real people and real issues is to be meaningful and thereby saved from becoming a mere cliché, we must begin to analytically and fearlessly scrutinize the validity and worth of the very notion of theological connection to the people" (1996e:21). To combat the potential that theological connection to the people can become a mere cliché, it is

necessary to critically examine the methods used to establish or claim connection to the people as well as evaluate the objectives of the connection (Maluleke 1996e:21). One of the methods used to connect to the people from a theological perspective is manifested in an increasing interest in the African Indigenous Churches as well as in the African poor. These are generally referred to as 'grassroot communities'. Of this increasing interest in grassroot communities that has resulted in theologies, Maluleke points out that while the formal, progressive theologies receive constant review and evaluation, often observer–based theologies with an equal interest in grassroot communities seldom receive the same kind of review and evaluation. (1996e:21). Maluleke indicates that one of the reasons that attention should be given to these observer-based theologies is "… the belief that they are attempting a refreshing variation in South African theology's quest for relevance and 'people attachment'" (1996e:21).

In dealing with two basic views on Africa, namely on the one hand, Africa being in distress, and on the other a Christian Africa, or at least an Africa in which Christianity is expanding rapidly, Maluleke encourages all religious people "… Christians in particular, need to 'search their souls' about the possible linkages between their faiths and the problems on the continent" (1998b:330). This tension and contrast that exists in the two-Africas approach should be seized as an opportunity to do an in-depth exploration that could lead to answers regarding the restoration of Africa. This exploration should not lead to a list of what, on the one hand 'distressed Africa' should not do, and on the other what 'church Africa' should do to address the problems in Africa. Maluleke suggests, "We need to find a manner of speaking that will smash the fanciful and artificial division between the two Africas. Alternatively, we need to find means of making connections between the two Africas seeking to explain the 'tension' created by the contrasts" (1998b:336). "The time has come for Africans to take responsibility and full ownership of the presence, significance and consequences of Christianity on the continent" (Maluleke 1998b:337). This approach, however, will only be possible if African theology truly connects with the grassroots.

2.3.3.4 Witnessing community

As is commonly noted that the centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted to the African continent, the African church now has to realise that it is also carrying a number of responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is that of being a witness. Given the history of colonialism and apartheid, the African church has the liberating task of presenting Christianity to the West. The African church is loaded with the responsibility to proclaim the whole counsel of God. With regard to this imperative of the gospel to declare the whole counsel of God also to the West, Tutu says, "We are compelled to help the white man to correct many of the distortions that have happened to the gospel to the detriment of all" (1975:27).

2.3.4 Response to globalisation

Globalisation is normally discussed in the context of the political and economic realms. It will, however, be helpful to understand the impact of globalisation on the life of the African church and see how the church responds to it.

2.3.4.1 Catholicity and context

Two concepts come to the fore in the discussion of globalisation, namely catholicity and context. Catholicity in the context of this discussion, refers to what is global or universal. This catholicity also impacts the context. Context refers to a smaller part of the whole that might or might not impact the whole.

Maluleke is of the opinion that, in a sense, cultural and economic globalisation has become a catholic, or universal, phenomenon. These forms of catholicity, "… aspiring to some grand unity of all … was a warped and deficient form – a 'catholicity' without justice, dignity, coherence or a sound eschatology… [D]espite all noble pronouncements, what is really being globalized is greed, misery and violence" (Maluleke 2002a:315).

It is not possible to speak of either catholicity or context with detached innocence anymore. Is it possible to speak of catholicity and context if the world in which we live is moving deeper and deeper into chaos, suffering and violence? (Maluleke 2002a:315). The only way in which we will be able to speak of true catholicity is if we "… strive for truly catholic Christian churches – churches firmly rooted in their contexts and fully awake to the worldwide church of all times and all places" (Maluleke 2002a:315). At the same time, the church also needs to strive for a truly catholic world "… a world that is awake to the fact that God created all in and for love" (2002a:315). Such a catholic world will be open and sensitive to the pain and suffering of those living in specific contexts. Maybe then we will see less globalised greed, misery and violence.

Maluleke lists a number of heartbreaking events that have plagued the African continent over the past number of decades. He concludes his list by mentioning a number of current issues, namely, "Today millions of Africans are dying in the face of famine, hunger, poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic while the considerable resources of the world's wealthiest nations are focusing elsewhere – ironically, mainly on war and the military" (2002a:316).

After expressing his disdain with the content of at least the closing chapter of a book written by Keith Richburg on his impressions of the situation in Somalia and Rwanda, and especially his remark, 'Thank God I am an American', Maluleke makes the following statement, "As Christians, we are called upon to imagine a different world and a different humanity from that which emerges from such exclusivist divisions – whether between the faithful and the infidels, or between the USA and a heap of all the others (at the bottom of which you have… Africans)" (2002a:318). In this global village we are called on to imagine a different kind of world. "What we are called upon to imagine, and embody, is a catholic world in which being American, Afghanistani, German or African is no index of one's value as a human being" (Maluleke 2002a:318).

Looking, not at death itself, but at the manner in which people are dying as an expression of the violence and meaninglessness of societies, even in the midst of global connectedness, Maluleke says, "Millions of people all over the world - including in the USA - are concerned about the death-road that the world appears to be taking as a result of economic globalization" (2002a:321). Taking the various contexts of the globe into account, it could be possible through their different, valid contributions to establish a different world. Christians across the world, including the African church in its variety of contexts, can add to the value of such a global quest. In order for the African church to make its valid contribution, Tutu gives some good advice, "… we should take the Incarnation seriously. Christianity to be truly African must be incarnated in Africa. It must speak in tones that strike a responsive chord in the African breast and must convict the African of his peculiar African sinfulness" (Tutu 1975:30). Only then could it speak out of and to his own context (Tutu 1975:30).

The context in the light of catholicity can also give expression to the failure of the globalisation picture. Given the South African situation Maluleke indicates how, amidst attempts to search for a new national identity, issues of racism and xenophobia and other forms of social disorder continue to plague our country. "It sometimes looks as if, in spite of all of Tutu's and Mandela's efforts and in spite of all the tragedies and celebrations that we have shared as South Africans, white stay white, black stay black, rich get richer, poor get poorer and all the internal divisions remain intact" (2002a:323).

Even symbols such as songs, though the intention is not to be divisive, can become a rift between various groups. Maluleke points out, "This means that for all their community-building possibilities, even prayer-songs may give birth to sectarianism so that the 'god' being appealed to is nothing but an idol." (2002a:326). There is, however, a way in which such symbols and songs can be used to establish true catholicity. "The songs 'God bless Africa', 'God bless South Africa' and 'God bless America' can lead to catholicity only if their singers regard the blessing of Africa, South Africa and America as part and parcel of God's blessing

of *all humanity* and *all creation*" (Maluleke 2002a:326). Maluleke warns, however, that when the appeal for God to bless America, or Africa, is construed as an exclusive privilege denying the blessings of others, then even these beautiful prayer-songs are transformed into idolatrous prayers (2002a:326). Maluleke suggests that the most profound song that Americans and South Africans can sing is 'God Bless Humanity and All of Creation'. "Unless we all can sing such a song over and above our own anthems – official and unofficial – then we are not yet ready to participate in the mission Dei, and not ready for the practice of genuine catholicity and genuine contextuality" (2002a:327).

In giving an overview of the growth of the African church Maluleke concludes, "Therefore I would argue that from the earliest times the history of African churches has been a history of interplay between catholicity and context. In striving for contextual integrity African churches were, at the same time, striving for catholic integrity in the worldwide church" (Maluleke 2002a:328). In this sense the West, including the Western church, will need to take seriously the effect that the context of the African church has on global catholicity (See Tutu:1975).

2.3.4.2 Pentecostalism as response to globalisation

In trying to understand the phenomenon of the rise of Pentecostalism globally, and specifically in its African manifestations, Maluleke holds the view that it still needs to be comprehended (2002a:328). One indication is that it may be a particular Christian response to globalisation. "If I am correct, then perhaps African Pentecostalism is at least partly an attempt, on an ecclesial and spiritual plane, to mitigate the disempowering effects of globalization upon poor and marginalized people" (Maluleke 2002a:328). It can therefore be regarded, contends Maluleke, that Pentecostalism could be a contextual movement seeking its way against "… that wave of compressing and all-consuming 'catholicity' known as globalization" (2002a:328). Maluleke points out that African Pentecostalism has its own distinctive emphasis and character, and that it is not merely a carbon copy of either American

right-wing fundamentalism or American Pentecostalism. "African Pentecostalism has a distinctive African accent and idiom and yet, to the extent that it borrows from other Pentecostal movements in the world, it is (on the positive side) also part of a new Christian catholicity, and (on the negative side) caught up in the web of the very globalization it is attempting to tame" (Maluleke 2002a:328).

2.4   The spirit world as essential to the African church

2.4.1   The African spirit world

2.4.1.1 Origin

After discussing the number of theories indicating the origin of the spirit world, Khathide expresses the view that it can be concluded that there is no agreement about the origin of the spirits, though there might be some overlap in thoughts. However, when it is seen in the light of the African world view, "A belief in ancestral spirits seems to be the most prominent feature in the African traditional religion because it always resurfaces in one way or another" (Khathide 2003a:306). The whole African existence is an interplay with the spirit world. Even though it does not add to the debate of the origin of the spirit world, it is an indication that the very existence of the African world is interlinked with the spirit world. On this Khathide adds, "Again, according to the African spirituality, every person is a nexus of interacting forces so that he or she is capable of communicating and interacting vertically – with God, and deities, ancestors and other spiritual forces including mystical powers and horizontally – with fellow human beings" (Khathide 2003a:308).

Khathide points out that the synoptic gospels "… though not attempting to discuss the origin of Satan and demons, are full of exorcisms of demonised people" (2000b:84). There are a number of commonalities between first-century Palestine and the African view regarding the spirit world. "As it was in the first-century Palestine, the African world view presupposes a world that is inhabited by various spirits that affect humans on a daily basis" (Khathide 2000b:85).

2.4.1.2 <u>The need to discuss the spirit world</u>

One of the issues of the African church, especially for those who find themselves in mainline churches, is the reason why many people who profess the name of Christ persist in turning to traditional practices in times of crisis (Khathide 2003a:38).

The matter of spirit engagement is vital for Christian theology in general, and missiology in particular. The debate on the importance of the spirit world for human existence can no longer be shunned or ignored (Khathide 2003a:34). Knowledge and the ability to engage the spirit world should become central to Christian, including African theology.

2.4.1.3 <u>Hindrances in understanding the African spirit world</u>

There are a number of hindrances in the understanding of the spirit world.

One of the hindrances is the fear that incorporating the African spirit world in the life of the African church is a form of syncretism. Tlhagale is of the opinion that the incorporation of any of the African traditions into the African church should not be seen as introducing religious syncretism (City Press, p 22).

Part of Khathide's concern in looking into issues relating to the spirit world, "… is the two-tier Christianity or the schizophrenic religious personality seen in world Christianity, particularly in the Third World" (2003a:14). "One finds deeply committed Christians faithfully attending church services on Sundays, praying to God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ, but in time of need or existential crisis, they turn to a local shaman, *inyanga* for healing, a diviner for guidance and to an exorcist, traditional or 'spiritual', that is, for deliverance from spirit oppression" (Khathide 2003a:14). Khathide contends that the spiritual ambivalence of African Christianity can be attributed to two possible factors. "Firstly it can be blamed on the inability (or reluctance?) of Africans to

comprehend the requirements of Christian discipleship which proscribes any form of idolatrous behaviour …" (2003a:16). Or "Secondly, it can be attributed to the inadequacy of the gospel-product which failed to address the African situation holistically – a situation that led African converts to Christianity, in view of the insufficiency of the missionary gospel, to revert to their traditional practices which, to a large extent, were not ecclesiastically acceptable" (2003a:16). In analysing these two factors, Khathide contends that "… on the whole, the major contributing factor to the African spiritual ambivalence can be attributed to the people who first introduced the gospel to the continent of Africa" (2003a:16).

Theologians can also be partially blamed for some of the hindrances in understanding the spirit world. Khathide points out that New Testament scholars, even though they do acknowledge the spirit world in the New Testament, struggle to acknowledge the ministry of Jesus as exorcist and the role of the demonic in the modern world (2003a:24).

The Enlightenment also played a part in the lack of understanding of the spirit world. Due to their Enlightenment-rooted presuppositions which in essence denied the existence of the spirit world, "The early missionaries who came to the African shores with the intention of proclaiming the gospel, inadvertently demonstrated ignorance in understanding and dealing with spirits and spirit possession" (Khathide 2003a:336). The result was that missionaries simply failed to see a natural consequence of primal world views which allow for the interrelationship between the natural world and that of spirits and gods (Khathide 2003a:337). The Enlightenment separation of the natural and the supernatural realities, where the supernatural realities have been ridiculed as mere fairy tales, and "…belief in these was labeled as barbaric and primitive" (2003a:350), Khathide points out that missionaries coming out of such a world view, who brought the gospel to Africa, preached a message that left Africans with the perception that the God of the Bible was insufficient (2003a:350).

It is not only the Enlightenment world view that influenced early missionaries. Western missionaries who work in the spirit- or

experience-orientated communities have often had inadequate preparation for the socio-spiritual conditions in host countries (Khathide 2000b:79). As a result of the limitations of the Western world view and lack of preparation, Khathide maintains that "… traditional theology has been incapable to point out that the invisible reality forms the cosmic backdrop of the mission and ministry of Jesus in the New Testament" (2000b:79). The fact that Christianity in the Two-Thirds World is often viewed as powerless to deal with the spirit world, Christians often go to diviners and spirit doctors to have their needs met. This dilemma facing the African church is a lack of fidelity to biblical revelation; a lack of articulation and application of the very supernaturalistic-orientated New Testament view of life (Khathide 2000b:81).

African scholars have done sterling work on some areas regarding the spirit world. Maybe due to the fact, as Khathide contends, that many African theologians were and are still mentored by Western theological specialists "… not much research has gone into other spiritual entities and realities like divinities, spirits (good and bad), ancestors, witchcraft/sorcery and diviner healers. Many spiritual entities and experiences and the effect they have on ordinary Africans, are still not accounted for" (Khathide 2003a:353).

2.4.1.4 <u>Gender</u>

Khathide suggests that the issue of spirit possession and gender is worth further exploring, as there are numerous divergent views on this debate. (2003a:346). On the one extreme, spirit possession is seen as a coping mechanism that women revert to in order to increase their self-esteem in a male dominated society, and on the other hand, the view is held that women have always played a very important and central role in the spirit world.

2.4.2   Church practices

The concept of spirit possession is an issue with which the African church constantly has to wrestle. It should be noted that, in general, there is a different response to the spirit world between what is known as African Indigenous Churches and European founded churches. For example, Khathide draws our attention to the fact that "While African Independent (Initiated) Churches have integrated aspects of spirit possession and witchfinding cults into their services through prophetic and deliverance ministries, former missionary churches have been reluctant in this regard" (Khathide 2003a:338). These 'former missionary churches' need to come to the realisation that their African members do not experience the message of God's caring love, prayers and the sacraments as fully adequate. A result of this is that the Protestant churches are losing members to African Indigenous Churches or to Pentecostal churches. "The evangelical movement in Africa, though it declares Christ's sovereign rule over the spirits, prefers to say little about the spirit world, concentrating rather on the salvation of the individual or 'soul', hoping that that experience will be a panacea for all other problems" (Khathide 2003a:349).

There is also an inculturation response in some of the mainline churches. "In the Roman Catholic Church, for example, devotional objects like holy water, the rosary, medals and prayer books often seem to 'replace' the traditional fetishes earlier rejected by the missionaries" (Khathide 2003a:352). The church should keep in mind that "Judging by the various responses, it is clear that African Christians consider the spirit world not as illusionary or just products of imagination or something depicting socio-psychological problems in a person or a group, but as reality, that the Christian faith needs to address itself deliberately and holistically" (Khathide 2003a:353).

Khathide points out that "It is important to note that the church has progressed well where there has been a recognition and engagement of the powers by the followers of Christ" (2000b:90). Khathide encourages the African church, that though the area of power encounter, in other

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words, encountering the spirit world, is quite risky and full of pitfalls, "Engaging the powers should include inter alia, a ministry of adventure and experimentation by those who follow in the footsteps of Christ as it is in the case of the New Testament" (Khathide 2000b:90).

2.4.2.1 Spiritual warfare movement

The spiritual warfare movement is one of the church's responses to the spirit world. The spiritual warfare movement takes the spirit world seriously. "The approach of Christians involved in spiritual warfare is that Christ has given authority to believers (cf. Lk 9:1; Mt 10:1, 7;Mk 16:17) to engage the powers which often want to hinder the work of the church and the mission of Christ" (Khathide 2003a:28). The spiritual warfare movement is not beyond its fair share of criticism. Given the various criticisms raised against the spiritual warfare movement, Khathide rightly argues that "… the emergence of the spiritual warfare movement has highlighted the need of the forgotten ministry of the church – that of engaging the spirits that (depending on which side of the debate a person stands) torture and torment humanity" (2003a:33). One of the contributory factors to the growth of the spiritual warfare response "… is the fact that the historic or mainline churches, in order to halt the exodus of their members to Pentecostal/charismatic and African Initiated Churches, had to introduce the ministry of deliverance in their services" (Khathide 2003a:351). If this response, however, is intentionally to halt the exodus of members to the Pentecostal and African Indigenous Churches, then Mofokeng's criticism of them is valid (see 2001:17). The growth of the spiritual warfare movement, however, especially in Africa, can be seen in the fact that "The number of faith-healers and those who minister in deliverance is increasing in the churches of whatever background and doctrinal persuasion on the continent" (Khathide 2003a:352).

Khathide points out that practices of the spiritual warfare movement are not without problems. "Because spiritual warfare is predominantly based on the charismata or the gifts of the Holy Spirit without the necessity of ordination or training, most of the movement's practitioners tend to lack

theological depth which unfortunately lead to the demonisation of everyone and everything" (2003a:352).

2.4.3   Ancestors

The ancestral world continues to play an important part in the life of the African church. The African cannot exist outside this context. Khathide points out that according to African spirituality, "… every person is a nexus of interacting forces so that he or she is capable of communicating and interacting vertically – with God, and deities, ancestors and other spiritual forces including mystical powers and horizontally – with fellow human beings" (Khathide 2003a:308). Faith in God as presented by the Western missionary did not eradicate the African Christian's view of the ancestors, but it did, however, alter some of the views in the African church. Tlhagale (City Press, p 22) explains

> Faith in God as the all-powerful father, as the all-merciful mother, as the creator and foundation of all being, has dethroned the ancestor from the human-made pedestal. The belief in the power of ancestors to inflict pain or to enhance life, the belief that they can control the destiny of human beings, has been radically adjusted yet they remain an essential part of it

2.4.3.1   Worship or veneration

The question of worship or veneration always comes to mind when the place of ancestors in the life of the African church is discussed. It is the normally negative Western approach to the African church's position on ancestors that leads Mofokeng to argue that "The traditional African way of life was said to be pagan or even from the devil. It could not lead to salvation and therefore we were led to believe that all our ancestors had been damned" (2001:2).

A number of the views with regard to ancestors in terms of worship or veneration, in Khathide's mind appear to be influenced by a Western

anthropological perspective in which reality is divided into different categories, e.g. social and religious (2003a:314). The African view, however, does not make this distinction. "Although most Africans prefer the usage of 'veneration' to 'worship' when it comes to ancestral belief, there are still practices that may tilt the argument to worship …" (Khathide 2003a:315). Surprisingly, "It is for this reason that many missionaries in the past and in the present have regarded ancestor veneration as the centre of African traditional religion and as something opposed to the worship of the true God" (Khathide 2003a:315). Not so, says Mofokeng. Ancestors are not worshipped, but only honoured. "Some Christians have the completely mistaken idea that in our African Churches we continue the 'pagan' practice of 'worshipping' the spirits of our ancestors. In the first place, we do not worship our ancestors, we respect our ancestors in the same way as we respect, honour and revere our living parents" (2001:21). Mofokeng continues her argument by adding, "Worship is reserved for God alone" (Mofokeng 2001:29). Tlhagale's contribution that "Prayers continue to be directed to the dead, but above all to God, on behalf of the living as well as the dead" (City Press, p 22), does leave the debate open.

What is clear is that the African church does hold a high view of its ancestors. This can be noted in Mofokeng's very valuable contribution to the debate (see Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:30).

The African church, however, should continue this debate as it is doing, as this will continue to be an issue in the conveyance of the gospel in Africa. According to Khathide, "African theologians and churches are still struggling how to respond appropriately and biblically to the issue of ancestral practices, especially among Christians" (2003a:316). Of importance to the establishing of the church as an African church on the African continent, is Khathide's concern that "Of all the various theological positions adopted by scholars, it is the demonizing of the ancestors that becomes problematic in the conveyance of the gospel in Africa" (2003a:360).

2.5 Emerging paradigms in African theology

Earlier in this chapter the need was expressed for the continual development of an African theology. We can rightly ask the question whether there are any emerging paradigms in the African theology. Maluleke indicates that there are a number of emerging paradigms that should be taken note of. These paradigms to be discussed are not meant to be paradigms that all would necessarily agree on. Maluleke qualifies these as his interpretation of developments, and only the reading of developments that he is aware of (2000b:197).

2.5.1 Old established and new developing frameworks

One of the aspects of the developing paradigm is that African theology "…is still framed in the old and established frameworks of African theologising. The overwhelming picture is one of Africa as a victim, hard done by one and all. Cold-war era African Theology whether it be 'inculturational' or 'liberational' proceeded out of the recognition of Africa's massive victimization and exploitation" (Maluleke 2000b:197).

There is another thread flowing through African theology, namely the new. "There was once a scramble for Africa! Africa was once 'valued' however warped the motivations and values of those who wished to have her. Now Africa wonders if she is still of much use even to her erstwhile exploiters and admirers, as she sits on the world's rubbish dump" (Maluleke 2000b:199). Maluleke also indicates, as do Tutu, Mofokeng and Khathide, as already pointed out in this study, that "It also appears that our inherited frameworks, theological methods and metaphors are increasingly being seen as inadequate if not expired. Africa finds herself in a 'new place' and its thinkers and leaders are desperately looking for new language and new frameworks" (2000b:200). As an example of this search for new language and new frameworks, Maluleke makes reference to "The African poor are pouring scorn at 'liberation-rhetoric' regardless of the quarters from where it emanates because long after independence they remain poor, if not poorer, if they have not been killed off by disease or the guns of the

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more powerful" (2000b:200). Especially the African women are not too happy with the 'liberation-rhetoric'. "African women are mobilizing without and despite African men (in fact they are seeking alliances with other women from all over the world and from all walks of life)" (Maluleke 2000b:200).

2.5.2   Continuation of liberation theology

The theme of liberation will continue to be part of African theology. Maluleke points out two currents that relate to this, namely, "South African Black Theology and African Women's Theology. In these two theologies the notion of 'the poor' is broken down to mean 'women', 'African women', 'Blacks' and or 'the Black working class' so that there is a deliberate emphasis on gender, race and class issues" (Maluleke 2000b:197). Linked to this Maluleke maintains, "Yet perhaps the most enduring contribution of Black Theology to African Theology is not in its privileging of race as a socio theological tool, but its biblical hermeneutics" (2000b:198).

The so-called African theology of liberation should not be seen in isolation as if it formed only one current in African theology, but should be understood in the light of other themes. "There was the so-called inculturation current… as well as the kinds of early socio-anthropological studies of African religions…" (Maluleke 2000b:198). According to Maluleke, just as the first generation of self-conscious and written African theology during the twentieth century was deeply influenced by the work of liberation theologians, so too will present theologians continue to be influenced by these (2000b:198).

2.5.3   Logic of equations and distinctions

"We should create a framework for discussing African Christianity within which it is still possible and legitimate both to field and pose critical questions directed at African Christianity" (Maluleke 1996b:15). Maluleke makes this statement in lieu of his negative evaluation of African theologies based on the logic of equations and distinctions. That which

Maluleke refers to "… is the logic of equations and distinctions consisting of a set of such dualisms such as; the distinction of Christianity from colonialism, the distinction of the missionary transmission of the message (gospel) from indigenous assimilation of the message, the distinction of the Christian gospel from Christianity and the equation of the Bible with the Word of God" (1996b:10).

On the equation of the Bible with the Word of God, Maluleke says, "Black and African theologies must redraft and problematise their relationship with the Bible as well as its place in African Christianity" (1996b:12). To Maluleke, the way out of biblical entrapment is not to take flight, but to confront, not only the Bible, but all other sources and interlocutors of theological discourse precisely at a hermeneutical level (1996b:14). Maluleke warns that "While it is true that for those of us who have become Christian, Christianity provides the most valid framework for a full and complete life, we have no right to view everything in African life as waiting for Christianity in order to be fulfilled" (1996b:16).

"There is and should therefore be at least a two-way critical relationship between literature on African Christianity and actual African Christianity" (Maluleke 1996b:17). The reason for this is that, to a greater or lesser extent, the one estimates and needs the other. Maluleke continues to say that "Whilst African Christianity may generally be said to be marching ahead of theology, there are times when African theology is and should be marching ahead of African Christianity. The two-way relations I am proposing need not be rigidly formal in order to be authentic" (Maluleke 1996b:17).

2.5.4 The African agent

Maluleke expresses the opinion that an important role for Christian theology is for theology to interpret and enhance the agency of Africans "… in the light of cultural, religious and economic marginalization" (2000b:193). According to Maluleke, South African ecumenism is in some kind of recess, if not a kind of disarray. "It is therefore not difficult to observe the fatigue in ecumenical South African theology. The silence

has been sudden and deafening. How have the cries of the poor majority been suddenly silenced by the shouts of the joyful minority?" (Maluleke 2000b:194).

Referring to a number of his esteemed mentors and colleagues, Itumeleng Mosala, Takatso Mofokeng, Simon Maimela, Smangaliso Mkhatswa, Frank Chikane and others, all of whom have 'gone secular' by becoming all manner of administrators and state functionaries, Maluleke points out that they have perhaps responded to a 'higher' calling (2000b:194). To a large extent, the African church has become dependent on such 'prophets' and are still waiting for them to address the issues of our time, while they are responding to other kinds of needs. "Perhaps the South African Christian community must wake up from its dependency on the Tutus and Mosalas of this world and take up its prophetic calling with or without them" (Maluleke 2000b:194).

In the development of the African agent, we must take note of the ordinary Africans who are surviving, often in the midst of all kinds of tragedy. "In countless African villages in remote areas unreached and ignored by government, people find ways and means to survive. In countries without infra-structure, without effective government and with the lowest GDP imaginable Africans are surviving" (Maluleke 2000b:201). Throughout the ages and against all odds, expectations and condemnations, Africa and the African have survived. "By diverse means ordinary Africans are finding ways to neutralize the stifling 'hands' of globalization and IMF policies. This view of Africa is informed by a slightly different gaze at Africa" (Maluleke 2000b:201). Maluleke suggests that "… we are being called to a humble but careful observancation of the struggles of Africans to be agents against great odds, not by ignoring or discounting the odds, but by confronting them" (2000b:202). In encouraging the African church to be partakers of the future of Africa, Maluleke says, "Africans have always been agents, never 'simply victims, wallowing in self-pity'; they have always exercised their agency in struggles for survival and integrity" (Maluleke 2000b:202).

2.5.5   One all-encompassing African theology

At one stage it seemed that the various forms of African theology would culminate in one all–encompassing 'African theology', but instead "… we have seen an explosion of many newer, even discordant forms of African theology" (Maluleke 2002a:329). One example is the growth of women's theologies. These theologies "… have deliberately refused to be fitted too neatly into any of the previous Western and African theological forms" (Maluleke 2002a:329). "Nor have the predictions materialized that African theologies of inculturation and indigenization would, sooner or later, make way for theologies of liberation. Rather, issues of inculturation and indigenization persist alongside, and sometimes inside, issues of liberation – and vice versa" (Maluleke 2002a:329).

Tutu points out that "Theology is a human activity possessing the limitations and the particularities of those who are theologizing. It can speak relevantly only when it speaks to a particular historically and spatio-temporally conditioned Christian community and it must have the humility to accept the scandal of its particularity as well as its transience" (Tutu 1975:30). For this reason, Tutu maintains, "There must be therefore of necessity be a diversity of theologies and our unity arises because ultimately we all are reflecting on the one divine activity to set man free from all that enslaves him" (Tutu 1975:30). Tutu further appreciates the fact that "There must be a plurality of theologies because we don't all apprehend the transcendent in exactly the same way nor can we be expected to express our experience in the same way" (Tutu 1975:30).

2.5.6   Death and tragedy

"African theologies and churches have recently been faced with a new context of death and tragedy" (Maluleke 2002a:330). Maluleke continues by pointing out issues of war, HIV/AIDS, and that the "… 'miracle of reconciliation' is not, in fact, that miraculous because the damage which centuries of economic disparity and racist human relations has done

cannot be erased overnight" (2002a:330). These factors contribute to the fact that many African countries are places of death and dying, rather than places of life and living. "In these contexts, Christian churches and their theologies are challenged to respond creatively and meaningfully" (Maluleke 2002a:330).

Maluleke points out that "Many of the items on the agenda of early African theology have not disappeared but have converged or coalesced around the theme of tragedy, killing and dying" (Maluleke 2002a:330). In many parts of Africa, South Africa included, death has become a way of life. Dying occurs in many ways. Maluleke makes a plea that "We have to find a way to move beyond the pretence of nation states, warped anthropocentrism, ethno-centric, racist and sexist, elitist identities and their arbitrary and mostly imaginary borders – the pretence that these are worthy of our worship even unto death" (Maluleke 2002a:330). "Better still, we are called upon radically to interrogate all our views and positions – even our religious doctrines – in order to ensure that they are not misconstrued to underwrite a 'ways of dying' ethic. Rather our doctrines, like our life of faith in Jesus Christ, must become beacons of a 'ways of living' ethic" (Maluleke 2002a:330). "Christian communities are therefore called to practices, habits and crafts of a 'ways of living' ethic. The times require Christians to embody, and enact, the deepest values of their community" (Maluleke 2002a:331). If the African church can manage that, Christianity will make sense in Africa.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGES RELATING TO SOCIAL, ECONOMIC- AND POLITICAL ISSUES

3.1   Introduction

In the areas of social, economic and political issues, South Africa is probably hurting the most. For those who are experiencing some kind of deep trouble in their lives, Tutu holds out one of his core beliefs to encourage them and South Africa, proclaiming that "This is a *moral* universe, which means that, despite all the evidence that seems to be to the contrary, there is no way that evil and injustice and oppression and lies can have the last word. God is a God who cares about right and wrong. God cares about justice and injustice" (2004a:2).

In giving an example from the history of South Africa when there was a specific issue that he and others were dealing with, Tutu describes how he was encouraged by the principle of transfiguration. At that stage the transfiguration in nature, as well as the transfiguration of the cross, strengthened him in his situation. In relation to this Tutu says, "The principle of transfiguration says nothing, no one and no situation, is 'untransfigurable', that the whole of creation, nature, waits expectantly for its transfiguration, when it will be released from its bondage and share in the glorious liberty of the children of God, when it will not be just dry inert matter but will be translucent with divine glory" (2004a:3).

In this chapter we will look at a number of social, economic and political challenges that the African church will need to deal with as it continues to establish itself as an African church, but also as it relates, in a relevant way, to those who are suffering.

There are a number of social issues that the church needs to take note of. These issues are contributing to the fragmentation of the moral fibre

of our societies. The church, by voice of the theologians who were selected for this study, has identified a number of areas that need to be addressed in the strengthening of the moral fibre of not only the African church, but also our societies at large. Health issues are also part of the social struggles that the African church is facing. HIV/AIDS features here as probably one of the biggest factors, which is not only a social issue, but also leads to political and economic questions. South Africa, even after ten years of democracy, is still struggling to come together as a nation, and continually needs to work at reconciliation. The African church has a vital role to play in this regard, and cannot merely leave it to government and similar institutions to address. It is, however, not only the role of the leadership of the church to take the lead in addressing social issues, but when we look at the role of the human agent in transformation, we note that the laity needs to play just as vital a role, as they are often the ones who find themselves in the midst of the social concerns.

The African church cannot divorce itself from political issues, or leave all political issues to government to take care of. Over the last ten years, however, the church has found it difficult to understand its position and find clarity regarding its own identity in the light of a government that functions as a secular state. A number of laws made, giving weight especially to what were regarded as human rights, have not always been compatible with the teaching of the church. The result has been that the church often felt the need to respond to government. In understanding its relationship to government there is a call for the church to seriously consider a theology of the state. Issues such as human rights, affirmative action and the effect of violence are also looked at as political issues that the church needs to understand and assist in finding answers to.

Economic issues also beg our attention in this chapter, as the economic distress of so many South Africans has to a large extent, an effect on what we referred to as social and political issues. Poverty is one of the biggest issues that the African church will have to focus its attention on. Terms such as 'reconstruction' and 'development', though easy to

define, seem not to work out too well in practice. The African church will also need to put its mind to those. Donor stress can easily result in much needed funds and personnel being lost and which are crucial in addressing issues especially surrounding poverty. Economic abuse is also an area that contributes to the economic distress that so many South Africans find themselves in. The African church needs to address this as well. Issues relating to the environment have also caught the attention of at least one of our theologians chosen for this study. Issues surrounding our environment have a direct effect on other economic questions.

The challenge, even in this study, when focusing on the issues that are detrimental to the health of the African continent, and especially South Africa, is not to become pessimistic, but while addressing these issues, to keep focused on the successes of our past. After describing the successes of the 1994 elections, now ten years into our democracy, Tutu was prompted to say, "Our problems are not over – poverty, unemployment, and the AIDS epidemic – because transfiguration is ongoing. But just because there is more to be done, we should not forget the miracles that have taken place in our lifetime" (2004a:8).

3.2   Social issues

3.2.1   Morality

3.2.1.1 Abortion

One of the social issues that our secular government and various segments of the church do not agree on is that of abortion. Some parts of the church are very outspoken on this issue. Tlhagale, for example, is in agreement that "There are a number of vexing moral questions and practices that deviate radically from the moral teachings of the Catholic Church" (2003b:1). One of the areas Tlhagale points out is the rights of citizens that are upheld by the Constitution or upheld by the courts in the light of the Constitution. According to Tlhagale this is "… clearly going against the Church's own teaching", and this has brought into sharp

relief the nature of the conflict concerning moral issues (2003b:1). It is pointed out by Tlhagale that "The Catholic Church continues to feel not only extremely uncomfortable, but is also opposed to the legislation on abortion" (2003b:1).

A Pretoria High Court judgement, according to which girls may now procure an abortion without their parent's knowledge caught the serious attention of the Southern African Bishop's Conference. As spokesperson, Tlhagale delivered a joined statement by the Conference on this High Court judgement, in which he wished "… to protest in the strongest terms possible the further erosion of the unsurpassable value of life…" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1).

In the light of this unacceptable view of life, as the Bishop's Conference interpreted the High Court judgement, Tlhagale objected strongly against "… that part of the Constitution that treats life as if it were simple biological material to be freely disposed of" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1). Tlhagale continued to reiterate the position of the Catholic Church with regard to abortion. "Procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing of a human being at any time between conception and birth. The act is totally and absolutely unacceptable. Killing an innocent human being is always gravely immoral" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1).

A further area of concern that the Pretoria High Court judgement brought to the fore for Tlhagale was that by extending the right to terminate pregnancy to females under 18 years of age, the burden of responsibility has been shifted to younger women as well. Tlhagale maintains the view that "This judgement will lead to the weakening of individual consciences, especially of those of young people whose conscience formation is at a critical stage" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1).

It seems ironic that while the South African government over a number of years has openly expressed a grave concern about the degeneration of the moral fibre of society, the result of this judgement according to

Tlhagale will do just that - seriously undermine the moral fibre of society. "While South Africa speaks of a moral renewal of society, it strenuously seeks to exclude sexual morality and private lifestyles of people. Such an approach is doomed to reap the whirlwind" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1). Mofokeng is in agreement about moral decay as a result of this kind of judgement. "Unfortunately some of the laws passed by our new democratic parliament tend to encourage the moral decay in our society" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:56). Included in this list of laws that, in the words of Mofokeng, encourages the moral decay of our society, is the legalisation of abortion (2001:56).

A further result of this judgement is that the value of the family is seriously undermined by it. It does not only encourage sexual permissiveness, but it also ignores the esteem of motherhood. Tlhagale expresses a strong word to the lawmakers when he says, "The judgement, we maintain, is a direct assault on the value of family as the sanctuary of life. We cannot rule out the question of complicity in the evil of abortion with regard to those who make such laws…" (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1).

Not only has this Pretoria High Court judgement raised cause for concern, but also The Termination of Pregnancy Act has created a crisis of conscience for Catholic health workers. In defending the position of these health workers, Thlagale indicated that "If nurses were equipped to handle abortions themselves, this would undermine the family and the idea of marriage and threaten the culture of life, promoting what Pope John Paul II calls 'the culture of death' in which we live" (Diocesan news 2004d:1). Tlhagale protested against the fact that "The government intends nurses to be trained like midwives and the fear is that if the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Amendment Bill is passed, moral approval will be conferred on abortions" (Diocesan news 2004d:1).

In a meeting chaired by Tlhagale, amongst other issues, major attention was given to the discussion of abortion. This discussion was done in the light of the mentioned Pretoria High Court ruling to open doors for girls to have abortions without their parent's knowledge. Although Tlhagale,

through the organs of the church, does not shy away from addressing government on the issue of abortion, this meeting chaired by him proved the ability of the church, not only to identify issues, but also to effectively deal with them. This meeting identified five areas of constructive contributions that the church could make in addressing the issue of abortion. 1. They identified that it was not constructive to only be vocal on the church's concern about legislation on abortion, but that the church needed to create ongoing education for young people regarding the effect of sex before marriage. 2. Taking into consideration that 70% of South Africans are nominal Christians (Diocesan news 2004b:1), the need was expressed to make a statement and enlist other religions to focus on and provide alternatives. The argument was that if the various religions could work together, "… we could be a good voice to persuade the government to react and offer a strategy for education" (Diocesan news 2004b:1). 3. There was also a call for recommitment to the teachings of the church. "Adoration of the Blessed Sacraments to intercede for the perpetrators and lawmakers is a way to go" (Diocesan news 2004b:1). 4. Various resources of the groups in the different dioceses were acknowledged, and thought was given to these being tapped into to change the destruction of family life. 5. The feeling was expressed that the power of the pulpit was not being used sufficiently for moral teaching anymore, and that this had to be addressed. (Diocesan news 2004b:1).

3.2.1.2 <u>Child abuse</u>

Child abuse is probably one of the most senseless and damaging activities plaguing the moral fibre of our South African society. When some cases are exposed and propagated by the media, such as the senseless gang raping of a baby, it calls for a general outcry by society. The anger and hurt felt by the multitude of victims, however, normally go unnoticed. Child abuse by people in authority and those who are supposed to uphold and help build the moral fibre of society, such as teachers, when exposed, also generally leads to an outcry by society. The Catholic Church, in its recent history, has been plagued by revelations of sexual abuse committed by some of its clergy. It can be

considered, therefore, that the church in a sense is also in some sort of moral crisis. The concern of Tlhagale is that "One reported case of sexual abuse is one case too many" (Tlhagale 2003b:1).

The outrage at the allegations of sexual abuse is a rude moral awakening for the church. In the light of sexual abuse of children, Tlhagale strongly states that "As Church, we dare not underestimate, even for one moment, the sensitivity around sexual abuse, especially by men who claim to be the moral guardians of society, by men who claim to be speaking in the name of Jesus Christ, men who claim to be the 'alter ego' Christ himself" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). The fact that we live in a vibrant culture of human rights and that personal dignity and the rights of others, especially of children, are held in high regard, Tlhagale reminds us, "The community is outraged at such misdemeanour because clergy hold a position of trust in the community" (Tlhagale 2003b:1).

Tlhagale doesn't spare the rod when he addresses the clergy of the church. "Our code of conduct for Church personnel is apparently not adequate. As leaders in the Church, we are being called to account publicly for the deeds of our clergy" (2003b:1). In stating this, it is clear from Tlhagale's perspective that child abuse is a serious issue and that the church cannot tolerate the practice of covering up such incidences for the sake of the view that people hold of the church. On this Tlhagale reiterates, "If there is a breakdown of discipline within the Church then it is the problem of the Church. But if Church personnel assault the dignity of others through sexual abuse, the public outcry is that the perpetrators be exposed to the wrath of the law and that the Church be held accountable" (2003b:1). Tlhagale is clear on the fact that the church cannot call for the moral integrity of others, while it does not maintain its own position of moral integrity. "The Church cannot call upon the state and the private sector to be accountable and yet be perceived to be diffident when she is called upon to account for the clergy" (Tlhagale 2003b:1).

3.2.1.3 <u>Racism</u>

In the euphoria of the 1994 elections and the discovery of new ways for the different races to co-exist in South Africa, it was easy to merely tolerate people of other races, without seriously tackling the issues of racism. In addressing a workshop to explore race relations and reconciliation in the church, Tlhagale posed the question, "Are we brothers and sisters, or just being cordial to each other?" (Diocesan news 2003:1).

In expressing ways in which racism can be overcome, Tlhagale sees value in the realisation and the embracing of otherness. "We are called to conversation, to transcend, overcome our own blindness and to appreciate the beautiful form of otherness" (Diocesan news 2003:1). According to Tlhagale it is by, amongst other experiences, "… reconciling ourselves to the oneness of diversity in human beings of different races", that we experience salvation (Diocesan news 2003:1). This oneness can only be attained if we accept the fact that we need to complement each other.

According to Tlhagale, it is part of our vocation not only to accept differences, but also to work through them to reach unity (Diocesan news 2003:1). In terms of being different, Tlhagale says, "We will continue to be different, but we need to understand that and complement each other on this journey" (Diocesan news 2003:1). Catholicity implies a multitude of cultures bound in unity, and catholicity is the ability to hold things together. Tlhagale says, "We come from the same origins and have a common destiny. God is our vocation. We have to live with this, not run away from the 'crime and grime'. In spite of all that, we need to move together. Therefore it is important for us to overcome racism" (Diocesan news 2003:1).

In the need to move together and for us to overcome racism, we will not only need to have dialogue, we will also have to overcome social and cultural differences. Although South Africans experienced the same history, various groups experienced different nuances of the same

history and, therefore, have their own challenges to face as a result of their past. The majority in South Africa hold the key for all South Africans to reach peace and reconciliation. Of this Thlagale says, "In order to have peace and reconciliation in this country, the majority need to feel that their dignity has been restored in the last 10 years" (Diocesan news 2003:1). For the dignity of the majority to be restored, the basic equality amongst people with the same destiny needs to be acknowledged. This, according to Tlhagale, will have to be expressed in tangible terms. "The only thing that will influence this is when the majority can work, have a roof over their head, send their children to school" (Diocesan news 2003:1). This will contribute much to eradicating the issues that give rise to racism.

Tlhagale adds a comment on the view that Catholics believe that they all have the same origin, that all Catholics are redeemed by Jesus Christ and, therefore, all have the same calling and identity. Because of this they all enjoy the same basic equality amongst people, with the same destiny. "We need to grapple with this and to live what we proclaim. Discrimination based on race contradicts this belief that we come from one Father. It is our duty to one another" (Diocesan news 2003:3).

3.2.1.4 <u>Sexism</u>

Sexism is a form of discrimination, expressed not only, but especially, in the workplace. Tutu, for example, expresses himself on the role of women in the church "For Christians, the most radical act that can happen to a person is to become a member of the body of Christ. If gender cannot be a bar to baptism, which makes all Christians representatives of Christ and partakers of His royal priesthood, then gender cannot be a bar to ordination" (Tutu 2004a:48).

Sexism is often expressed in the form of violence against women. There are few things as resilient and widespread in the cultures of the world today as the violence against women, and against children. This is the view of Maluleke in an article he wrote in conjunction with Nadar (2002:6). A number of the views expressed by Maluleke could also be of

great value in the discussion on child abuse, and should be understood as such. Tutu also expresses his opinion that "Sexism is equally absurd in the eyes of God. Sexism quite literally makes men and women into each other's enemies instead of each other's equals, instead of each other's sisters and brothers. It creates artificial divisions everywhere that tear apart God's family" (Tutu 2004a: 48).

The place of power that men occupy in relation to women can be seen as the focal point in the discussion of violence against women. Maluleke and Nadar indicate, and this could probably be true of most cultures if not all, that "In the cultures to which we belong – Indian and African – men are either silent 'beneficiaries' or perpetrators of horrendous violence against women" (2002:6).

It is the opinion of Maluleke and Nadar that a covenant exists regarding the violence against women. They use the word 'covenant' in the context of describing an unspoken, unwritten, but very real covenant between human societies and violence. "It is a deadly covenant cultivated and reinforced in attitudes, teachings, practices, and rituals that tear human societies apart even as they promise to preserve and sustain" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:7). This covenant has got another side to it, and that is a covenant of silence. This is a "… silence about violence, especially violence against women" (2002:7). The battle of the abused, in cases of domestic violence, is often not only against the abuser, but a host of others who have been brought into the framework of the abuse. This covenant also coaxes them into silence. "In cases of domestic abuse the battle is not only against the abuser but also against a host of other conspirators, people who have entered into a covenant of violence and silence with the abuser himself" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:7). Even for those who have the courage to speak out against this form of sexism "… the voices of those who dare to stand up against the covenant are often like voices in the wilderness" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:7).

Violence against women should always be acknowledged as an important focus in liberative forms of theology. Maluleke and Nadar call

for a special way in which this should be dealt with. They suggest that all liberative theology should be formulated in a manner that does not focus on method, but that includes life and life concerns (2002:7). "Violence is something not merely to be studied and theorized; it must be faced head-on and it must be overcome" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:7). The crucial reason for this is that violence against women is not a mere theory but is a reality of the everyday life of many South Africans. Therefore, Tutu adds that "There can be no true liberation that ignores the liberation of women" (Tutu 2004a:48).

Referring to two stories from their own perspectives, Maluleke and Nadar give an initial interpretation of them, pointing out some of the similarities. "Hence, the similarities between the two contexts pertain to the common reality of societal subscription to what we have chosen to call a covenant of death. In both settings violence against women is both the result of and part of an intricate and sickening coherent socio-cultural and economic system" (2002:13). This socio-cultural and economic system is, in the words of Maluleke and Nadar, "… oiled and perpetuated by the macro-economic situation as well as by an equally intricate set of cultural sayings, precepts, rituals and practices" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:13).

One could easily conclude that if violence against women is found in and is the result of the socio-cultural and economic system, the perpetrators are victims of their own circumstance and can, therefore, be excused for their behaviour. Not so, according to Maluleke & Nadar. They hasten to say, "In pointing to the intricate network of related circles and cycles of violence, we are not subscribing to the sterile attempts by some to turn 'the perpetrators of violence into the victims of circumstances'" (2002:13). Not only should the perpetrators of violence against women not be left off the hook, but it is also "… equally devious and unacceptable to exonerate the macro-perpetrators of violence against women, such as national and international policies, at the expense of micro-perpetrators of violence, such as local and ethical cultural practices" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:13).

A further key role in the scourge of abuse is what Maluleke and Nadar call "… the 'unholy trinity' of *religion; culture* and the subsequent power of *gender socialization* in underwriting a culture of violence against women" (2002:14). They point out a number of cultural practices that could lead to the abuse of women. As a result of such cultural practices, we should not be surprised when feminist scholars are not always too optimistic about the call to 'return to' and 'preserve' culture (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:14). "By and large, experience, religion, culture and gender socialization would have us believe that the place of women in society is established and that violence against them is normal, even though sometimes regrettable" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:15). Without going into a discussion on some of the helpful suggestions that Maluleke and Nadar give on how the covenant of violence against women can be stopped, it would suffice to say that "The challenge that lies before us is to devise cultural and theological strategies that will *un-conclude* this issue, unmasking its heretical nature and its inherent injustice" (Maluleke & Nadar 2002:15).

The ending of sexism, discrimination against women, especially in the workplace, as well as violence against women, and including them fully in every aspect of society will, according to Tutu, not only bring an end to its own great evil, but will also be part of the solution to the rest of the world's problems (2004a:49). "Until women are deeply involved in opposing the violence in the world, we are not going to bring it to an end. All women must be equally at the forefront of the movements for social justice. And they also have a special leverage over the men in their lives, who often perpetuate death while women are left creating life" (Tutu 2004a:49).

Women in the workplace are encouraged by Tutu to "… transform the institutions they are inheriting and to make them more humane and more just" (Tutu 2004a:49).

3.2.1.5. <u>Sexual orientation</u>

The gay communities in South Africa have won many legal battles in recent years, in the light of the rights of the individual that are protected by the South African Constitution.

The likely recognition of gay unions or civil partnerships by the state or the courts of law brings a contentious discussion and challenge to the church. Tlhagale points out that "The Church upholds heterosexual unions" (2003b:1). According to Tlhagale, "Such Gay unions would undermine the moral basis of heterosexual marriages. It would undermine the family, the very cornerstone of society" (2003b:1). The human rights culture, according to Tlhagale, favours and promotes the rights of individuals irrespective of their sexual orientation. (Tlhagale 2003b). Mofokeng agrees with Tlhagale that the legitimizing of, amongst other things, homosexuality, "… encourages the moral decay in our society" (2001:56).

Tutu, however, is of a different opinion. In responding to the question of if he could have one wish granted to reverse an injustice, what that wish would be, Tutu replied, "… for the world to end the persecution of people because of their sexual orientation, which is every bit as unjust as that crime against humanity, apartheid" (The Times, p 22). Tutu argues that "… we try to claim God for ourselves and for our cause, but that God's love is too great to be confined to any one side of a conflict or to any one religion. He contends that our prejudices, regardless of whether they are based on religion, race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, or anything else, are absolutely and utterly ridiculous in God's eyes" (Tutu 2004a:43).

On his own position Tutu says, "I could not have fought against the discrimination of apartheid and not also fight against the discrimination that homosexuals endure, even in our churches and faith groups" (The Times, p 22). For Tutu this is a struggle against discrimination against homosexuals and this struggle is a seamless rope. It is a seamless rope, as "Opposing apartheid was a matter of justice. Opposing discrimination

against women is a matter of justice. Opposing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a matter of justice" (The Times, p 22).

It is not only a struggle against discrimination against homosexuals, but for Tutu it is also a matter of love. "Every human being is precious. We are all, all of us, part of God's family. We all must be allowed to love each other with honour" (The Times, p 22). Of this love Tutu remarks, "Many, however, say that some kinds of love are better than others, condemning the love of gays and lesbians. But whether a man loves a woman or another man, or a woman loves a man or another woman, to God it is all love, and God smiles whenever we recognize our need for one another" (Tutu 2004a:47).

Tutu is very outspoken towards those who blame homosexuals for what they are. "Yet all over the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are persecuted. We treat them as pariahs and push them outside our communities. We make them doubt that they too are children of God and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy" (The Times, p 22). For him it is more than blasphemy as there are some countries that even make homosexuality punishable by death. Contrary to Tlhagale and Mofokeng's expressions on the issue of sexual orientation, Tutu maintains, "The Churches are not vocal enough in opposing these vicious injustices, while some Christians even encourage such persecution" (The Times, p 22). It is clear that the issue of sexual orientation will continue to be heatedly debated by the church.

3.2.1.6 <u>Sexual immorality</u>

Khathide has expressed the need for parents to speak openly with their children about sex. The fact that the HIV/AIDS crisis is totally out of hand can be ascribed to the fact that sex is a taboo subject. In urging for open talk on this issue, Khathide says, "I am hoping to break the silence. My message will raise crucial issues so that parents can start talking openly. Once we break the taboo of talking about sex, we will defeat the virus" (City Press b, p 5). Although Khathide is receiving lots of criticism for openly addressing public gatherings and issuing recorded messages in

which he candidly speaks on issues relating to sex (see City Press, p 7 and City Press a, p 5), Khathide maintains, "I am playing my role in society as a father and pastor because most parents, teachers and churches are turning a blind eye when it comes to educating their children about sexual matters" (City Press b, p 5).

3.2.1.7   Moral integrity

The church has a moral responsibility that is inspired by its whole existence.   "Entering the moral battlefield inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and in the name of moral re-generation presupposes a measure of moral integrity" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). This moral integrity "… presupposes fidelity to the moral teaching of the Gospel and to the discipline of the Catholic Church" (Tlhagale 2003b:1).

As a result of the revelations of sexual abuse committed by some of its clergy, the moral integrity of the Catholic Church has been brought into question. The outrage of the community is not only a reaction to the issue of abuse, but the "… community is outraged at such misdemeanour because clergy hold a position of trust in the community" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). The challenge for the Catholic Church is to take a close look at the moral make-up and conduct of its clergy, as Tlhagale states, "Our code of conduct for Church personnel is apparently not adequate" (2003b:1). Tlhagale comments correctly that the leaders of the church are being called to account publicly for the deeds of its clergy. "If Church personnel assault the dignity of others through sexual abuse [this will hold true of any other moral lapse], the public outcry is that the perpetrators be exposed to the wrath of the law and that the Church be held accountable" (2003b:1). Tlhagale points out that it can be expected from the media to echo the sentiments and revulsion of the public, and, therefore, it should not be surprising to see "The screaming newspaper headline about the 'church of shame' or the 'brotherhood of silence' (even though it may appear disproportionate to the actual facts)" (2003b:1).

It is of the utmost importance for the church to hold onto its moral integrity, because this is the expectation that the church has not only for its members, but also for other structures. "The Church cannot call upon the state and the private sector to be accountable and yet be perceived to be diffident when she is called upon to account for the clergy" (2003b:1).

The moral integrity of the church is also questioned when the impression is created that it covers up its shortcomings. Tlhagale's concern is that "Our reluctance or refusal to report such cases to the justice system will only perpetuate the perception of our being more concerned about scandal" (2003b:1). It is important for the moral integrity of the church that issues of moral lapse should be dealt with in a sensitive manner, but also transparently. Tlhagale states that "A close collaboration with statutory agencies is being called for in order to ensure that allegations of abuse are swiftly dealt with, victims supported and perpetrators held to account" (2003b:1). The same kind of transparency and accountability that the church as a moral watchdog demands from both the public and the private sectors is demanded from the church.

When the leadership of the church falls into a moral lapse, Tlhagale warns that "Confidence is undermined, suspicion and doubt promoted among the faithful and our moral integrity compromised as we seek to promote a culture imbued with moral values" (2003:1).

Tlhagale's evaluation of moral issues that the Catholic Church has to deal with is not an indication that the church is plagued with issues of immorality, but rather indicates the desire of the church to portray its moral integrity. Mofokeng expresses this same desire for the African Indigenous Churches when she maintains that "The African Indigenous Churches are well-known for their strong emphasis on strict moral observance" (2001:54). Moral integrity is of great value to the African Indigenous Churches. "In fact, what attracted African people to Christianity in the first place was the moral teaching in the Bible" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:54). It is not only the moral teaching of the Bible that forms the basis of moral observance in the African Indigenous

Churches, but the African culture also calls for a high moral value. Maluleke indicates a number of reasons for the moral decay that is rampant in our society.

The blame for moral decay, according to Mofokeng, can actually be laid at the feet of the missionaries who began to demonise everything African, including the African culture (2001:54). "The missionary onslaught on African culture destroyed the very foundation of our moral values and standards. Again it was our churches that provided the pillars of culture and the Bible on which to build a sound moral life" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:55). Further blame is laid at the feet of Western education as a contributor to the breakdown of morals in this country. "In its attempt to entrench Western civilisation, the educational system undermined and trampled upon African moral values" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:55). Western education divided people into educated and uneducated, civilised and uncivilised, black and white. The outcome of this was that "… when children became more 'educated' than their parents, the fundamental African relationship of authority whereby older people are obeyed and respected by younger people was undermined" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:55). This breakdown in respect can be observed in moral degeneration.

The moral degeneration that is happening in other parts of the world, although it cannot directly be held responsible for the moral decay in South Africa, does have an effect on our South African life. Mofokeng correctly observes, "Of course, the same moral decline [sic] is happening in other parts of the world, and this makes our problem worse, because we see so much of the violence and immorality on TV and films and videos and other media. This also has a powerful influence on our youth" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:55).

On the issue of the moral integrity of the church, Mofokeng points out that when moral lapse in the church occurs, the congregation deals with the situation. "If a member of the church later lapses into immoral behaviour, the congregation will call for prayer and fasting for that

member to ensure his or her return to proper moral observance" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:54).

Taking seriously the moral integrity of the church, Mofokeng can rightly call upon South African leaders and government to adhere to a high standard of leadership. Mofokeng expresses the concern of the church, "We as members of the African Indigenous Churches, are seriously concerned about the allegations of corruption among some of the leadership in the government we have chosen" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:56).

3.2.2   Health

3.2.2.1   Holistic approach to healing

As with moral integrity, healing is central to the teaching and practice of all African Indigenous Churches, for two reasons. One reason is that it is central to the teaching and practice of Jesus Christ himself. Secondly, healing is a very important part of the cultural traditions of Africa (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:32).

Healing is not only seen in the context of somebody who is ill, and needs to be rid of the illness, thus a mere physical healing. Mofokeng indicates that various kinds of healing are practised in the African Independent Churches. "God saves or heals the body, the soul, the society and even the land. God heals relationships between people, including our relationship with our ancestors. God can also heal us when we have been possessed by evil spirits" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:33). Mofokeng expounds this holistic view of the need for healing on the doctrine of the Fall. For this reason, Mofokeng maintains that "Due to the fact that everybody fell under the curse it became clear that the need for restoration of life was essential, and restoration would come through healing, holistic healing" (2001:33). Holistic healing, including issues of medical health, cannot be addressed only by medical doctors. For this reason, Mofokeng says, "Physical as well as spiritual health is of prime importance to everybody. Hence the need for spiritual healers and

medical doctors, both conventional and traditional" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:33).

Expanding on the need for both conventional and traditional methods of healing, Mofokeng argues that "Before the era of colonialism and Christianity the health of the people was attended to by a wide range of health workers: traditional doctors, herbalists and specialists" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:33). These partakers in the healing process were not only the qualified and known health workers. "Even ordinary people who were able to heal the common diseases were free to do so. Healing was decentralised" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:33). However, Mofokeng points out, "The most famous health workers of the time were the qualified traditional doctors – wrongly referred to by some people today as 'witchdoctors'. A witch casts spells and kills, a doctor heals" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:34).

The process of civilization and Christianity which were brought by colonisers and missionaries brought dramatic changes to the daily lives of African people, including their health. A number of factors came into play. Mofokeng points out that healing by the traditional doctors was suppressed and it was regarded as a disgrace to seek the restoration of one's health through their traditional ways of healing (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:34). The introduction of Western style medical doctors, nurses, hospitals, clinics and chemists brought its own kind of problems. The introduction of these institutions was not regarded as bad in itself, but Mofokeng's contention is the way they were introduced, as they brought many problems (2001:35). "Healing became something you had to pay for – in cash. If you had no money, you could not be restored to health" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:35). A further contention Mofokeng has is that healing in the Western context became a privilege granted to Christians only. "You had to become a Christian to benefit from Western medicine. Healing was administered and practised in such a way that it favoured whites and discriminated against blacks" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:35). In relation to the quest for a holistic healing Mofokeng indicates, that in this process healing lost its holistic character. "Also healing became something purely physical. Its spiritual roots and its

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relation to God and the work of the Holy Spirit were lost. Healing became something cold, clinical and scientific" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:35). "The Christianity brought by the missionaries divorced the salvation of the soul from the salvation, or healing, of the body. The healing of a sick society was not even considered. The focus was on saving souls from hell" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:35).

The African Indigenous Churches brought a new dimension to the African experience of health and healing. "We believe that this is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, who heals us in every way" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:35). Healing in these churches, although it usually takes place during their worship services is not confined only to the worship services, but it can happen anywhere and whenever the need arises (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:36). A holistic approach is always at the forefront for the health practitioner, whether conventional or traditional, as "At all times the concern of the healer in our churches is the spiritual as well as the physical health of our communities" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:36). In relation to the spiritual component of the healing, Mofokeng indicates, "Ceremonies of forgiveness and reconciliation are also conducted to ensure that healing is complete and holistic" (2001:36).

Not only is the healing holistic, but given the fact that the African Indigenous Churches are mainly made up of people in poverty, the cost factor is also addressed. "Because all this healing comes from the Holy Spirit, our healers, prophets and prophetesses always heal free of charge" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:36). Tlhagale warns us, however, that the contribution that traditional healers make to the health needs of South Africa can also easily be abused. "Today we do have nuns and some priests who claim to be traditional healers drawing strength from their role as priests and this makes you money. This troubles us. We urge you not to deceive people, not to exploit people" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). When this is the case, the principle of a holistic healing approach is undermined.

It is important to note that for the African Indigenous Church the relation to the spirit world cannot be divorced from the context of healing. "As

Africans we have always had a spiritual understanding of life and healing – whether we are thinking about the spirits of our ancestors or the Holy Spirit of God" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:37). Mofokeng acknowledges that healing sometimes comes through the spirits of their ancestors and the work of traditional doctors, just as it sometimes comes through Western medical doctors (2001:37).

Often societies are in need of healing. "A sick society suffering from poverty, oppression, prejudice, discrimination and over-indulgence cannot enjoy peace, happiness, justice, and forgiveness until the people confess their sin and repent" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:37). Mofokeng explains that "The demon of death must be exorcised and our people cleansed…" (2001:38). This demon of death manifests itself in "… political violence, the criminal violence, taxi wars, death on the roads, suicides, serial killings, rape, child abuse, prostitution and abortion. Our society is swimming in the blood of its own people. It is sick from the head to the foot" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:37).

3.2.2.2 <u>HIV/AIDS</u>

At the launch of a meeting of concerned parties in the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Tlhagale stressed that it was a virus that causes AIDS, not people, and our response was the concern for all (Diocesan News 2004a:1). For Maluleke the HIV/AIDS pandemic "… has ushered in a new *kairos* for the world in general and for the African continent in particular" (2001d:125).

Tlhagale is concerned that the world is in a sense numbed by the idea of AIDS, and the apparent inability to find a cure for the disease. "There is still a stubborn unwillingness, a refusal to come to terms with the reality of the disease, a refusal to recognise that AIDS is increasingly becoming a single cause of the disintegration of our communities and of the socio-economic fabric of society" (Tlhagale 2004:1). Tlhagale holds the view that the church would not be reluctant to get involved with the whole issue of AIDS, if we all firmly believed that AIDS is a destroyer of the gift of life. Tlhagale maintains, "… we would all lend a hand towards the

prevention of the disease, especially in view of the fact that a cure eludes the medical profession" (2004:1).

Ironically, AIDS is the very antithesis of life, says Tlhagale. "It renders the gift of sexuality suspect, the very gift that makes life possible" (2004:1). The church has a very important role to play and responsibility to carry in this AIDS pandemic. Maluleke, too, points out that the whole church has a responsibility in dealing with the AIDS issue. "While we in the church may *not* all be *infected*, we all *can* be infected and once one member of the body is infected we are certainly all *affected*" (2001d:125). For Tlhagale, intervention in the AIDS pandemic is consistent with the Christian message. "Christians are to disseminate the Good News, they are to be healers as their Master. It is therefore consistent with Christian calling to be courageous and generous in giving care to those with PWA (People with AIDS)" (Tlhagale 2004:1). The church is not just a place of worship, but also a refuge of healing and of friendship. "We therefore strongly recommend that each Christian community, each community of faith, each congregation, has a responsibility of sharing the burden of those with AIDS by being available, by accompaniment, and by giving care" (Tlhagale 2004:1). Where the church is absent in being there for and with people with AIDS, it is in fact an "… indictment of Christian communities - about their much vaunted claims of love of neighbour, of caring for the other" (Tlhagale 2004:1).

We are our brothers' and sisters' keeper. HIV/AIDS is putting this claim to the test. "Each congregation ought to account how it has responded in an ongoing manner to the AIDS pandemic" (Tlhagale 2004:1). In terms of accountability, Tlhagale feels that not only the congregations but also church leaders ought to hold each other accountable. The questions that Tlhagale asks are, "What do we and our respective communities do about caring and ministering to PWA? What do we do about healing our brokenness with visible and tangible compassion?" (2004:1).

Not only should the church be a companion to those who are suffering as a result of the virus, but the church can also go a long way towards

helping to remove the stigma from people suffering with AIDS. Often the church adds to the problem by its "… preoccupation with moral judgement, the temptation at passing judgement on PWA creates a serious problem" (Tlhagale 2004:1). The church should rather acknowledge the interplay of various values that are at stake. Tlhagale acknowledges, "There are values of fidelity, of self respect, of respect for the other. Values are foundational to any relationship" (2004:1). Tlhagale requests the church, not to be judgemental about people with AIDS. It is imperative that they rather help develop a solid sense of moral responsibility in relationships (2004:1).

Tlhagale encourages churches to take active steps in targeting the youth, especially young people who are not yet sexually active, "… by helping them to cultivate a positive attitude about themselves, their self-worth and by helping them to unlock the world of possibilities and dreams of who they possibly can become" (2004:1). Tlhagale continues to give a number of helpful hints in this regard (2004:1). In concluding with ways in which churches can assist the youth of the country, Tlhagale challenges the churches "… to adopt this positive goal of 'Love Life', avoiding teenage pregnancies, retaining pupils (students in schools) for the sake of their future. Teachers are to do more than teach but also form, develop human growth" (2004:1).

Tlhagale puts forward a call for all organisations that are genuinely committed to the elimination and prevention of HIV/AIDS, to collaborate in specific areas of common interest. 'Love Life' is a secular organisation that Tlhagale advises the church to find ways to collaborate with. "It is important too, to form on-going, committed and structured partnerships, which are clearly aware of ideological and theological moral differences, but are at the same time committed to a common goal of confronting HIV/AIDS headlong" (Tlhagale 2004).

The use of condoms to prevent infection with HIV/AIDS is for Tlhagale an area of moral conflict. Condom use is seen by the church not so much as preventing death, but as promoting sexual promiscuity among

the youth, thus undermining the values of self-restraint and the very sacredness of the Sacrament of Marriage (Tlhagale 2003b).

Maluleke is of the opinion that the AIDS pandemic has caught the church off guard. "My sense is that little in our theological training prepares us to combat this challenge meaningfully and constructively" (Maluleke 2001d:127). Referring to a lack of theological language for and within which to discuss challenges brought about by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Maluleke warns that "Failure to probe the theological significance of this moment will not only be a missed opportunity but will be irresponsible" (Maluleke 2001d:130). The church's apparent inability to effectively deal with AIDS can be seen in the fact that, notwithstanding some huge developments in African theological thinking, "… when it comes to the question of the challenge of HIV/AIDS, our theologians have been slow and silent – and we have reason to suspect that, differences from country to country notwithstanding, churches have been slow and quiet too" (Maluleke 2001d:131). "Maybe our silence in the face of AIDS is also because when faced with it we have to confront two issues which our modern churches and our inherited cultures, both Western and African, have been unable to handle openly and constructively; namely death and sexuality" (Maluleke 2001d:132). Maluleke calls for an effective and a viable HIV/AIDS curriculum for theological education. Such a curriculum will have to "… seriously engage both the educators and the learners in the hard and difficult discussion of theological, ideological, economic and cultural traditions and dogmas that shape the way we look at the world, ourselves and God" (Maluleke 2001d:133).

3.2.3   Reconciliation

3.2.3.1 Role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in reconciliation

In evaluating the effectiveness of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Maluleke indicates that even though there are numerous criticisms, of which some are valid and can be laid on the process of the TRC, these kinds of TRCs are helpful instruments

for peace-building. In an initial evaluation of the Truth and Reconciliation process, Maluleke holds the view that "… the TRC is the most particular, specific and potentially thorough instrument aimed at contributing to the promotion of unity and reconciliation in South Africa" (1997e:62). One of the pressing problems that Maluleke points out that the TRC has failed in, is that black South Africans, to a large extent, feel cheated in many ways. One of the ways Maluleke points out is that the TRC had the "… ability to grant amnesty while its weakest has been its inability to do anything concrete for victims of apartheid" (cf Maluleke1997e:66, 2001:192).

South Africa has given the world two examples. The one was apartheid and the effects thereof, and the other was the ending thereof and the transition to a democratic society, in which the TRC played an important role. Maluleke warns us, however, "… we must be cautious not to claim as a model either the South African transition from apartheid to democracy, or its attended TRC process" (2001b:195).

One important role-player in the reconciliation process, who is seemingly absent, is the church. Excepting that there are a few examples of the church, or at least individuals from the church, who were involved in the TRC process and similar kinds of reconciliation processes, Maluleke contends, "It can be argued that, in Africa at least, churches and Christian theology have not always played a reconciling role – and this despite the abundance of 'reconciling rhetoric' in many liturgical and doctrinal traditions" (Maluleke 2001b:197). One of the problems relating to the TRC is that the church lost a golden opportunity to be part of the reconciliation process as "… moments which give rise to TRCs – which often come during or after a political transition - are also moments during which Christian church organizations are their weakest" (Maluleke 2001b:197). Maluleke is further of the opinion that part of the reason why the South African theological community has been unable to accompany the TRC process critically "… is the fact that there is a discernible theological and ecclesiastical confusion in South Africa today" (Maluleke 1997e:78).

One of the confusions surrounding the TRC that has led to warranted criticism, is that there might have been too great an expectation of what the TRC could accomplish. Though Maluleke is correct in the assessment that "… there is neither historical nor compelling proof that human rights campaigns, nation-building exercises, excellent constitutions or very civil societies have led to the extermination of racism, sexism, and poverty …" (Maluleke 1997e:80), it can be contended that the TRC was not meant to accomplish all of that.

Maluleke points out that the TRC is loaded with Christian symbols, and that we should be aware that, for example, "… we should not equate 'full disclosure' with sorrowful Christian confession or the granting of amnesty with the Christian practice of absolution" (1997e:82).

3.2.3.2 <u>Nation building</u>

The problems facing South Africa are extremely complex. The notion of nation building is just as complex. One of Tutu's contributions in dealing with the issue of nation building is the well-used concept, namely the "rainbow nation". Tutu uses the analogy of a rainbow to explain the diversity of South Africans. This diversity is of the essence, but it is caught up in one nation. Tutu explains, "We have sought to point out that a rainbow is a rainbow precisely because it has different colors. We are a rainbow nation because of our diversity. We should celebrate our differences, we should affirm them because they make us need one another since it is clear none of us is self-sufficient. We need others in order to be human" (1996b:205). Maluleke indicates that the concept of a rainbow nation is not a simplistic one to achieve. "Tutu's vision of a 'rainbow nation' is a subtle modification of the idea of a united nation for it recognises some differences; but still, the rainbow is 'one thing,' not several things" (1997e:80).

"Though espoused as an ideal towards which South Africa is supposed to strive, the idea of national unity is both theologically problematic and difficult to put into practice" (Maluleke 1997e:80). One of the areas of difficulty for Maluleke in achieving aspects of nation building lies in the

differentiation between culture groups that we as South Africans have to deal with as an apartheid legacy. "Indeed, apartheid was the great simplification of a rather complex society" (2001b:193). "All whites were forced into a homogeneous 'white' block pitted against a similarly homogeneous 'black' block. However, in reality there was much more diversity and division among the ranks than the model of the two blocks pretends" (Maluleke 2001b:193). Even though these 'blocks' are not imaginary but real issues we need to face in grappling with the concept of nation building, Maluleke makes the important point that "… black South Africans need white South Africans and vice versa, and this should be accepted without the insinuation that the one group is more 'valuable' than the other" (2001b:193). Reconciliation will continue to be one of the cornerstones of nation building. What will it take, however, for blacks and whites to engage in the process of reconciliation? Maluleke's contention is that reconciliation should be an ongoing process. "My contention is that for the reconciliation process to be continuous, and for it to advance and plant itself into the very veins of a nation's life-blood, what is needed is a continued sense and reality of a constant *mutual dependence based on a more constructive and positive set of criteria* whose potency must be felt for a long time" (2001b:195). Maluleke cautions that we need to think more critically both about the precise ways in which we envision 'national unity', and about whether and how the notion is theologically sustainable (1997e:80).

3.2.3.3 <u>Reconciliation</u>

Holding true to what Maluleke argues in response to the TRC that "… there is neither historical nor compelling proof that human rights campaigns, nation-building exercises, excellent constitutions or very civil societies have led to the extermination of racism, sexism, and poverty …" (1997e:80), the question that needs to be answered is whether or not South Africans are able to move beyond the TRC, and from the wealth of their own inherent dignity move towards reconciliation.

Tlhagale challenges us to "reconcile differences of culture, race, rich and poor, to work for the common good and for the upliftment of all"

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(Diocesan news 2004b:4). For Mofokeng, confessing the wrongs of the past as done during the TRC and in confession exercises that took place in the atmosphere that the TRC created, "Confession without repentance and remorse is hollow. It is of no value to either the perpetrator or the victim. Only when the sinner apologises and asks forgiveness, can the victim forgive and healing begin to take place" (2001:38).

It is clear that reconciliation in South Africa will not take place only during emotional repentance and forgiveness exercises. Maluleke points out a number of obstacles standing in the way of reconciliation, and indicates that after the 1994 democratic elections and even the process of the TRC, there are still many rifts of different kinds in the South African population. One of the rifts he points out is "While a black elite middle class is emerging, the majority of black people remain in the same, if not worse, condition today" (2001b:192). The situation for the majority of black people has not improved as yet. "Poverty coupled with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world continues to be their lot. The notorious South African townships remain the 'reserves' of black people, with very little noticeable improvement in their infrastructure" (2001b:192). In contrast to this, according to Maluleke, "… whites continue to be the majority in the now very expensive white suburbs – living in the same old luxury they have been used to" (2001b:192). The majority of black people do not recognise this as reconciliation.

A further obstacle in the way of reconciliation that Maluleke points out is the issue of crime. He compares the crime as experienced by the 'white block' as different from that of the 'black block'. Of the 'white block', Maluleke contends that "The apparent increase in the crime rate in post-apartheid South Africa, while indeed alarming, especially to whites and foreign media, is in fact nothing new to black South Africans" (2001b:192). Of the 'black block', Maluleke argues, "Black urban townships have always been riddled with crime – and this happening in far less secure surroundings than the high security residences of post-apartheid white South Africa" (Maluleke 2001b:192). Giving a list of various reasons why crime seemed to escalate, Maluleke suggests that one of the reasons is "…the fact that the gap between the rich and the

poor is widening" (2001b:192). He contends that "Surely this situation has to do with reconciliation in the country. How can there be reconciliation while the gap between the rich and poor is not only widening, but also retaining its essentially racial nature?" (2001b:192).

For Tutu reconciliation can take place if we realise that we are all part of one family. "Equality is essential to human life and well-being,… God's dream envisions more than mere equality… God's dream wants us to be brothers and sisters, wants us to be family" (Tutu 2004a:21).

There will be disagreement in this family of God, as no family has total agreement about everything. "But those disagreements, pray God, do not usually destroy the unity of the family. And so it should be with God's family" (Tutu 2004a:20). Indicating that there will not at all times be unanimity or even consensus on every conceivable subject, Tutu explains what the attitude should be in this family. "What is needed is to respect one another's points of view and not to impute unworthy motives to one another or to seek to impugn the integrity of the other" (2004a:22). He continues, "Our maturity will be judged by how well we are able to agree or disagree and yet continue to love one another, to care for one another and cherish one another and seek the greater good of the other" (2004a:22). The expression of the attitude that Tutu reminds us to have for one another is extremely clear. It is, however, questionable whether this attitude can only be portrayed if every opposite is lumped into one family. The uniqueness of the Christian witness is found therein that the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ can be portrayed to all people even when they do not have the ability to call God Father, because of the same Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ indwelling their lives, thus living in different families.

Even if we don't agree with Tutu on the definition of this family, he does spell out a further important characteristic. "Another characteristic of this family is its willingness to share. The early church went so far as to have its members selling their property, each refusing to claim as his exclusive property what had belonged to him before. They had all things in common" (2004a:22). Tutu continues, "When the one part suffered,

the whole suffered with it, and when the one part prospered, then the whole prospered with it. There was a mutuality in the relationship in which all gave and all received" (2004a:23).

Tutu remains consistent in his approach when relating to one's enemies, as he holds to the same thinking in an interview conducted with him in 1989, when he stated, "… you accept the principle that, for example, you don't regard your adversary as an enemy but as a potential friend to be won over. You do not taunt people and you have a very profound respect for the law, which is why you obey God's law" (1989:64). Tutu reminds us, "Even our enemies are bound up in this bundle of life with us and we must therefore embrace them" (2004a:52). This begs the question of how we could embrace our enemies in such a way that the animosity would be buried forever, making it possible to live in peace and harmony. Tutu suggests that "True reconciliation is based on forgiveness, and forgiveness is based on true confession, and confession is based on penitence, on contrition, on sorrow for what you have done" (Tutu 2004a:53). Tutu puts forward the view that forgiveness gives us the capacity to make a new start. "That is the power, the rationale, of confession and forgiveness… [A]nd forgiveness is the grace by which you enable the other person to get up, and get up with dignity, to begin anew" (Tutu 2004a:54). It is crucial to be able to forgive, as the choise of not forgiving has negative results. "Not to forgive leads to bitterness and hatred, which, just like self-hatred and self-contempt, gnaw at the vitals of one's being. Whether hatred is projected out or projected in, it is always corrosive of the human spirit" (Tutu 2004a:54). Forgiveness, however, calls for action, and not only words. "But if the process of forgiveness is to succeed, acceptance of responsibility by the culprit is vital. Acknowledgment of the truth and of having wronged someone is important in healing the breach" (Tutu 2004a:55). The culprit may not be let off the hook. This is probably one of the criticisms of the TRC that weighs the heaviest. Tutu helps us, however, to understand how we should relate to perpetrators. He reminds us that even if somebody commits a diabolical act, we should not turn the perpetrator into a demon. "When we proclaim that someone is subhuman, we not

only remove for them the possibility of change and repentance, we also remove from them moral responsibility" (2004a:10).

For Tutu, reconciliation is not an exchange of words but, in the fullest sense, the rectifying of a wrong relationship. "True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking, but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end dealing with the real situation helps to bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing" (Tutu 2004a:55).

In the whole process of reconciliation, whether it is formal or informal, Tutu warns us that peacemaking and reconciliation are never completed. Reconciliation is built on trust. "Violence erupts in moments of hatred and rejection, but peace is created in long years of love and acceptance. Trust must be built over generations, but small, even symbolic acts – handshake – can make a great difference in humanizing former enemies" (Tutu 2004a:120).

3.2.3.4 <u>Ubuntu</u>

In the whole process of growing up, an African child learns "… to respect parents, elders ancestors, the clan, the nation and Almighty God. Thus the African child grows up in an atmosphere of sharing, caring, and togetherness rather than in the typically Western atmosphere of individualism and isolation" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:24). In this way the African is educated according to the essentials of *ubuntu/botho* or humanness. "**Ubuntu/botho** is the norm for everyone at all ages. It is passed on from one generation to the next. Without **ubuntu** we would be like animals" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:24).

This togetherness, humanness, or *ubuntu* cannot be explained in a single definition. In giving an explanation of what ubuntu is, Tutu explains, "The first law of our being is that we are set in a delicate network of interdependence with our fellow human beings and with the rest of God's creation" (2004a:25). In Africa, recognition of this

interdependence is called *ubuntu. Ubuntu* "… is the essence of being human" (Tutu 2004a:25). Tutu broadens the meaning of *ubuntu* by adding "… my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness; it speaks about compassion" (Tutu 2004a:26). Tutu (2004a:26) gives a number of characteristics of a person living with *ubuntu.* Such a person is

> … welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable, affirming of others, do not feel threatened that others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong in a greater whole. They know that they are diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. The quality of ubuntu gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them

Tutu's desire for the world, and especially for South Africans, is to live together harmoniously as members of one family. This family Tutu defines as the human family, but more so God's family (2004a:23). "If we could but recognize our common humanity, that we belong together, that our destinies are bound up in one another's, that we can be free only together, that we can survive only together, that we can be human only together, then a glorious world would come into being…" (Tutu 2004a:23).

3.2.4   The human agent in transformation

3.2.4.1 The role of laity

Tutu mentions a number of issues that will be dealt with as we act as transforming agents on God's behalf. The answer does not lie purely in the realm of politics, because these issues, although they relate to politics are vastly religious issues, as God's whole creation is religious. Leaders, but also every person, have the responsibility to act on the issues of our time (see Tutu 2004a:13-18). In the same vein, Tlhagale invites the lay people of the church to actively contribute to the strengthening of the moral fibre of South African society. Lay people are invited "…to strengthen each other, to incite each other to a more fervent Christian lifestyle. The Church invites you to renew the temporal order, to participate in the promotion of Christian and human values in society and to participate fully in the moral regeneration of our society" (2003b:1).

Tlhagale divides this invitation into a two-pronged one to lay people. On the one hand, the church needs the assistance of saints of the ordinary. These are lay people who "… sanctify themselves in the ordinariness of their daily relationships and daily activities, in the ups and downs of daily living and challenges" (2003b:1). Then, there are the lay people who carry out their lay apostolate in the "public square", as it were (Tlhagale 2003b:1). Of them Tlhagale says, "You are to bring to bear the positive influence of the values you embrace on the communities in which you live and work. As Christians, you are to strengthen the moral fibre of your families and of the society in which you live" (2003b:1).

This responsibility required from the laity is no different from that of the saints, clergy and religious. Referring to the teachings of Pope John Paul II, Tlhagale says, "… the holiness of lay people is not a second-class holiness to that of the saints, to that of clergy and the religious" (2003b:1). The Council of Vatican II indicates something similar, in the words of Tlhagale, "… that the vocations of both clergy and laity are distinct and yet complementary" (2003b:1). This distinction and

complementarity has not always been clear in the church, but the "… acceptance of lay people as equal partners in the work of the Church even though the roles of both clergy and laity are distinct, is extremely important for the success of the Mission of the Church" (Tlhagale 2003b:1).

The only way, Tlhagale maintains, in which the excesses of the human rights culture and the pervasive influence of secularism are to be confronted head on, is if the support of the Catholic laity is enlisted. "These challenges can no longer be seen as a task for the hierarchy alone nor relegated to laity because the hierarchy has failed to turn the tide. The spiritual and moral challenges demand that complementarity between clergy and laity be taken seriously" (Tlhagale 2003b).

Tutu's view is in agreement with that of Tlhagale. He maintains that God uses the human as agent to transfigure the world. "… we are the agents of transformation that God uses to transfigure His world" (Tutu 2004a:15).

These human agents who are working in the presence of God can often become lonely. Tutu urges them to see that they are not alone in their struggle for justice. "There are many of you who are working to feed the orphan and the widow. There are many who are working to beat swords into plowshares. There is hope that nightmares will end, hope that seemingly intractable problems will find solutions. God has some tremendous fellow workers, some outstanding partners" (2004a:18). Tutu reminds the laity that they are to remember that they "… are a moral agent, capable of creating a particular kind of moral climate that is impatient with injustice and cruelty and indifference and lies and immorality" (Tutu 2004a:123).

3.2.4.2   Leadership

In answering the question on who has the power to accomplish God's dream, which in essence is described as the opposite to the issues facing Africa, Tutu referring to individuals says, "We have the power.

Institutions or corporations or governments have no life of their own, despite what we typically think about bureaucracies. They are only groups of people. They are people like you and me, making choices, deciding whether to heed God's call or not, to accept God's proposal or not, to become God's partner or not" (Tutu 2004a:122). For this reason, the church needs to put forward leaders who will be able to assist corporations and government to become God's partners.

The people, including the church, hold certain expectations of such leaders. "True leaders must at some point or other convince their followers that they are in this whole business not for self-aggrandizement but for the sake of others. Nothing is able to prove this quite so convincingly as suffering" (Tutu 2004a:124). Tutu holds former President Mandela up as such a leader, who through suffering learnt how to lead, and calls on leaders to follow in his footsteps. Tutu poses the question about patience, "As we look forward at the evils that still await transfiguration, must we learn to be patient, to wait for twenty-seven years? Yes and no. Yes, we must have the calm assurance and patience that faith can give us. But no, we must not be patient with oppression, with hunger, and with violence" (Tutu 2004a:126). Calling for good, honest leadership, Tutu says, "The good ruler will redeem the lives of the needy from exploitation and outrage because their lives are precious in his sight. If you are not this kind of ruler, you are in trouble. You are in real trouble with God. Sometimes oppressors need to be reminded that they are not God. They are just ordinary human beings. Maybe they have a lot of power now. But watch out" (Tutu 2004a:126).

3.3   Political issues

3.3.1   Church and state relations

3.3.1.1   Effect of a secular state on religion

The church, to a large extent is still trying to find its feet. Prior to the 1994 dispensation, the church was, generally, comfortable in a Christian national style of government, but now has to come to grips with functioning in the context of a secular state.

An area in which the church needs to come to an understanding is the role of Christians in government or government-related functions. Maluleke points out an important factor that Christians should not be confused about, namely, that when Christians are serving in government positions, it does not mean that they represent the church in government. The TRC serves as an example of this. In debating whether the church was represented on the TRC, Maluleke says, "We must never forget that the TRC is a juridical entity with a political rather than a spiritual or theological agenda. To that end, all those appointed to it are appointed not by churches, nor to serve the cause of the churches…" (Maluleke 1997e:69). Maluleke further points out that church people make the same error when they assume that "Christian and churchly concerns are represented in the present South African government, just because we have many former church leaders in it" (Maluleke 1997e:69). Maluleke sternly warns Christians that they "… must face up to the challenges of witnessing in a secular state and stop deluding themselves by ascribing undue significance to the presence of prominent Christian leaders in government organs" (Maluleke 1997e:71).

3.3.1.2   Church response to government decisions

There are a number of areas in the South African Constitution, as well as decisions made by government and the courts that place the church in a dilemma. Tlhagale points out, "There are a number of vexing moral questions and practices that deviate radically from the moral teachings

of the Catholic Church" (2003b:1). We can refer to a number of these tensions caused by points of view of the church differing from that which is upheld by the state.

The "Rights of citizens, clearly going against the Church's own Teaching but upheld by the constitution or upheld by the courts in the light of the constitution, have brought into sharp relief the nature of the conflict concerning moral issues" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). One area is that of abortion. "The Catholic Church continues to feel not only extremely uncomfortable but is also opposed to the legislation on abortion. The Termination of Pregnancy Act has created a crisis of conscience for Catholic Health Workers" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). After the judgment made by the Pretoria High Court in which permission is given for girls to have abortions without the knowledge of their parents, Tlhagale, as spokesperson for the Southern African Bishop's Conference, delivered a strongly worded joint statement by the Conference. "The Catholic Bishop's Conference wishes to protest in the strongest terms possible the further erosion of the unsurpassable value of life as a result of a recent Pretoria High Court judgement." (Southern African Bishop's Conference 2004:1) In the same stern tone Tlhagale continued, on behalf of the South African Bishop's Conference, to address those who are in authority and who lay down the rules. "We cannot rule out the question of complicity in the evil of abortion with regard to those who make such laws or those who encourage sexual permissiveness and ignore the esteem for motherhood" (2004:1).

A further concern for Tlhagale is the likely recognition of gay unions or civil partnerships by the state or by the courts of law. Tlhagale says that in the light of the fact that the church upholds heterosexual unions, this likely recognition "… equally offers a political challenge to the Church" (2003b:1). The concern is that "Gay unions would undermine the moral basis of heterosexual marriages. It would undermine the family, the very cornerstone of society" (Tlhagale 2003b:1). This is a further example of the implementation of the human rights culture that is upheld by government.

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Mofokeng also has some stern words to say to the South African Parliament. "Unfortunately some of the laws passed by our new democratic parliament tend to encourage the moral decay in our society. We are speaking about the laws that legalise abortion, legitimize homosexuality and allow the publication of pornography" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:56). Mofokeng continues by holding the position that the church has the right to question the laws that are passed by Parliament. "Some members of our churches are law-abiding citizens. We respect the law, the constitution and our legitimate rulers. But that does not mean that we cannot question some of our new laws just as we questioned the laws of the past" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:56). It is clear that Tlhagale and Mofokeng at least are not silent or hesitant to address government when they feel that its decisions are not sound. This boldness in addressing government can be seen in the concern that Mofokeng raises with regard to the actions of some government officials. "We as members of the African Indigenous Churches, are seriously concerned about the allegations of corruption among some of the leadership in the government we have chosen" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:56).

If South Africans and the rest of the world have not been taking note that South African theologians are still speaking out and are taking up the issues that South Africa as well as the rest of the African continent are struggling with, everybody surely sat up straight after Tutu delivered his address at the Nelson Mandela Lecture in 2004. The reaction of the South African State President in his response to the address, as well as the multitude of reactions in the South African newspapers, give some indication that the world is still taking note of at least what Archbishop (emeritus) Tutu is saying. One of the core messages that Tutu referred to in his address was that South Africans are not making enough of their successes. "I have been saying that we South Africans tend to sell ourselves short. We seem to be embarrassed with our successes. We have grown quickly blasé, taking for granted some quite remarkable achievements and not giving ourselves enough credit" (Tutu 2004b:1). Tutu indicates that this lack of ability to give ourselves credit leads to despondency, "The result is that we have tended to be despondent, to

seem to say behind every ray of sunshine there must be an invisible cloud – just you wait long enough and it will soon appear" (Tutu 2004b:1). It is evident that almost no mention in reaction to Tutu's address was made about the positive side of his address, even though almost four of the five pages focused on the achievements of the South African nation over the last decade. Tutu did address a number of issues that touched on poverty, health and political issues. Mentioning the devastation of HIV/AIDS, he pointed out, on the positive side, the way in which many white South Africans are assisting in campaigning against the disease that is affecting mainly black South Africans (Tutu 2004b:4). Tutu mentioned some concerns with regard to the ruling government of the day (Tutu 2004b:4), and also pointed out the plight of the poor masses in the light of the increasing wealth of a few. (Tutu 2004b:5).

3.3.1.3 <u>Church taking on a political role</u>

The church is not only addressing government on specific issues, but from time to time the church also takes on a political role. Mofokeng points out that the African Indigenous Churches, due to their commitment to democracy, were involved in the struggle for liberation in South Africa. (2001:49). "Some researchers have accused the African Independent Churches of not being involved in South Africa's political struggle against apartheid. This is not true. Statements of this kind simply manifest the ignorance of these researchers – ignorance of our history and ignorance of the ways in which grassroots people were involved in the struggle" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:50). Even now, after the struggle, many of the African Indigenous Church members hold high positions in the local structures of their communities. Although they join these political organisations as individuals and not as churches, Mofokeng says, "Our churches encourage this. They teach their members to fight for their rights, to fight for justice and peace, because, as they know very well, there can be no peace without justice, and no reconciliation without peace" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:51).

On his own role in the political arena, Tutu says, "I was often criticized during the struggle to end apartheid for being 'political' and told by

people in and out of the church that our place was to be concerned with religious matters. But we were involved in the struggle because we were being *religious*, not political" (Tutu 2004a:64). Tutu maintains that "To oppose injustice and oppression is not something that is merely political. No, it is profoundly religious" (Tutu 2004a:63).

Although the church occasionally takes on a political role, there is no confusion between these roles. In his position as a church leader who's mantle, because of the situation of the day, has to a certain extent been characterised as a political cloak, Tutu says, "I certainly have said that I was an interim leader, and now these guys are here I move off the center stage. The goal is one: we all want to go ahead, and not let the people be confused about where the choices lie. Maybe we (in the church) need to say we have a dream, a vision, and you the politicians have a duty to meet it" (1993a:313).

3.3.2 Theology of the state

Maluleke points out that there is a need "… for the construction of an independent, prophetic and liberational theology of the state" (1997e:82). In the previous dispensation the church, to a large extent, collaborated with the state. This is a common event in many countries. Now that the country is not in a situation where the church is in collaboration or in opposition to the state, "This is the time to begin to systematically build such a theology or such theologies of the state – not a time to shy away from it because of some mistaken belief that we have less to worry about in relation to the present state" (Maluleke 1997e:83).

3.3.3 Human rights

Commenting on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Tutu says that during the period of apartheid's ghastly oppression, in which South Africans were made to suffer because of their race, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights served as an inspiration. Tutu says that "… these rights were God-given, they're simply and solely because we were human beings. They were universal, everyone, just everyone whoever

they might be, whether rich or poor, learned or ignorant, beautiful or ugly, black or white, man or woman, by the fact of being a human being had these rights" (1998a:16). From a Christian perspective, Tutu adds that "… each person was of infinite value because everyone had been created in the image of God. Each one was a God carrier and to treat any such person as if they were less than this was blasphemous, a spitting in the face of God" (1998a:16).

Having first hand experience of the value of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which served to inspire and to be subversive of injustice and oppression, Tutu encourages that "We must all, everywhere, commit ourselves to work for an ordering of society where the contents of the Declaration are embodied and also to remain forever vigilant against a violation of those rights" (Tutu 1998a:16). Tutu yearns for the day when "… people everywhere will enjoy the rights enshrined in the Declaration, when war will be no more, and universal peace and justice will prevail. When the lion will lie with the lamb and we will have beaten our swords into ploughshares and hunger, poverty and ignorance will have been eradicated and children can play safely and happily again" (Tutu 1998a:16). Christians must not view the concern for justice, righteousness, and equity as a political concern in which they have no responsibility. For Tutu it is a deeply religious concern. "Not to work for justice and peace and harmony against injustice, oppression, and exploitation is religious disobedience, even apostasy" (1990a:7).

Maluleke, although not negating the value of human rights, does, however, point out the problematic nature of the notion of universal human rights. He points out the reason why he perceives that such a notion is problematic. "However, it is at least problematic to speak of universal human rights – not only because European and American cultures, upon which the global craze for human rights is based, are not universal, but also because the presence of law and human rights bills do not necessarily translate into human dignity and prosperity, especially in the Third World" (Maluleke 1997e:81). In order to speak of human rights that have substance, we can conclude from Maluleke's comment

that they need to be relevant to the contexts in which they are expressed.

3.3.4   <u>Affirmative action</u>

Another area in which Maluleke holds that the church has a responsibility to make a valuable contribution is that of affirmative action. Notwithstanding the fact that general discussion on affirmative action is normally done according to foreign experiences, Maluleke points out, "The basic point of departure in South African affirmative action talk is and should be the struggle of Black peoples against three and a half centuries of White oppression" (1996c:307).

The same argument that Maluleke upholds with regard to human rights, he also consistently applies to the debate on affirmative action. "Basic to the many convoluted, passionate and yet indecisive affirmative action arguments is a failure to place affirmative action in its proper context – namely the context of the struggle of Black South Africans against White oppression" (Maluleke 1996c:307). Maluleke points out that if the dominant confines within which the current debates are being waged do not regard the affirmative action debate as being continuous with the Black struggle, it will be regarded as narrow and misplaced (1996c:307).

Affirmative action in South Africa should also be seen in the light of the bigger world in which affirmative action takes place. "The modern world is in a large measure the fruit of centuries of colonial exploitation and dispossession. Behind the grandeur of the modern world lie centuries of slavery and imperialist dispossession" (Maluleke 1996c:307). This kind of exploitation can also be regarded as affirmative action, yet it was not noble. "It was a callous, all-encompassing affirmative action in favour of White people, all over the world, justified by the declaration of huge sections of the human family to be savages without souls and beasts of toil" (Maluleke 1996c:308). This kind of affirmative action was not founded on the principle of a 'search for racial equality' nor on the commitment to 'reversing discrimination', therefore, Maluleke contests that "… unless we see current affirmative action talk in the context of the

less noble and ruthless 'affirmative activities' through which dozens of generations of South Africans were dispossessed, we will continue to misunderstand the issue at stake" (Maluleke 1996c:308). The basic question that should be asked in the discussion on affirmative action, Maluleke suggests is, "to what extent does affirmative action estimate and fulfill the objectives of the struggles that gave birth to it?" (1996c:309). Maluleke, therefore, calls for a viable programme of affirmative action that will be guided by a social analysis that goes beyond race, "… yet without jettisoning race as one of the analytical categories" (Maluleke 1996c:320).

3.3.5   Violence

A general perception of the African continent is that it is a violent continent. Some form of violence has affected many people on the continent, including South Africa. Maluleke rhetorically asks, "But then how many African countries do not have the problem of violence in one sort or the other?" (2001e:387). It is not only the role of the government or economic structures to find solutions to the culture of violence. The church with its message of hope has an essential and vital role to play in addressing violence. "So it seems to me that this is an area that African theologians cannot afford to ignore in this century" (Maluleke 2001e:387).

The issue that eludes us of effectively realising reconciliation in South Africa is also one of the causes that lead to violence. The uneven distribution of wealth will always lead to contention which, in its turn, is a breeding ground for violence. In expressing the uneven distribution of wealth, Maluleke indicates, "While a black elite middle class is emerging, the majority of black people remain in the same, if not worse, condition today. Poverty coupled with one of the highest unemployment rates in the world continues to be their lot" (2001b:192).

A further contribution to the potential of violence is the living conditions of the majority of people in South Africa. "The notorious South African townships remain the 'reserves' of black people, with very little

noticeable improvement in their infrastructure" (Maluleke 2001b:192). In contrast to this, according to Maluleke, "… whites continue to be the majority in the now very expensive white suburbs – living in the same old luxury they have been used to" (2001b:192).

Maluleke argues that the apparent increase in the crime rate in post-apartheid South Africa, while indeed alarming, especially to whites and foreign media, is in fact nothing new to black South Africans. "Black urban townships have always been riddled with crime – and this happening in far less secure surroundings than the high security residences of post-apartheid white South Africa" (Maluleke 2001b:192). Maluleke refers to the escalation of crime in South Africa as an apparent increase in crime, indicating that it might only be a perception that in reality is built on wrong assumptions or information. Maluleke holds the view that "… much of the alleged 'increase' in violent crime in South Africa may be due partly to (1) a greater awareness of crime due to better reporting; (2) a spillage of crime from black townships to previously 'untouched' white suburbs; and (3) the fact that the gap between the rich and the poor is widening" (Maluleke 2001b:192). As long as the issues of poverty are not addressed, the potential for violence or violent crime in South Africa will continue to exist.

Crime is not only something that blacks do to whites, and therefore something that occurs only in white suburban areas, as the tendency is to believe. However, as Maluleke indicates, "… millions of blacks are victims of crime. For a long time crime has been a significant variable in the township subculture" (1995d:167). Crime, says Maluleke, "… is always problematic because eventually it claims the majority of its victims amongst the disadvantaged – namely the blacks" (1995:167). Maluleke argues that studies of the causes of crime should continue, however, there is a void in such studies. "… I think far too little in-depth studying of the problem of crime is being done, at least from the side of the churches" (1995d:167). Because the wealthy are better positioned to insulate themselves from crime, to a large extent "township crime has preyed on poor, helpless and defenceless township residents" (Maluleke 1995d:168). "…the oldest and most common form of crime has been

'murder,' with people dying like flies, especially over weekends. Township crime is and has been therefore an assault on both human dignity and human life" (Maluleke 1995d:168). "Crime must not be trivialised to mean only the 'greed' and 'injustice' of the poor (against the rich). Broadly defined, even the often unscrupulous and exploitative conduct of business people, employers, government officials and politicians is criminal" (Maluleke 1995d:168). "Township crime must be understood as a variant of the larger criminal reality in South African society" (Maluleke 1995d:168).

Tutu adds another perspective to the devastating problem of violence. Pointing out the way in which the apartheid government dealt with its opponents and those who dared to criticise their evil policies, Tutu warns against the tendency for humans to copy bad examples. Referring to some of the events relating to black on black violence, Tutu states, "We copied a very bad example set to us by our apartheid overlords, that someone who disagreed with you was your enemy and the best kind of enemy was the enemy you had shut up or better still whom you had eliminated" (1996b:204). He continues, "What is so obvious seemed to elude us – that using force, intimidation or whatever to shut up someone who differed from you or who disagreed with you was already to concede that the case was not strong enough to stand on its own to persuade your opponent" (Tutu 1996b:204). Tutu concedes that we have learned a bad lesson only too well. "It is taking a while to make people realize that each of us is entitled to space – emotional, intellectual, physical space in order to be human" (1996b:205). This perspective of Tutu's is extremely important to note, especially when it boils down to cycles of violence. This can be seen clearly where children grow up in an atmosphere of especially domestic violence.

A further perspective that Tutu adds to the debate which indirectly affects South Africa in an extreme way, is the all too rampant occurrence of war, not only on the African continent, but also globally. In speaking on the various actions emanating from the USA in the light of the 11 September 2001 attack on American institutions, Tutu points out, "In today's moment of deep anguish over the war, it is important to

recognize the reasons for hope and pride, both in the United States and across the globe" (Tutu 2003a:11).

Tutu focuses our attention on the fact that though governments and groups take action, in general the average global citizen does not condone violence and is not in favour of war. "Never in history has there been such an outpouring of resistance from average people all around the world before a war had even begun. Millions took a stand" (2003a:11). Tutu favours this kind of resistance which he calls a "doctrine of moral and popular pre-emption", and urges that it must be sustained (Tutu 2003a:11).

3.4   Economic issues

3.4.1   Economic distress

3.4.1.1 Poverty

Of all the challenges facing the African church, poverty is the hub of the majority of issues that are causing destruction on the African continent. While many of the Western churches in South Africa are privileged not to find themselves in the grasp of poverty, and so many are often not even exposed to poverty, the average member of the African churches is not so lucky. Mofokeng expresses the economic state of those in the African Indigenous Churches, "The members of our churches are among the most oppressed and exploited. They are mostly uneducated and unskilled labourers – the ones who do the dirtiest jobs" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:51).

One should immediately caution that the church is not prompted to be involved in the eradication of poverty because it has church members in its community who are living in extreme poverty. The fact that the church exists and that poverty exists is sufficient reason, in the light of the church's very nature, for it to actively assist in the eradication of poverty.

Mofokeng points out that the leaders suffer the same fate as the membership of their churches. "In our churches those in positions of leadership are ordinary people just like the other members of the church. They live among the people and suffer like anybody else the consequences of oppression. They are often labourers living in townships, villages and squatter camps with the people who suffer" (Ngada & Mofokeng 2001:51).

Acknowledging the stark reality of poverty as a stumbling block in the way to reconciliation as well as a stimulus for violence, Maluleke brings a further perspective to the poverty issue. He points out that the township phenomenon has become a permanent feature of South African life (1995d:163). "The issues raised by this phenomenon are not only increasing in quantity but also becoming even more complicated" (Maluleke 1995d:163). Maluleke argues that these townships, including the increasing number of squatter camps that are growing at the fringes of the townships are not going to diminish but will continuously be the "… containers of the largest number of people in most South African cities" (1995d:164).

Townships have largely been neglected and avoided, not only by the authorities and also by whites who regard them as unknown places of terror, but also by blacks who for various reasons tried to "wash the township off their skins" (Maluleke 1995d:164). Maluleke gives four basic features of townships. Given these features, and that they understandably will be embedded not only in the minds, but also in the whole world view of black South Africans, it is to be expected that a bitter-sweet reaction will be called to memory when speaking of the place of devastation as home. "Townships are, firstly, a hangover from a typical colonial industrial revolution – a revolution built on exploitation of everything 'native' and 'local'. "Secondly, urban black townships, as reluctant successors of single sex compounds, are an aspect of a multifaceted programme of 'people control' and land dispossession. "Thirdly, townships were places of hiding, and even refuge, for many an 'illegal' black person hoping to find work and eventually strike it rich on the outskirts of the city's neon lights. "Fourthly, as time went by,

townships became 'home' to many people with a distinguishable culture and sense of history" (Maluleke 1995d:167).

Maluleke indicates some of the social features of township life. One of the most economically devastating social features is that of crime, which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Another social feature of township life is that of alienation. Residential racism has resulted in a huge discrepancy in relation to the total structure of the township in comparison to the white suburbs. Given the background of the lack of ownership of homes and intended 'temporary' living in homes in the townships, "… township residents never had a sense of ownership for their houses, the township at large and the city as such" (Maluleke 1995d:169). Not having ownership, they became alienated from the very places where they had spent most of their lives. Maluleke rightly asks the question "Is it possible that even the crime issue was made worse by the sense of alienation? Since this was not 'home,' was there a sense in which things could be done in the township which would be taboo back 'home' [referring to the homelands]?" (Maluleke 1995d:169) Maluleke argues that although "Alienation is indeed a general urban problem, not only in South Africa, but in the entire world" (1995d:169), it is, however, compounded by a unique reality, as Maluleke puts it, "It's uniqueness in black South Africa lies, I want to suggest, in its legal and racist historical basis" (1995d:169).

The irony of township living is that when black people speak about the city they can praise it, but they can also show contempt for it. This condemnation, according to Maluleke, is not purely condemnation of the city because of anti-urbanism, but for the very fact that "… it is and has always been the place of and for white people" (1995d:170). This state of alienation has given rise to the practice of exploitation. Maluleke rightly points out, "This context raises many serious issues for Christian mission – issues which perhaps could not be addressed meaningfully hitherto because they were not regarded as having a high priority" (Maluleke 1995d:170).

Maluleke sketches other features of township life that can in a sense be seen in a positive light, namely, the ability to rise to protest, creativity and innovation, and "… a culture of expensive taste for clothes and an excessive lust for whatever 'luxury' can be found" (1995d:171).

Maluleke brings to our attention that though townships are mostly urbanised, they have, to a large extent, remained rural. "Belief in the power of the herbalist and in the reality of the spirit world is very much alive among township folks" (1995d:171). Maluleke points out, however, "… much of what is rural in the township is not necessarily due to preference or even (its) perceived value. Much of what is rural in the township is a result of the fact that racism and capitalist exploitation have excluded black people from the 'benefits' of Cox's [referring to a discussion by Cox on urbanisation] urbanised secular city" (1995d:171). Of interest for the church is this important qualification in the discussion on the rural element in township life, "As long as township people remain excluded from the 'fruits' of the secular city – the rural element will have an upper hand, even in the church" (1995d:172).

The implication of Maluleke's evaluation of the township is that the church will have to re-examine a number of its theological assumptions, as well as to look again at its structures according to which it is functioning in the township.

3.4.1.2 Reconstruction

An area that is, in a sense one of the pillars of the current South African government, and which has largely caught the attention of the church, is the area of reconstruction and development. On the political front, Maluleke points out that "*Reconstruction, development and democracy* are fast becoming as integral to South African political language as the notions of the *struggle, revolution and liberation* used to be" (1994c:245). This reality of reconstruction as championed in the political realm "has helped to entrench reconstruction as an important concept in so-called 'progressive circles' including the churches" (1994c:246).

The fact that the liberal tradition is typically taking the lead in the proposal of a theology of reconstruction cannot be ignored. South African political reforms are basically taking their cues from these liberal traditions. Maluleke mentions a number of reasons why we should take cognisance of this fact, amongst which is a call to move away from resistance to reconstruction. This proposal for a shift from 'resistance' to 'reconstruction' "… must be understood within the context of a sustained rejection of black and African theologies of liberation by liberal theologians" (1994c:247). Maluleke points out that the South African political reforms have thrust liberalisms of all kinds onto the political and ecclesiastical centre stage (1994c:247). Maluleke questions whether a theology of reconstruction is free of any 'third way' tendencies (1994c:247). If a theology of reconstruction is merely a 'third way', meaning a 'third way' between two 'apparent extremes', then Maluleke says "… the ultimate objective of the theology of reconstruction is not liberation but merely the regulation of the process of liberation in the name of commitment to reconstruction" (1994c:247). Maluleke then poses the question, "…who are the real beneficiaries of this 'regulated' process of liberation?" (1994c:247).

Maluleke is of the opinion that although an increasing number of references to a link between theology and reconstruction are being made in South Africa, little systematic theological reflection has gone into it. Maluleke further indicates that the proposed theology of reconstruction is a kind of 'contextual theology' because "… the proposal for a theology of reconstruction is strongly based upon a particular 'diagnosis' of 'the present context' in South Africa" (1994c:248). It would be wrong, however, to assume that it is based purely on a South African context as the global context calls for a theology of reconstruction (Maluleke 1994c:249).

Maluleke expresses his doubts about the liberal influence in the discussion on a theology of reconstruction when he adds that "Although the proponents of a theology of reconstruction do not say this in so many words, it is clear that the essential context for reconstruction theology is the apparent global triumph of liberal democracy" (Maluleke 1994c:249).

The context in which the liberal discussion on reconstruction is taking place is a problem to Maluleke because as "… this 'dialogue' is not altogether irrelevant for Africans, it is essentially non-African in character" (Maluleke 1994c:250).

There is, however, also a positive side to the discussion of a theology of reconstruction. On the positive side "… a theology of reconstruction appears to have substantial biblical motifs to undergird it. Concepts such as reconciliation, repentance and forgiveness are important building blocks in this theology" (Maluleke 1994c:250). The central biblical motif for this new theology is "… the *'post-exilic'* experience rather than the *'exodus'*, as it was with various contextual theologies which formed part of the 'struggle' of resistance" (Maluleke 1994c:250). "The challenge now facing the churches is different. The complex options for a new South Africa require more than resistance. The church is obliged to begin the difficult task of saying 'Yes' to the unfolding process of what could culminate in a democratic, just and kinder social order" (Maluleke 1994c:250). The process of reconstruction needs to connect to the heart of the Christian being and the life of the African church. Maluleke refers to reconstruction theology as a missionary theology, "… a kind of 'programme' of Christian witness" (1994c:251). Reconstruction theology is not meant to be an academic theology, but it must engage in all the public issues of a democratic society (1994c:251). "It is perhaps in its missionary pronouncements that reconstruction theology appeals most strongly to a variety of churches, Christian groups and theologians" (Maluleke 1994c:251).

In the debate on whether the liberation theology of Africa was merely a 'No' that is now moving over to a theology of reconstruction that is merely a 'Yes', Maluleke reminds us, "African theology of liberation is not properly understood merely as a negation of Western theology. Nor can the praxis of the African Independent Churches any more be seen in terms of a *reaction to* or a *negation* of Western churches" (Maluleke 1994c:252). A proper understanding of a theology of reconstruction can act as a catalyst in drawing the Western and African churches closer to each other in South Africa.

3.4.1.3 <u>Development</u>

Listing a number of the disastrous events of the last few centuries, some of which occurred despite the world's technological advances, Tutu says, "There seems to be enough evidence to cure us of the arrogant and dangerous delusion of automatic progress" (Tutu 2004a:114). Our 'automatic progress' has failed to make a difference in the basic needs of billions of people trotting this globe, including the majority of those living in Africa, and even South Africa. Our technological advancement has become an end in itself, and seemingly we have not aquired the ability to effectively utilise it for the good of mankind. "Sometimes our technological expertise has seemed to top our moral capacity to use this expertise for the good of humanity. We have a capacity to feed all and yet millions starve because we seem to lack the moral and political will to do what we know is right" (Tutu 2004a:114).

Touching on the way in which developments are approached, Tutu has a strong word for leaders. "Of course you must have leaders who are willing to take risks and not just seeking to satisfy the often extreme feelings of their constituencies. They have to lead by leading and be ready to compromise, to accommodate, and not to be intransigent, not to assert that they have a bottom line. Intransigence and ultimatums only lead to more death" (Tutu 2004a:118).

One of the ways in which development can be encouraged is through the pardoning of the debt that so many poor countries owe to wealthy countries and institutions. Responding to the question of what it would be if he was granted one wish to reverse an injustice, Tutu responded, "… for world leaders to forgive the debts of developing nations which hold them in such thrall" (The Times, P 22).

3.4.1.4 Donor stress

"When we look around, we see God's children suffering everywhere. The poor are getting poorer, the hungry getting hungrier, and all over the world you see many of God's children suffering oppression." (Tutu 2004a:66).

When we are constantly confronted with this picture sketched by Tutu, and seemingly the global situation is getting worse rather than improving, Tutu warns us against what he terms 'donor fatigue and 'God's partner fatigue' Tutu says, "When we look squarely at injustice and get involved, we actually feel less pain, not more, because we overcome the gnawing guilt and despair that festers under our numbness. We clean the wound – our own and others'- and it can finally heal" (Tutu 2004a:68).

3.4.2 Economic abuse

3.4.2.1 Capitalism

One of the characteristics of *ubuntu* is that "… it is not a great good to be successful through being aggressively competitive and succeeding at the expense of others" (Tutu 2004a:27). The opposite, however, seems to be one of the characteristics of capitalism that often comes to the fore.

Not negating the successes of modern society, Tutu holds the view that modern society has achieved much through individual initiative and ingenuity. Tutu suggests that we should commend these efforts, but warns, however, that the cost of achieving these was too high. Not only has it, says Tutu, "… permitted a culture of achievement and success to evolve, assiduously encouraging the rat race mentality", but also "The awful consequence is that persons tend then not to be valued in and for themselves with a worth that is intrinsic" (2004a:29).

Tutu reminds us of the intrinsic value of each human being when he says, "The Bible places human beings at the center of the divine

enterprise as creatures of infinite worth and dignity independent of our work, our ability, or our success" (2004a:34). This worth "… is intrinsic to who we are, depending on nothing extrinsic whether it be achievement, race, gender, or whatever else" (Tutu 2004a:34).

Tutu contends that "The capitalist culture places a high premium on success, based as it seems to be on unbridled, cutthroat competitiveness. You must succeed. It matters little in what you succeed as long as you succeed. The unforgivable sin is to fail. Consequently it is the survival of the fittest and devil take the hindmost" (Tutu 2004a:35). When you perceivably do not achieve in the eyes of the beholder, you are regarded as a failure. "Our capitalist society despises weakness, vulnerability, and failure, but God knows that failure is an inevitable part of life and that weakness and vulnerability are a part of creaturehood" (Tutu 2004a:37). Tutu starkly reminds us that the gas chambers of Nazism which we all abhor "… were the ultimate product of a philosophy which despised the 'weak' and admired the 'strong'" (2004a:39). A result of placing this value on highly driven success is manifested in the fact that we tend to "… treat the weak, the poor, the unemployed, the failures with disdain…". This world of success has made us harsh with very little space for compassion. "We have tended to be embarrassed by compassion and caring as things that were inappropriate in the harsh, callous world of business" (Tutu 2004a:37).

Tutu questions, when we count the actual cost of the harsh, callous world of business, whether it is worth all the effort. "Western capitalism has produced a great deal of wealth and prosperity, but have we computed the cost? Has it not perhaps been a Pyrrhic victory with countless casualties in the unemployed, the homeless, and the poor" (Tutu 2004a:37)? Not only does this form of capitalism lead to casualties such as unemployment, homelessness and poverty, but it also demonises the view the so-called failures have of themselves. "A great hardship that occurs from capitalism's endless desire to make hierarchies of worth and human value is that it inevitably generates self-hatred" (Tutu 2004a:40).

3.4.2.2 Selfish intentions

A concern is the seeming inability to share or to look out for one another's needs. Tutu says that if we can learn to emulate a true family, perhaps then "… we could address the injustices that cause a small percentage of our world to consume the vast majority of its resources… while the vast majority lives in poverty" (2004a:23). It is not only a style of living that the wealthier components of society emanate, but they also create at least the impression of selfishness.

It is also the threat of destruction that indicates that power struggles are more important than the needs of the poor. These power struggles, for whatever reason, but often for selfish motives, can be seen in the equipping of governments with military arms. Tutu expresses that "It is a religious imperative to be concerned about the arms race, about the threat of nuclear holocaust when we spend obscene amounts on budgets of death and destruction" (Tutu 1990a:7). A fraction of the money spent globally on these methods of destruction could go a long way in ensuring that people everywhere "… had a decent family life, with adequate housing and a clean supply of water, enough food, satisfactory education and health services in a community that ensured that children would not die prematurely from easily preventable diseases such as kwashiorkor, pellagra, TB, diphtheria, measles, and so forth" (Tutu 1990a:7).

We should strive to overcome all forms of selfishness and work towards a society "… where people mattered more than things and profits, where cooperation and working together were at a premium and harsh competitiveness and horrendous self aggrandizement were frowned on" (Tutu 1990a:7).

3.4.3 Environment

The environment is also central to the debate on the economic challenges we are facing. As an example of how poorly we are looking

after creation, Tutu says, "It is sacrilegious to be so wantonly wasteful of God's creation, using up irreplaceable fossil fuels as if the supply were endless" (1990a:7). Environmental questions should not only involve debates on securing a future on the planet for all, but also how the exploitation of the planet is affecting the multitudes living in poverty. Just as it is becoming clear that humans are made for interdependency, Tutu comments, "The world is also discovering we are made for interdependence not just with human beings; we are finding out that we depend on what used to be called inanimate nature" (Tutu 2004a:28).

In the human's response to creation, Tutu refers to the demand that the Bible places on the human being to take responsibility for the environment. "The Bible also tells us of our relationship to the rest of creation and the sacredness of God's creation, all of it in its glory and its physicality. We are stewards of all this, and so it is not to be involved in a passing fad to be concerned about the environment, about ecology" (Tutu 2004a:28).

As the term 'dominion' has often led to a wrong interpretation of the word, Tutu clearly spells out what is expected of the African church when it also takes up its responsibility of dominion over the earth. "The dominion we were given in Genesis 1:26 was so that we should rule as God's viceroys, doing it as God would – caringly, gently, not harshly and exploitatively, with deep reverence…" (Tutu 2004a:28).

As we seek to make the earth more humane and 'user friendly', Tutu spells out a number of concerns that the church needs to take up as mission priorities. "It is a religious task to be concerned about ecology, about the purity of the air and water, about damage to rain forests and the ozone layer, about the greenhouse effect, about threatened species (both fauna and flora)" (Tutu 1990a:7).

CHAPTER 4

CHALLENGES FACING THE CHURCH IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY

4.1   <u>Introduction</u>

After ten years of democracy in South Africa, it has become clear to most South Africans that many demographic changes have taken place. South Africa is probably now just as much a pluralistic society as any other place in the world. The African church will now have to evaluate its existence in the light of a multi-religious society.

After being the dominant religion in South Africa for centuries, and now being exposed to other religions in a new way, the African church will rightly have to ask itself questions about religious tolerance. One approach to dealing with religious tolerance is by viewing everybody as one family as we discuss issues relating to an inclusive versus an exclusive approach. Does fate, for example, make one religion more valuable than another? In this discussion we are reminded of the value of people of all religions. Although we should not shy away from our various distinctions in the variety of religions, we should also find ways of working together on issues affecting us all.

When looking at issues of religious extremes, we are cautioned to avoid religious activism. Even religious states and the concept of religious freedom can add their fair share of intolerance between various religions.

One religion in South Africa that is often overlooked, or when not overlooked is seen as a target to proselyte, is the Africa Traditional

Religions. We speak of the value of religions, therefore, we should find a way to dialogue with them, as they are also a legitimate religion.

4.2   Religious tolerance

4.2.1   Inclusivism versus exclusivism

When speaking on the relationship between the various religions in South Africa, Tutu is of the opinion that we should follow an inclusive rather than an exclusive approach. Tutu builds his argument on a segment of the creation story, and expresses a statement as if God would say, "… My children will know that they are members of one family, the human family, God's family, My family" (2004a:20).   Tutu continues to define who this family is. He says, "In God's family, there are no outsiders. All are insiders. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistani and Indian – all belong" (2004a:20).

Tutu points out that the Bible, when referring to Jesus, does not speak only in exclusive terms, as those who hold an exclusivist view will point out. "But is this all that the bible does say, with nothing, as it were, on the side of inclusiveness and universality, and does the exclusivist case seem reasonable in the light of human history and development?" (Tutu 1992b:126). In this sense, according to Tutu, the other side of the coin so to speak, inclusivity and universality language combined with human history and development weigh more than the exclusive language that is also found in the Bible. He continues by saying that "Fortunately for those who contend that Christianity does not have an exclusive and propriety claim on God, as if God were indeed a Christian, there is ample biblical evidence to support their case" (1992b:126). Tutu then argues from a number of Scripture portions which can be interpreted as inclusive. Of the creation, Tutu says, "And how is it possible for God to have created human beings, all human beings, in His own image and not have endowed on them all with some sense, some awareness, of His truth, His beauty and His goodness? If the opposite is asserted, it

would call in question the capacity of the creator" (Tutu 1992b:127). There is no doubt that all have been created in the image of God, and Tutu would be correct in asserting that "The Bible, as we have seen, asserts what seems the reasonable position – that all God's human creatures in some sense have a divine hunger …" (Tutu 1992b:127).

In responding to those who hold an exclusive view, Tutu says, "To claim God exclusively for Christians is to make God too small and in a real sense is blasphemous. God is bigger than Christianity and cares for more than Christians only" (Tutu 1992b:127). This view in itself is correct, as God according to the biblical data does care for all of His creation. Could we, however, agree with Tutu when he continues, "It is surely more acceptable and consistent with what God has revealed of his nature in Jesus Christ, and it does not violate our moral sensibilities, to say that God accepts as pleasing to him those who live by the best lights available to them, who are guided by the sublimest ideals that they have been able to discern" (Tutu 1992b:128)? On the one hand, we can be in agreement that humans cannot live in any other way than the best light available to them. We however, need to differ from Tutu according to the view that this is not consistent with what God has revealed in Jesus Christ. It would be more true to God's revelation in Jesus Christ that Jesus, according to the gospels, makes a number of exclusivist statements. This would also be true of the epistle writer's interpretation of the message of both the Old Testament and their knowledge of Jesus' teachings. Tutu's comment as expressed in the words, "It is no dishonour to God for us to claim that all truth, all sense of beauty, all awareness of and after goodness, have one source and that source is God, who is not spatio-temporally defined, confined to one place, time and people" (Tutu 1992b:128), in the light of creation would be acceptable, as all creation has its being in God who freely created.

A number of comments need to be made on this discussion of inclusivism versus exclusivism. There are certain theological premises being challenged in what Tutu expresses as God's family. His interpretation of the creation story, on which the premise of 'one family' is based, leaves out an essential part of the creation story, and that is

the Fall. This has pertinent implications on the 'one family' theory. The question of special revelation, including the Bible and Jesus Christ, and general revelation and the implication of those become relevant to this discussion. We would further need an explanation on how to deal with exclusivist statements in the Bible. We cannot merely ignore them as if they do not exist, or as if they were merely incorrect assertions of the authors in terms of their own theology, or their interpretations of the message of Jesus Christ. On a structural level it is not always clear what Tutu's purpose is of lumping everybody into one family. If it is purely to indicate that we are all part of creation and, therefore, God's eternal love for us wants us to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ, and for that reason every person should be treated as having intrinsic value and should be respected as such, we could be in agreement. My assumption is that this would also be Tutu's conviction (see Tutu 1992b:128). If it, however, means that every person can determine their own destiny by purely following the best light that is available to them, the incarnation of Christ, His person and ministry as expressed in the Bible would make no sense.

By including all opposites as family of God we must be reminded that these members of this family were created with moral choice, and it is not a given that everybody in this family will work as God's agents to bring God's dream to fruition.

The value that Tutu places on inclusive approaches in the Bible should, however, not be ignored. We would be in agreement with the outcome of Tutu's desire, and that is that all religions or faiths should be treated equally and with respect. His hope is expressed as he states, "I hope I have done enough to convince diehard exclusivists that the Christian cause is served better by a joyful acknowledgement that God is not the special preserve of Christians and is the God of all human beings to whom he has vouchsafed a revelation of his nature" (1992b:129). We can all be urged to be tolerant of other religions and not treat them from a superior position, as we are all dependent on the grace of God.

4.2.2 Question of fate

In debating the question of inclusivism and exclusivism, Tutu approaches it from an ethical standpoint on fate when stating that "We have to be reminded too that the faith to which we belong is far more often a matter of the accidents of history and geography than personal choice" (1992b:128). Tutu continues by giving an example of how fate can determine people's beliefs. "If we had been born in Egypt before the Christian era, we would perhaps have been worshippers of Isis, and have we been born in India rather than South Africa, the chances are very considerable that we would have ended up being Hindu rather than Christian" (1992b:128). At best, we can agree with Tutu saying that "It does seem to me that it is worrisome that so much should be made to depend on the whims of fate, unless it is to make us more modest and less dogmatic in our claims" (1992b:128). If anything, this perception of fate should drive us to modesty and, therefore, all the more recognise our responsibility as co-workers in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Tutu's further remark on what is referred to as fate, can also be understood in the theological context of election. "God cannot want people to be Christians and then seem to stack the odds so very considerably against them and to proceed to punish them for their failure" (1992b:128). This thought is just as incomprehensible as biblical statements where certain choices are made in favour of one against the other. At best, we can only comment that we do not have answers to these questions.

4.2.3 Value of religions

Now that South Africa has opened to the rest of the world, we are more and more being exposed to and living with a vast array of foreign cultures, and to a large extent, also religions. "We are being taught how to live with a bewildering but glorious plurality of peoples, cultures, faiths, and ideologies in a world that is shrinking rapidly into a global village where we are all neighbours" (Tutu 1990c:7). One of the lessons that we should learn is how to value people of other religions. "Earth should be a place where each is recognized as a person of infinite worth with inalienable rights bestowed by God, their Creator – where race, culture,

religion, sex, and nationality are not used as means of denying some access to the resources God has made available to all" (Tutu 1990c:7). Tutu says that all things that emanate from other religions should not be frowned upon because they are not Christian. For example, he argues, "Would we assert that what Mahatma Ghandi did was good but it would have been better had he been a Christian?" (1992b:128). The value of Tutu's 'one family' approach comes to its full right when he expresses his desire for Christians to value people of other religions. "How I pray that we will open our eyes and see the real, true identity of each of us, that this one is not a white or a black, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, or Jew, but a brother, a sister and treat each other as such" (Tutu 2004a:23).

4.2.4   Acknowledgement of distinctions

In his endeavour to explain that the whole of creation is one family and belongs to the same God, Tutu does, however, come to the conclusion that "To acknowledge that other faiths must be respected and that they obviously proclaim profound religious truths is not the same as saying that all faiths are the same" (1992b:128). Tutu continues to explain the unique role and responsibility that Christianity has. "We who are Christian must proclaim the truths of our faith honestly, truthfully and without compromise, and we must assert courteously but unequivocally that we believe that all religious aspirations find their final fulfillment in Jesus Christ" (Tutu 1992b:128). It is, however, important for the African church to afford this same right of expression to people of other faiths. "But we must grant to others the same right to commend their faith and hope that the intrinsic attractiveness and ultimate truthfulness of Christianity would be what commends it to others" (Tutu 1992b:129).

4.2.5   Ways of working together

Taking the previous discussion into account, it should be possible for people of different religions to work together. Referring to the time of apartheid, Tutu maintains, "We should have been able as we pointed out at the beginning to walk arm in arm with adherents of other faiths in the

cause of justice and freedom when fellow Christians vilified and opposed our witness" (1992b:129).

One area in which Tlhagale took practical steps to indicate how Christians can work together with people of different faiths, can be seen where he, in his role as Archbishop of the Johannesburg Catholic diocese, together with Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, representing the Jewish community in South Africa, in a joint press release criticised what they saw as problems in the film, *The Passion of the Christ*. They referred to part of the storyline that "… was negative, and could undermine the strong Jewish-Catholic working relationships in South Africa and fuel anti-Semitism" (Saturday Star, p 2). In this joint statement they also expressed "… concern over the acts of brutality and extreme cruelty in the film, saying this was more reflective of the obsession with violence in modern-day popular culture than with traditional Judeo-Christian teachings" (Saturday Star, p 2).

In an attempt to assist government to effectively address the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS, especially in the area of proper education relating to it, according to Tlhagale the need was expressed to make a statement and enlist other religions to focus on and provide alternatives. The argument was that if the various religions could work together, "… we could be a good voice to persuade the government to react and offer a strategy for education" (Diocesan news 2004b:1).

4.3   Religious extremes

4.3.1   Religious activism

Not much is said by the theologians chosen for this study on the place of religious activism. Tutu, however, warns us against religious activism, and it is most appropriate to bring it into this study as we continue to see a growth in this area, although it does not affect the African church in South Africa at this stage, "… activism based on religion, in and of itself, is not necessarily a good thing. It has been religious fanatics who have done some of the greatest damage in the world; many of the world's

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wars have been sparked or exacerbated by religion; and a great deal of the prejudice and tyranny in the world today has a religious base" (Tutu 1992a:40).

4.3.2   Religious states

Tutu addresses the issue of whether it is even possible to make a choice between a secular and a religious state. He points out a number of examples to indicate that religious states, and more specifically, so-called Christian governments, have not faired better than non-religious states. Of the examples that come to us from European history, Tutu states, "When we look at the history of Europe, we are appalled at how supposedly Christian countries were constantly at one another's throats. Right up until our time you could say that the annals of Western Christian civilisation are written in gory letters of blood" (1992b:125). In view of the fact that South Africa has always been referred to as a Christian country, Tutu points out contentions in what defines us as a Christian country. "If it means that the majority of the population is Christian then I can have no quarrel with that description… But I suspect that those who are fond of this appellation mean to convey that our country has something distinctive about it which would contrast it with say, a Muslim or Hindu country" (1992b:124). Even referring to a Christian country, *per se*, has implications, as Tutu further points out different emphases on Christianity when he says, "Christianity is decidedly pluriform in beliefs, in worship and expression" (1992b:125). For Tutu it does not appear to be advantageous for a country to have a religious tag attached to it. "Almost always the adherents of the particular dominant faith in that country fall disastrously short of the high ideal of their professed faith, which tends to be brought into disrepute by its association with the state in such an intimate way" (1992b:125).

A few comments also need to be made with regard to a country where religious freedom seems to be valued. Given the fact that South Africa has always held to the principle of religious freedom, it was quite clear in practice that all religions did not share equal privileges. "… we engage in little empathy to understand what people of other faiths must endure

every day here in South Africa. I believe we are disobedient to our Lord's injunction that we should do to others as we would they did to us" (1992b:124). Tutu contends that the religious freedom that South Africa experienced in the apartheid era was theoretically only freedom of worship, and not freedom of religion. "This means that people are free to express their religious affiliation in the manner appropriate to that faith. Nobody is persecuted in an overt way for not being Christian or for profession of atheism or agnosticism. And yet it is obvious that Christianity enjoys very many privileges denied to other faiths" (Tutu 1992b:124). Tutu's basic points are well taken. Christianity, in the previous government dispensation, did unfairly receive many privileges that were not as accessible to other religions as they were to the Christian church.

Many questions can rightly be asked about the validity of a Christian state. Therefore, we agree with Tutu's closing statement that "It is far better for all concerned that we should have a secular state rather than one in which one religious faith has privileges which are denied to others" (Tutu 1992b:129).

These two issues addressed by Tutu did not fall on deaf ears, and we do now have a dispensation of a secular state with religious freedom soundly entrenched in South Africa's Constitution. It does, however, come with difficult implications that need to be worked through. Tlhagale points out a potential area of tension that "… concerns the promotion of the Catholic ethos in public schools on private property. The government is concerned about the teaching of a particular religion and prayer practice that might infringe on the right of the minorities in such schools" (2003a:1). There are obviously a number of similar issues that the African church will need to deal with.

4.4   Relation of foreign religions to Africa Traditional Religions

An area in the discussion of the relationship of the various religions in South Africa that have seemingly gone unnoticed, which Maluleke points out, is the plight of the Africa Traditional Religions (ATRs).

Maluleke argues that in the 'new' South Africa, given the dawn of the new interfaith, multi-faith, and multi-religious initiatives, the current calls for religious tolerance, interfaith dialogue and the criticism of the 'religious apartheid' of 'triumphant academic Christian theology' must be acknowledged (1998a:121). If these are ways of catering for the minority religions in South Africa, Maluleke poses the question of the place of African Traditional Religions in this discussion.

Maluleke maintains that taking into consideration the traditional religions that Africa has of its own, the "invading world religions" should not just assume that Africa is willing to be host to them. "In her own way, Africa is raising fundamental questions – especially on the invading world religions like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism" (1996b:16). Maluleke contends that these religions owe Africa an explanation. "Rather than (continue to) exploit and simply assume Africa's hospitality, these religions must argue their case. Why must Africa continue to be host to them given the tremendous problems and ambiguities associated with their presence in Africa?" (1996b:16).

Maluleke continues, "After all Africans do have a vibrant religious life outside of and independent of the so-called major world religions. In other words Africans do have answers to life's most vexing questions which are independent of Christianity or Islam" (1996b:16).

Maluleke holds the view that in the light of the imposing religions, the African Traditional Religions have become a minority, and in a sense they are perceived as hardly existing. "Nor have ATRs received any direct and focused attention from the more than a decade old South African Chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP)" (Maluleke 1998a:122). African Traditional Religions have not only been dismissed in the history of Western Christianity's contact with Africa, but they "continue to be silenced and excluded from current religious discourse in many ways" (Maluleke 1998a:122).

Maluleke points out that there is a tendency in South Africa in both Christian scholarship and official censuses to depict black South Africans only and mainly as Christian (1998a:122). Africa Traditional Religions, however, have not disappeared off the face of the continent. "ATRs are thriving in South Africa as indeed they are in the rest of the continent. They exist inside and outside Christianity, inside and outside Islam – and in the process, they are radically altering the faces of both Islam and Christianity" (1998a:123). Yet, even though aspects of the African Traditional Religions can be noted in the main religions, they also maintain a resilient and independent existence apart from Christianity. (Maluleke 1998a:123). In an evaluation of the work of p'Bitek, Maluleke advises that "His challenge for Africans to study ATRs without a view to proselytism and evangelisation is valid – but one which African scholars and their missionary cohorts appear unable to meet" (1998a:129).

CHAPTER 5

FINDING

In this study, I have examined what some South Africans are saying with regard to a number of challenges that are tearing the African continent apart. It is generally remarked that after the end of colonialism and apartheid, times during which at least segments of the church were very vocal, the church has now become silent. In the problem statement in chapter one of this study, I expressed the opinion that in addressing issues relating to colonialism and apartheid, other vastly important issues were overshadowed, and now that those issues are being addressed, they are done so as part and parcel of the legacy of apartheid. My opinion was that this study would show that there are voices calling from South Africa, voices that are speaking out against our current challenging issues. I also stated that these voices are fragmented, and that they are hesitantly uttered in a whisper.

In this study, we looked at three main challenges that the African continent is facing, with focus on South Africa. These were identified as challenges in establishing the church in Africa as African church, challenges relating to social, economic and political issues and challenges facing the church in a multi-religious society. We looked through the eyes of South African theologians, namely Archbishops Tutu and Tlhagale, Bishop Mofokeng, Professor Maluleke and Doctor Khathide.

The finding of this study is that if we combine their contributions, the South African church is speaking out on the issues that are challenging the African continent, and more specifically the African church. It is important to note, and as can be expected for reasons known to them, they are not all equally vocal on the same challenges. For example, challenges regarding the establishing of the church in Africa as an African church are much more on the forefront of Khathide's mind than the other challenges. This does not mean however that the other challenges are not of concern to Khathide.

It is also interesting to note the various audiences that our selected theologians are addressing. Although it seems as though they are speaking to different audiences, at least in their writings, this may not entirely be the case. Maluleke, for example, seems to be only addressing the academic world, while Tlhagale seems to be only addressing the audience of his own church. Mofokeng's contribution is of an apologetic nature targeted at the Christian community at large, while Khathide seems to have managed to get the attention of the media in terms of his contribution, thus addressing a much wider audience. Tutu, however, has managed, due to various other reasons and also because of his publications, to speak to the world at large. For the very reason that it seems as though our selected theologians are speaking to a fragmented audience, it might create the impression that they are silent.

As can be expected, because of the fact that the theologians have been influenced by various traditions, although there are broad agreements, their views on issues are not always the same and we cannot expect them to speak with 'one voice'. They do, however, offer a number of issues that the African church needs to be aware of and deal with. When apartheid, for example, was addressed as a common enemy, it could easily have created the impression that the African church spoke with 'one voice', although this was not even then always the case.

A further influence on how these theologians are heard relates not so much to what they are saying, but to the world views that they represent. Without trying to analyse their different world views, it seems as if there is a constant interplay between the various traditions that the theologians find themselves in. At times, it seems that what is being said is being said from a traditional or a pre-modern perspective which, at the same time can be intermingled with a modern or even postmodern perspective. This could have an affect on how our theologians are being heard, depending on the orientation of the hearers.

It is further important to note that the challenges addressed by these theologians are not necessarily the same as what the Western church

thinks the challenges are that the African church should address. A number of issues that are debated in the Western church do not even seem to be in focus for these theologians. This is how it should be, because it is an indication that the African church is mature and that it is identifying the issues that need to grappled with. Not only is the African church identifying its own issues, but it is also developing answers for the questions that the African church is asking. The answers might not necessarily be viewed as catholic, but over time will be open to debate, and in this way make their unique contribution to the church and the world globally. These theologians are serious about looking for answers to the questions of the African church. The Western church does not even need to create the space for these theologians to theologise from an African perspective, as they are doing so, and will continue to do so in any case.

The finding of this study is that the church in Africa is speaking out. The church has not become 'court prophets' and in a sense become silent by the present South African dispensation. Although it might seem that the church is whispering, it is speaking loud and clear. The church can, however, be bold and speak louder concerning several of these challenges facing the continent.

There are a number of other issues that must be noted in this study. The African church will have to do much more thinking in the area of hermeneutics. If the African experience is going to be incorporated as a valid hermeneutical key in developing a theology, the implications of this will need more contemplation and discussion. It has implications for, for example, the view on the spirit world with specific relation to the place of ancestors. If this is not addressed properly, there will always be accusations of syncretism as well as the worship of ancestors, which some are denying.

I am in agreement with Maluleke that the focus of a developing African theology should not dwell on colonialism, apartheid, Western missionary shortcomings or any other misgivings it might have on Western influence. It should rather strive for an African identity. These other

factors will logically continue to have an influence on the church in Africa, but by focusing on an African identity, the African church will have the potential to grow larger than its oppressors, and it will be able to effectively find answers to the challenges of Africa.

I would like to conclude by referring to three comments that are very relevant to this discussion. The African church has a lot to offer mankind, the African church will live against all odds, and the African church can assist effectively in bringing a positive outcome to the challenges facing the continent.

"These singing and dancing people who are so cheerful, spontaneous and emotional – and therefore unpredictable too, who transform huts into homes, work into rhythmic movement and worship into real celebration, must have something to offer the church and mankind" (Bühlmann 1977:153).

"At this time when so much fratricidal hate inspired by political interests is tearing our people apart, when the burden of the international debt and currency devaluation is crushing them, we, the Bishops of Africa,… we want to say a word of hope and encouragement to you, Family of God in Africa, to you, the Family of God all over the world: *Christ our Hope is alive; we shall live*" (John Paul II 1995:15).

"We want a new kind of society – compassionate, gentle and caring.… A nation where all belong and know they belong; where all are insiders, none is an outsider, where all are members of this remarkable, this crazy country. They belong in the rainbow nation" (Tutu 2004:5).

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Abbreviations

AIC   - African Independent Church
           African Indigenous Church
           African Initiated Church
           African Instituted Church
AICA   - African Independent Church Association
ATR   - African Traditional Religion
GDP   - Gross Domestic Product
HSCR - Human Science Research Council
IMF   - International Monetary Fund
PWA   - People with AIDS
USA   - United States of America
TRC   - South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission
WCRP - World Conference on Religion and Peace

Summary

For decades, Africa has tried to rid itself of the, most often, oppressive powers that have dominated the continent. Throughout the 20th century, and in the case of South Africa even further back in history, the church has played a vocal role in engaging the powers that refused Africans the right to be part of their own heritage.

The church marched with the rest of Africa to a glorious victory over these powers. In 2004 the first decade of democracy in South Africa was celebrated.

However, a number of challenging issues facing the very existence of the African continent, and especially the African church, did not disappear. Instead, over a number of years, these issues have surfaced, if not to a greater extent, at least in the full view of the whole world. It seems that the same vigorous voice of the church that spoke out against, for example, colonialism and apartheid, has now become silent.

The goal of this study is to determine if the church, with focus on the church in South Africa, is taking serious cognisance of these challenging issues, and to find out what it is saying about these challenges.

In order to assist us in this study, we look at what five of the South African theologians, who stand in different traditions of the church in South Africa, are saying about these challenging issues. The different theologians selected for this study are Archbishops Tutu and Tlhagale, Professor Maluleke, Bishop Mofokeng and Doctor Khathide. They, respectively, stand in the Anglican, Catholic, Reformed, AIC and Pentecostal traditions.

Through the voices of these theologians, this study identifies various issues, defines areas of concern, and determines what the church is saying about these challenges. These challenges are identified as challenges in establishing the church in Africa as African church, challenges relating to social, economic and political issues, and challenges facing the church in a multi-religious society.

Even though this study only refers to five of the church's theologians, the finding resulting from this study indicates that the African church is taking serious cognisance of these challenging issues and is still speaking out.

Key words

1. Africa
2. Church
3. Globalisation
4. Grassroots
5. Inculturation
6. Morality
7. Pluralism
8. Poverty
9. Reconciliation
10. Theology