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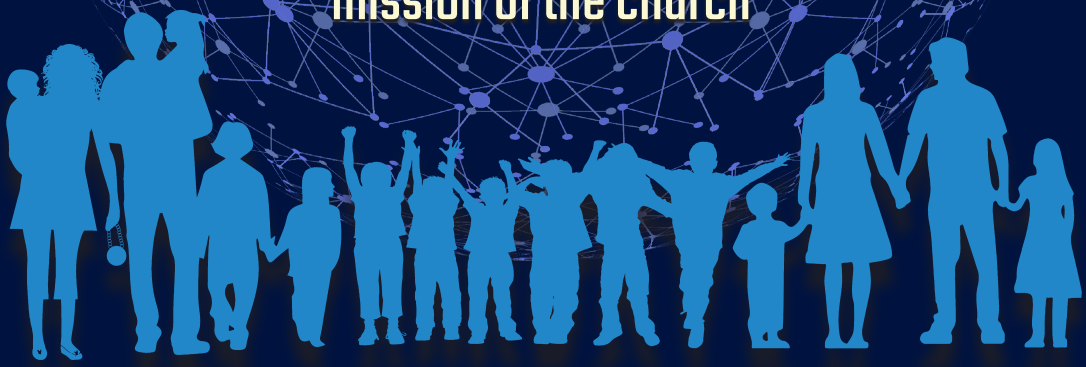
Volume 4

Powers, Inequalities and Vulnerabilities

Impact of globalisation on children, youth and families and on the mission of the church



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Johannes J. Knoetze
& Valentin Kozhuharov

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Powers, Inequalities and Vulnerabilities

Impact of globalisation on children, youth and families and on the mission of the church

EDITORS
Johannes J. Knoetze
Valentin Kozhuharov

AOSIS

Peer review declaration

The publisher (AOSIS) endorses the South African 'National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum Best Practice for Peer Review of Scholarly Books'. The manuscript was subjected to a rigorous two-step peer review process prior to publication, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the author(s). The reviewers were independent of the publisher and/or authors in question. The reviewers commented positively on the scholarly merits of the manuscript and recommended that the manuscript should be published. Where the reviewers recommended revision and/or improvements to the manuscript, the authors responded adequately to such recommendations.

Research Justification

This research addresses the gap in both missiology and family and youth ministry. Missiology does not focus on children and the youth specifically, although they are the largest age group in the population of the developing world. However, family and youth ministry has a more pastoral than missional approach, not always taking cognisance of the context, such as globalisation. Thus, the purpose of this book is to address the sometimes unintended and unnoticed influence of globalisation on the mission of the church, with a specific focus on children, youth and family. For this purpose, the International Association for Mission Studies' study group for children, youth and families, from different parts of the world, decided to describe the influence of powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities on children, youth and families in a globalised world from their specific contexts. Although the most prominent research methodology was critical literature studies, auto-ethnographic and empirical methods were also used. There was no decision on a specific method of research for this book. It can be viewed as an inter- and intra-disciplinary publication, because it deals with social sciences, anthropology, psychology, missiology, systematic theology and practical theology.

The authors of the different chapters in the book are practitioners, as well as academics, and this contributes to the value of the content and widens the target audience of the book. It will encourage and enrich both the practice of missions and youth ministry, as well as contribute to the classroom environment for these different disciplines. Practitioners, as well as researchers may find the book helpful.

This research is original and was not published before and no parts of the book are plagiarised.

Johannes J. Knoetze, Department of Missiology, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa

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Abbreviations Appearing in the Text and Notes

List of Abbreviations

AGI	Alan Guttmacher Institute
AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CE	Council of Europe
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CYM	Children, youth and mission
DVD	Digital video discs
EU	European Union
FoMO	Fear of missing out
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
IAFN	International Anglican Family Network
IAMS	International Association for Mission Studies
IMC	International Mission Council
LTP	Long-term potentiation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PIU	Pathological Internet use
SAMS	South African Mission Society
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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Chapter 1

Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: Mission in a wounded world

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Abstract

This chapter aims to provide a background against which the chapters in the book should be read. As such, the chapter is focused on an understanding of the concept of a wounded world within a globalised society and the obligation of the church in such a world towards children, the youth and families. In unpacking the concepts as mentioned in the title of this chapter, such as powers, inequalities and vulnerability against the background of

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globalisation and missiology, there is a clear focus on the importance of context and culture. The main questions that this chapter deals with are the following: why do churches or denominations need to focus on globalisation in their discipleship and mission strategy nowadays?; if churches attend in their mission strategies to globalisation, powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities, then what do they want to achieve?; and, if the church wants to present Jesus as the answer to children and young people in a globalised world, then what is the question that needs this answer?

Keywords: Mission; Globalisation; COVID-19; Context; Culture; Family and youth.

Introduction

The title of this chapter was taken from the conference theme of the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) that was scheduled for 09–14 July 2020 in Sydney, Australia, but could not happen because of the lockdown. Little did the editors know how 'wounded' the world would be in 2020 with the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the closing of the borders of many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic wounded not only the world but also the church and its mission in many instances. It also unmasked people's thinking about power, inequalities and vulnerabilities in many ways, namely, economically, socially, physically and spiritually.

When the *Children, Youth and Mission* study group of IAMS started their planning in 2018 for their specific contribution to the above-mentioned conference, we decided on the theme *Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: Impact of globalisation on children, youth and families and on the mission of the Church*, which is also the title of this book. It is therefore important to keep in mind that most of the chapters were written before COVID-19; this means that the globalised world was in many instances a different world. Countries such as China and the United States of America that were and still are viewed as the

economic powers in the globalised world suddenly became some of the most vulnerable countries in the world, with huge death rates because of COVID-19 (when this chapter was written in April 2020). Most contributions in the book make us aware of the powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities of the globalised world, whilst attempting to answer questions on the mission of the church in local contexts.

In this chapter, attention will be given to understanding globalisation as deep and continuing changes in economics, technology, culture and human and self-understanding. The first question we want to answer in this chapter is: 'why do churches or denominations nowadays need to have globalisation as a focus of their discipleship and mission strategy?' An even more important question is: 'if churches attend in their mission strategies to globalisation, powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities, what do they want to achieve?' If the church wants to present Jesus as the answer to children and young people in a globalised world, then what is the question that needs this answer?

Understanding mission

Bavinck (1948:5) describes mission as 'the work of Jesus Christ, making Himself known in and through his church to all the nations and making them part of the abundance of his salvation' [*Zending is die werkzaamheid van Jezus Christus, waardoor Hij in Zijn Kerk en door Zijn Kerk heen zich bekend maakt aan alle volken en het opneemt in de grootheid van Zijn verlossingswerk*]. He then continues to discuss the following three important principles of mission. Firstly, mission is fundamentally founded in the being of the Trinitarian God (Bavinck 1948:18; cf. Bosch 1991; Wright 2006). Secondly, the motivation for mission is found in the promises of the Old Testament (Bavinck 1948:19; cf. Bosch 1979; Wright 2006). Thirdly, the purpose of mission is to worship the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour to whom all power belongs (Mt 28:18–19) (Bavinck 1948:19; cf. Bosch 1991:56–83). In our discussion of the mission of the church in an age of globalisation, attention needs to be given to these three principles.

Interestingly, the 'globalised' Edinburgh mission conference of the International Mission Council (IMC) in 1910 was grounded in the optimistic and 'powerful' students' movement slogan 'the evangelisation of the world in this generation'. Then the vulnerabilities and equalities were unmasked a few years later during the First World War in 1913. The influence of the First World War and the Second World War has changed the world history and the mission of the church for good. The shift from a 'power' mission to a much more vulnerable mission can be seen in the remarks of Walter Freytag, the German missiologist, who attended both the Jerusalem 1928 and Ghana 1958 meetings of the IMC. Freytag describes the difference between 1928 and 1958 meetings at the 1958 conference in Ghana by stating that '[p]reviously, in 1928 mission had some problems; today, in 1958, mission itself becomes a problem' (my translation from Bosch 1979:2). At the end of the Ghana conference, the question remained: 'what is mission?' With COVID-19 again changing the world history and the ministries of the church, the question, 'what is mission?', remains in this globalised world.

In his theological synopsis of mission, Bosch (1991:1) states that the concept of mission has been paraphrased as 'propagation of the faith, expansion of the reign of God, conversion of the heathen, and the founding of new churches'. It is from a globalised context that Bosch describes mission in 12 different paradigms according to 'elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm', starting with the words 'Mission as …', and in this way indicating that mission is not one-dimensional and cannot be described by a one-dimensional definition alone. There is an unresolved interactive tension between mission as action in the world and mission as a theological concept founded in the Trinitarian God. In line with Bosch's descriptions of mission, Clark (2001, cited in Senter et al. 2001) states about the missional approach to youth ministry, underlining this unresolved interactive tension, as follows:

> The vast majority of churches want a vibrant youth ministry; but the bulk of them want to create and sustain a healthy youth ministry out of a pragmatic need, rather than theological and ecclesiological conviction. (p. 81)

Although mission must always address the practical needs of the world, it is in essence motivated from the being of the Trinitarian God.

When Darrell Guder published his book *Missional Church* in 1998, the word 'missional' as such was a new word to the theological world. Wright (2010:25) described it as follows: '[m]ission, like science, has a conceptual, generic breadth, and a word like "missional" can be as broad in significance as "scientific"'. In his attempt to answer the question what a mission is, Wright (2010), according to the author, changed the subject to worldview (even contextual) questions that each one of us needs to answer for ourselves, with questions such as: 'who are we?' and: 'what are we here for?' This indicates the importance of the local and global contexts and their influence on the understanding of what a mission is. Burger, Marais and Mouton (2017:24) described 'missional' as the church serving the community outside the church and the country or community as a whole. It includes missions and evangelism far away, but focuses on our immediate context and social issues, for example, racism, poverty and social justice – in other words, vulnerabilities and inequalities. Thus, a missional ecclesiology focuses on the (vulnerable people and inequality in) local congregations and their calling in a 'glocal' world, attending to vulnerabilities and inequalities.

Writing specifically about mission in a global community, Sunquist (2013:370–395) founded his understanding of mission in partnerships, with a close link to the paradigms mentioned by Bosch (1991). His motivation for the importance of partnerships is threefold: firstly, it is because of technology and the opportunities to communicate and even visit any person, group or church any time anywhere in the world. Secondly, it is because of an ecclesial reason, namely, 'the breakdown of major confessions and denominations and the rise of independency and local autonomy' (Sunquist 2013:371). Sunquist argued that the structures and organisations like the World Council of Churches

and other Western players and churches have decreased in influence and have been replaced by indigenous churches, NGOs and non-Western missions. Thirdly, it is because of the shift in Christianity in the 20th century, with a diversification and global spread of Christian communities. All three these reasons can be directly or indirectly linked to globalisation. Although it seems as if Sunquist (2013) based his arguments for partnerships on pragmatic needs as discussed, he later grounded his arguments for partnerships in four basic theological and biblical concepts, in line with Bavinck (1948), namely: 'the Trinity, Jesus's high priestly prayer, the church as the body of Christ, and the apostolic missions in the New Testament' (Sunquist 2013:375–376).

From this short overview it is clear that mission may no longer happen from any power position, but finds itself vulnerable. The following can be formulated as an understanding of mission as it is used in this publication. Mission is grounded in the being of the Trinitarian God as he reveals himself in the Old Testament and the New Testament, with specific identification in the life, death, resurrection and commands of Jesus Christ, through the life of the local church in different contexts working towards the kingdom of God. In the next section, attention will then be given towards understanding the context and the kingdom.

Understanding contexts and the kingdom

Focusing on the influence of globalisation on families, youth and children in this publication can only be done when the influences in specific and local contexts, places and cultures are discussed. In order to make sense of globalisation and contexts, it is important to be aware of certain movements that influence our understanding. For example, during the 1960s it became evident that a shift had taken place from a Europe-centred world (place) to a humankind-centred world (culture) (Bosch 1991:451).

The question that may be asked (Antonsich 2010) is:

> [*W*]hat happens to the notion of place in this age of globalisation? The specific character of place has not changed; yet, this specificity is no longer – if it has ever been – the product of internalised histories and embedded cultures, but the product of ongoing processes of material and social interconnections with the wider world. (p. 331)

It is thus clear that within globalisation no geographical place exists in isolation but is influenced and ever changing through new relations, whether economic, social or religious, which bring and create new histories and new cultures. Antonsich (2010) discussed the following three major theoretical arguments in relation to place: Massey's progressive 'sense of place' and its associated 'power-geometry'; Castells' (2000) twofold logic of 'space of flows' and 'space of places'; and Sack's (1997) notion of 'thick' and 'thin' places. This will not be discussed further as it is not in the scope of this chapter or the book.

Another important aspect of context is culture. With the focus on children, youth and family ministry in an age of globalisation, it is essential 'to understand and know the youth and their "reigning" culture' within the global and specific context (Nel 2000:29). In this regard, it is important to realise that culture includes, for example, the religious or theological heritage, historical and current events, social, economic and educational group, age, gender and personal circumstances (Ott & Strauss 2010:268–270). Thinking of powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities, these are mostly determined by 'culture' as described here. Some important questions in this regard are the following: 'what is the expectation when the church engages missionally with different cultures?'; 'why does the church want to engage with the powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities of children, youth and families in the globalised and different localised cultures?'; 'why are children, youth and families prepared to engage with the church?' and 'what are their expectations?' These questions are not simple to answer, but the church must at least listen to McKnight (2014:22)

asking, if Jesus is the answer, and the answer is that Jesus is the Messiah King, what is the question?

Different contexts clamour for different questions. The global context asks different questions in relation to the local contexts; therefore, our answers might be different but they still relate to Jesus as the Messiah King. We also need to answer the question whether a society that is transformed into a more humane place comes closer to the kingdom of God? Or to God's self?

Must the church only contextualise the gospel? '[G]ood contextualisation will help believers to feel both at home in their culture (indigenous principle) but also speak prophetically into their culture (the pilgrim principle)' (Ott & Strauss 2010:270). Or must the church transform the culture? McKnight (2014:16) discusses the claim that 'transforming culture is kingdom work' and argues that the word 'culture' is replaced by the Bible's word 'world'. He then shows from the Gospel of John that Jesus was sent to this world as the 'unredeemed realm of human affairs' to save people (Jn 3:19; 8:23; 15:19; 17:9, 16; 18:36). 'Jesus didn't come to make the world a better place or to "influence" or "transform" the world. He came to redeem people out of this world' (McKnight 2014:17). All of these concepts – contextualisation, transformation, and salvation/redemption – are used within the missional understanding of the church, sometimes even as synonyms.

In dealing with the various contexts, descriptions are used, such as 'inculturation', which means that Christianity never exists except when 'translated' into a culture; as such Christianity has a pluriform character in a globalised and even in a localised context (cf. Bosch 1991:447). When we inculturate to contextualise the gospel, it means 'relating the never-changing truths of scripture to the ever changing human contexts so that those truths are clear and compelling' (Ott & Strauss 2010:266). Thus, in the ever-changing human contexts, we celebrate the various local theologies, remembering that these local theologies are a discourse about the never-changing truths of scripture. When Jesus is accepted as Messiah King, people receive a 'new identity' that transforms their culture.

To get back to McKnight's (2014) question about what is the question the church wants to answer, I want to state that the church is vulnerable whenever it wishes to give clear-cut final answers. The church needs not only to listen more carefully to the voices in the different contexts, global and local, and to the great narrative of God's revelation, but also seek his specific revelation in participating in the *missio Dei* to let the kingdom come. But what does this mean if we want to confess true salvation in the kingdom of God, especially in a globalised context? To illustrate this view, McKnight (2014) quoted a missionary from Africa and then made the remark that he thinks these missionaries will call it 'kingdom work':

> Religious work in Africa is very interesting. Almost no missionaries are doing Bible teaching, evangelism, discipleship or church planting. We are all doing orphanages or trade schools or working with the deaf or people with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and/or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) education, etc. I am puzzled as to why this is our reality. (p. 3)

In the past, for instance during colonialisation, the missionaries had been at the centre of globalisation, spreading the gospel for improving living conditions, and providing a compelling ethical framework. 'Now for the most part, we have abandoned any missional engagement that seeks to shape the process, values, and outcomes of globalisation' (Myers 2017:103). May the kingdom then be defined just as good deeds, done by good people (Christian or not), in a public sector, for the common good? (McKnight 2014:4). The Bible never refers to the working for the common good as 'kingdom work'. Is there a difference between 'kingdom work' and 'kingdom mission'? If people view, for example, the quote of the missionary in Africa as 'kingdom work', then they are not busy with 'kingdom mission', in relation to the understanding of mission as discussed above. According to McKnight (2014:5), statisticians indicate that millennials are leaving the church because it has become too political, and then he furthers the argument by asking the question: 'is the involvement of the church in politics not too conservative?'

In light of the above, McKnight (2014) describes two interpretations of the kingdom. The first one involves the gospel interpretation as Creation–Fall–Redemption–Consummation (C-F-R-C) (McKnight 2014:24). In this interpretation, Genesis 1–3 is read to get *Creation* and *Fall* into place and then the rest of the Bible is skipped till Romans 3 or the crucifixion to get *Redemption* in place. The problem with reading the Bible in this way is that 99.5% of the Old Testament is skipped, and the discussion on Israel, or the church, or the people of God as the locus of what God is doing in the world, is neglected, and as such the focus on the salvation of the individual becomes the main purpose of the gospel. As such, 'the private realm of spiritual matters has become largely complete' (Myers 2017:102). Interestingly enough, the focus on the individualised focus on salvation comes from 'activists and the academics of development economics, technology innovation, and secular mission movement around human rights' (Myers 2017:102). Many of these groups view religion as either part of the problem, or irrelevant to improve the human condition, and unfortunately parts of the church have retreated, with little protest, and settled comfortably into a Christian subculture. The moment my personal relationship, or my personal salvation, becomes a private matter and does not influence culture and society, it is unauthentic and false in the world. The Bible is much more than the redemption story. The gospel is about the *missio Dei* and it is summarised in 1 Corinthians 15:3–5 with the following four points:

- That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
- That he was buried.
- That he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
- And that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

This is the reason for inculturation, for cultures to be transformed. The kingdom is about the gospel and the gospel is about Jesus and because it is about Jesus, it is about us. 'To make the story first about us, or first about me and my salvation, is to reduce the

story and to rob Jesus of the glory of being the central actor' (McKnight 2014:25).

The first interpretation (C-F-R-C story) focuses on Jesus the Redeemer, but not on Jesus as the Messiah, King and Lord. Often enough this interpretation does not teach children, the youth and families about living in the kingdom or living an authentic salvation in this world. Thus, McKnight (2014:26) gives a second interpretation that he calls the A-B-A story. In plan A, which covers the scriptures from Adam to Samuel, God rules over the world through his elected people as the only King. In plan B, God agrees to anoint a human king for Israel (see 1 Sm 8:6). As such, the story of the Old Testament becomes the story of David, where God continues to forgive Israel for its sins through the temple system of sacrifice, purity and forgiveness. Lastly, we find plan A revised, when God once again has established divine rule in the land through king Jesus, whilst Israel and the church live under the rule of king Jesus and have the privilege to participate in the *missio Dei* because forgiveness is granted through king Jesus, the Saviour. As such, doing kingdom mission must free us from and transform, for example, a (globalised) culture of (child) pornography and human trafficking.

Many missions fear that contextualising the gospel in the global, as well as in the different local contexts will open the door for syncretism or watering down the gospel. However, it is actually when the gospel is not contextualised properly, and when the gospel does not address the real needs of people, that the risk is taken to have weak churches, non-Christian syncretistic explanations and non-biblical lifestyles (Ott & Strauss 2010:266). In contextualising the gospel in the global world, there is a need for a new discovery or rediscovery of the local church contributing to a sense of maturing relationships, locally and globally. This discovery may even be referred to as 'ecclesiogenesis' or as 'reinventing' the church (Bosch 1991:451).

Understanding globalisation

A 'reinventing' of the local church, as part of the *missio Dei,* may contribute to form a kind of 'universal hermeneutical community' in a global context, where Christians and theologians from different contexts check one another's biases (Bosch 1991:457). In different contexts, globalisation has different understandings and interpretations. The developing world, for example, closely links globalisation to colonisation, and colonisation to missions (Bosch 1991:302), although for people from the West, globalisation entails material progress for the poor, democracy, human rights and eventual peace (Myers 2017:34–35). During the last decade, it became clear that globalisation also has to do with migration, especially from the South and the East to the West and the North, unmasking the inequalities and vulnerabilities created and kept alive in history. However, with the epicentre of Christianity moving to the South and the East, a new missional movement (through migration) also started to the West and the North, challenging and bringing hope in a post-Christendom society. As such, globalisation must not be used or understood in this publication as only an analytical category, but rather as a context that prompts conversation (Antonsich 2010:334).

The age of globalisation gives opportunities to openness, connectivity and mobility. Therefore, globalised theology is not non-Western theology but more-than-Western theology, a richer and more complete theology. The implication is that the Bible itself must always remain the starting point, and the articulations of the confessions of faith from past generations are used to come to complete theological understanding in new and globalised contexts with new and different questions and not necessarily alternative understandings. Globalised theology gives us the opportunity to grow and to learn from one another, through sharing perspectives on 'theology, worship, and Christian living so that we enhance one another's Christian experience' (Ott & Strauss 2010:287). All theologies, including those from the West, need each other, and in this understanding we are involved

not only in the inculturation of theology but also in the interculturation because we need the exchange between theologies (Bosch 1991:456).

From a power perspective, it is important to realise that no one is in charge of globalisation, nor can anyone determine the outcomes of globalisation, as discussed above with the remarks about immigration and mission from the South to the North. For many, this may lead to uncertainties, which might translate into defensive attitudes. It is, therefore, of utmost importance for children, the youth and families, even the most vulnerable, to understand themselves 'as actors who can and should do something about their future and the world they live in' (Myers 2017:51). Although there are many inequalities – for example, in the case of migrants – think of the different reasons for the migration, the church's mission must be to empower migrants to understand themselves also as part of the *missio Dei*. God is active in all lives and therefore the church must be active and attend to the social, economic and spiritual lives of all people. However, if the church only attends to particular people and only particular people feel at home in a particular church, 'and all others are either excluded or made unwelcome or feel themselves completely alienated, something has gone wrong' (Bosch 1991:456). This is the missional calling of the church; because God goes before us, the church must continue the discipleship process with the conversation that God has already started. The church does not bring God to children, the youth and families; rather, God brings the church to children, the youth and families.

In our globalised context with its consumerism culture, in which children, the youth and families get bored easily and are always looking for something more exciting, the church can easily fall into the entertainment trap. Entertainment-centred ministry provides an artificial intimacy, for example, like in a crowd at a concert, without the realities, pains, joys and frustrations of relationship-centred ministry. This brings us back to the questions asked above, about kingdom ministry and what is mission within the contexts of children, the youth and family?

It is especially the globalised consumer culture that makes people more vulnerable and brings forth the power games and inequality. When the church diverts from participating in the *missio Dei* with its focus on relationship-centred ministry, it participates in the power games of exploiting the vulnerable and inequalities. When read carefully, almost all the chapters in this book give in some or other way indications of the influence of global culture within the different local contexts.

Understanding children, the youth and families

Up to now, significant attention was given to context, and indeed the context does play an important role in the ministry to children, the youth and families. However, the most important context when dealing with ministry is the context of our faith in the Trinitarian God. The church must delude itself from thinking that it can 'make' children, the youth or families into anything, particularly into mature Christians. The most the church can do is to participate in the *missio Dei*, creating a context in which people can 'acquire a taste for grace' (DeVries 2004:160). As participants in the *missio Dei*, the church realises that the goal of our ministry is not simply to get children, youth and families into a relationship with Jesus Christ, nor it is to get them into more acceptable environments; rather, we are called to make disciples, according to Matthew 28:

> [*B*]aptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (vv. 19–20)

One cannot grow to Christian maturity on one's own; one needs other people and a faith community, a church. The baptism is the sign that the person is baptised not only 'into Christ' but also 'into the body of Christ', the faith community. It is within and through engagement with the faith community that children, the youth and families grow towards obedience in Christ.

Very few people will disagree with the statement that the family is God's primary instrument for introducing his grace and love in the lives of children and youth, but the family is not God (DeVries 2004:167). In this regard, there is a popular African saying: it takes a village to raise a child. Within our global and secularised contexts, where very few children and young ones have the privilege to grow up in a nuclear family, the faith community as the body of Christ has an undeniable role to play in the lives of (broken) children, young people and families. The ministry to children, the youth and families in the local church includes more than just building bridges and artificial relations in a global world. It is a ministry 'committed to time and proximity. It means getting into the canoe and crossing the "waterways of life" together, in community, with your sphere of relations' (Folmsbee 2007:31). It is about the authentic, life-dynamic and faith-sharing empowering of children, the youth and families to answer the questions posed by Wright (2010) : 'who are we?' and 'what are we here for?' In this instance, the African saying 'it takes a village to raise a child' can also be expanded to say 'it takes a village to lose a child'.

Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities

Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities are not only out there, but they are also part and parcel of the global and local faith communities. In the beginning of this chapter, I alluded to the fact that COVID-19 revealed to us just how wounded the world we live in is, but it also revealed how wounded the church is. This pandemic unmasked and helped us to rethink our understanding of power, inequalities and vulnerabilities. We realised that never before did we have so much knowledge about our ignorance, and how abnormal our thinking of normal is. Coronavirus Disease 2019 confirms Myers' (2017) statement that no one controls globalisation and no one can control the powers in the world, although each one of us has an influence. Thus, although we are

vulnerable with many inequalities, no one is totally powerless. The COVID-19 pandemic also helped the church to rethink its own powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities as a faith community, whilst it cannot come together in a worship service. In a sense, COVID-19 pandemic just helped the Fourth Industrial Revolution to explode in an already globalised world and force institutions like the church to adjust its operations accordingly. The local and global church will have to rediscover that it is not so much about doing church as about being church.

According to Myers (2017:59), in a globalised world 'with complex adaptive social systems, we must learn our way into the future' via vulnerabilities, inequalities and powers. It is in this process into the future that the church discovers to its embarrassment that it is not able to talk about God, yet it is its calling to talk about God! In this embarrassment of vulnerability, the church finds her power because it is not about her; it is about Jesus, the Messiah King. It is Jesus the Messiah to whom all power belongs (Mt 28:18), and it is only in and before Jesus that people are all equally vulnerable (Rm 3:10–11). The gospel of Jesus Christ is the message of hope the church must bring to all children, the youth and families experiencing different kinds of inequality in the world: 'inequality among the people of the world, inequality among the nations of the world and inequality within the nations' (Myers 2017:60). No global governance mechanism is in place to address the inequality and vulnerability amongst the people of the world.

Conclusion

Writing this chapter, it is my firm belief that this will be a powerful book exposing the inequalities and vulnerabilities of our wounded world. I also urge every reader to take up Myers' (2017:7) challenge 'to get back in the game. We have a God, a gospel, and a truth that a materialist and secular globalisation simply cannot provide'.

PART 1

Perspectives on globalisation and its impact on children, youth and families

Chapter 2

Exploring social constructs and the lives of street children

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Abstract

This chapter explores current discussions on social constructs of childhood and the implications of this theory for mission engagement with street children. The analysis of street children and their lived experiences reveals the need to understand the role of children in presenting distinct notions of childhood around the world. The chapter also explores theological implications for the global church and local mission expressions where children and youth are present and involved in ongoing discussions of intervention and policymaking.

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Keywords: Childhood; Social constructs; Street children; Contextualised mission; Childhood experiences.

The story

It was early morning when I set out to visit with the children living on the streets in Cochabamba, Bolivia. As I made my way with the street educators from a faith-based organisation, we noticed small plastic bottles littering the path close to where the children slept. The bottles were filled with dried up shoe glue. This is the *clefa* [shoe glue] that I had heard about from other street child workers in the city. Children pour *clefa* into small plastic bottles to sniff. The high that the shoe glue produces is well known amongst children around the world.

After walking a couple of blocks along a foot path next to a rain channel, we noticed five boys sitting on a bench. Two of the boys were sniffing *clefa*. Several of the boys recognised the street educators. The boys were between the ages of 9 and 12. Two of the five boys were high on glue and not very responsive to our questions, whereas the other three were open to a conversation. We spoke for a whilst about their lives on the street. It turned out that three of the boys (those not sniffing *clefa*) had just left a Catholic group home, called San Benito, that was established to help children living on the street in the city.

After spending half an hour with the boys, we headed towards the next location just a few hundred feet up the footpath. We found another group of children sleeping under a bridge in the rain channel. We climbed down under the bridge and walked into the dark waterway where I was able to make out several faces. There were three dogs under the bridge and six young people sleeping. Four of the young people were partially covered by blankets. We moved on, after attempting to wake them up with no success.

We hiked up another block and found another group of six boys and girls. We spent half an hour with the young people talking about life on the street. Later the same day, we contacted

five more young people about 10 blocks from these first contacts. They were living under another bridge that helped cover the rain channel. In one single day, we had contacted and observed 22 children living under bridges and in rain channels in Cochabamba.[1]

The varied contexts of street children

The children noted in the narrative above, represent lived experiences within a specific geographical and cultural space. Life on the streets for children embodies a lifestyle that is frequently described in monocultural ways even though it is lived out in distinct places and cultures around the world. Street-like culture is an idea that is developed in several significant ethnographies, primarily in the area of urban sociology.[2] It recognises that there are particular elements of micro-cultures at play in these different geographies around the world. Although the phenomenon of children living and working on the street can be found in all corners of the world, this study argues for understanding the phenomenon as a localised experience.[3]

Understanding street lifestyles

How do we understand street-living and working children? Some presume that any child that appears dirty or dishevelled wandering the streets is a street child. Evidence suggests that the term was coined to define children who do not fit into a typical category for how childhood should be perceived. In other words, those found playing in the street, park or garden, typically

1. This narrative was previously used in a non-published report by the author (see Burch 2009).

2. For further discussion on the issues, see Anderson (1992), Aptekar (1988), Hecht (1998), Liebow (2003) and Whyte (1991).

3. Although it is impossible to know statistically how many children live and work on the street around the world, publications by the Consortium for Street Children maintain the presence of children, such as those depicted in the narrative in this study, as ubiquitous globally. For more on this topic, see the Consortium for Street Children (2015) and Van Raemdonck and Seedat-Khan (2018).

do not receive special terms because they are within the realm of perceived normality, yet those who sleep and spend long hours in the street are somehow abnormal and must be assigned a particular category to describe their uncommon lifestyle (Glauser 1997:151–152). In the case of Bolivia, children who are found walking the streets with dirty clothes, or begging, are categorised as children living outside of what society considers a customary childhood. The academic discussion around useful categories and labels for children on the street is quite thorough. The categories 'street-living and working children' are used commonly in the literature to describe children who have taken to the streets either to work or to live, or both. A familiar term to describe both of these categories is 'street children'.

The genesis of a term

The term 'street children' came into use around the mid-19th century but is now rigorously debated in academic circles.[4] Although commonly used, a number of child advocates and others have concluded that the term does not serve the best interest of the very children it seeks to describe. Anthropologist Patricia Marquez (1995:5) says, '"[s]treet children" as a general category glosses over the heterogeneity of these young people's lives, depriving them of individuality'. Although she suggests that the term is inadequate, no alternative expressions are offered. Additional terms have been suggested by politicians and social scientists alike. The term 'community kids' was suggested as an alternative by the junior mayor Thami Mokhutu of Bloemfontein, South Africa. Another politician, former president, Hugo Chávez Frías of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thought a more appropriate category for children found working and living on the street is *niños de la patria* [children of the homeland]. I myself chose to enter into the debate in 2005 with the publication of a

4. For more on this debate, see Glauser (1997), Hecht (1998) and Marquez (1995).

book that suggested that children should be referred to as 'community children' (Burch 2005).

The term 'street-children' was first found in English in Henry Mayhew's exposé, originally published in 1851.[5] Mayhew referred to children wandering the streets as street-children (with a hyphen), urchins and waifs. Mayhew's depiction of the places where street children slept categorises the kind of children found on the streets of London at that time.[6] Similar to today, in many parts of the world, these children found ways to make a living on the street. Mayhew (1968:471) said, '[i]ndependently of the vending of … articles, there are many other ways of earning a penny among the street boys'. Ingenuity and survival skills were certainly not lacking amongst this population of young people.

Defining street children

Several organisations and individuals have developed definitions (and new terms) to help society identify the needs and groupings of children in street-like conditions. Many ideas come to mind when the term 'street child' is mentioned. The terms used to define the children are not very precise in taking into account the social status or risk factors of these children. As the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 1995:13) acknowledges, '[t]he expression, [*sic*]

5. Henry Mayhew (1812–1887) is best known for his social research and ground-breaking book on the poor in London, entitled *London labour and the London poor* (see the list of references for bibliographic information on the 1968 version of this source).

6. The author identifies three common characteristics, namely, (1) those who worked (newspaper boys, porters and shoe-shining children); (2) those who were involved in criminal activities such as pick-pocketing and stealing; and (3) children beggars. For those children who were not able to sleep in a room with their parent(s), would often sleep in lodging houses. There was a minimal cost associated with these houses. They were temporary shelters described as 'filthy' by Mayhew. Some children were forced to sleep in the markets or under what he described as 'dry arches'. On an average day during the summer months, there were about 200 children sleeping in the 'Garden-market' (Burch 1968:475). With regard to clothing, the street children wore clothes they acquired until they literally would 'drop off from continued wear' and would often have to be pinned back together (Burch 1968:476).

"street child" is a kind of blanket term that applies to a multitude of problems' . This blanket term helps highlight how far we still have to go to help those in and outside of the church understand the issues facing children commonly referred to as street children. Another suggested definition for this mixed group of children is 'those who have abandoned their homes, schools and immediate communities, before they are sixteen years of age, and have drifted into a nomadic street life' (Cockburn 1991:12–13). This definition assumes that such children are runaways. Within this understanding, there is an emphasis on the active participation by the young people themselves in abandoning homes, schools and communities.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also defined the term by developing new categories for which such children are to be understood. Street children are described as (1) children of the street and (2) children on the street.[7] Children of the street are referred to as young people who have taken up some kind of regular presence in the street, such as living, working and surviving. Children on the street are viewed as children who might work or spend considerable time on the street, yet return home to sleep (Taçon 1985:3—4). These categories are frequently used in academic and popular literature as ways to describe and define the kind of children referred to within any given context. One of the failures of this approach is the lack of specific knowledge and local perceptions of childhood. There is virtually no reference to the local setting where these boys and girls are found; therefore, the categories leave the readers to believe that they are global nuanced realities, regardless of ethnicity, culture or familial functions.[8]

7. For more on this, see Kilbourn (1997).

8. For a thorough discussion on definitions of street children and research, see Anderson (2001), Beaunaux (1993), Burch (2005), Dabir and Athale (2011), Kilbourn (1996, 1997), Lusk (1989), Raemdonck and Seedat-Khan (2018) and Williams (2011).

Beyond definitions

The previous definitions and others do not seek to identify children within specific sociocultural contexts. The definitions are general and collected globally. Is it accurate to assume that children who are called *niños y niñas en situación de calle* [boys and girls in street situations] in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia, are to be compared, via the same definition, with children living and working on the streets of Mexico City, for example? Data with regard to understanding the cultural particularities of children within a specific geographical location are lacking. Wells (2015:13) notes that space and geography are critical factors in understanding lived childhood experiences and alter the very concept and experience of childhood itself.

Sociologist Judith Ennew (2003:5) faces the same issue in writing about street children in distinct African contexts and highlights the concern by acknowledging the lamentable fact that these descriptions are frequently 'applied as an operational definition in other parts of the world … leading to varied interpretations so that the meaning is further obscured'. Although researchers and practitioners seek to develop definitions that take into account particular aspects of a street lifestyle, street children, like other children, do not easily fit into one single definition, but rather must be understood within a specific cultural and urban context. Globalised definitions, whilst highlighting vulnerabilities amongst these young people, do not capture the sociological experiences in the way that ethnographies, historiographies and other localised studies do.

Historical perspectives on children

Children and childhood issues are a new development in historiographies. Historian Colin Heywood (2001:5) describes the field of childhood studies as an under-represented territory in academic writings even up to the 1950s. One of the issues researchers face in studying children is that there is very little

written by children themselves on their own history. There are virtually no primary sources from children to be accounted for. Most of the writings are from adults about children. This does not mean, however, that children did not have a voice or spoke up for themselves in history. Perhaps as Jesus said in Matthew 18:3[9]: 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven', it is also accurate to say that we must become like little children to understand their voice in history.[10]

On children in Latin America, Hecht (ed. 2002) argues that:

> [*T*]he absence, until recently, of virtually any consideration of children in the history of Latin America is … a reflection more of the concerns and preoccupations of those writing history than of a lack of material worthy of scrutiny. (pp. 8–9)

Although it is evident that there is a paucity of literature on children in history, what is of utmost importance for us is to understand children historically. One fine example of this is found in the work of Philippe Ariès and his ground-breaking book on childhood, entitled *Centuries of childhood*.

An Arièsian perspective

With the release of Ariès' book *Centuries of childhood* in 1962, a new historical and social perspective troubled the academic world and affected the future writings of historians, anthropologists, sociologists and even missiologists (in more recent times) that led to new understandings of childhood. In this publication, Ariès

9. All Scripture references have been taken from Today's New International Version, unless otherwise noted.

10. For example, children speak through games and stories (Opie & Opie 1959, 1969), consumption (Seiter 1993), organised youth groups like Young Christian Workers (Gomes & Aparecido 1987), organised labour (O'Kane 2003) and, more recently, through political protest movements, such as the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls in Brazil (James & McGillicuddy 2001), child workers of Bolivia (Burch 2009) and the political engagement of children (Bartos 2016).

(1962:10) wrote on the history of the concept of family and perceptions of childhood.

Ariès' (1962:128) most well-known statement is that 'in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist'. Although this view is often critically received, many historians and other scholars agree about the seminal nature of his work and the critical notion that childhood should be studied within the social framework of its time.

Because of the fact that very little research on children in the Middle Ages was available, Ariès approached the medieval art in his desire to understand how children were perceived in society at that time. One of his greatest contributions was his focus on the idea that the child was not omitted from the Middle Ages, but rather that the child was understood through a different social lens than what he or she is understood today (Ariès 1962:38). Postman (1994:36) argues that life before the printing press suggested that 'there had been no need for the idea of childhood, for everyone shared the same information environment and therefore lived in the same social and intellectual world'. Although the Arièsian perspective acknowledged the place of children in medieval society, Postman (1994) states that:

> [*T*]he Greeks, for example, paid scant attention to childhood as a special age category, and the old adage that the Greeks had a word for everything does not apply to the concept of a child. Their words for child and youth are, at the very least, ambiguous, and seem to include almost anyone between infancy and old age. (p. 6)

During the medieval age children were perceived in several ways. Those above the age of toddlerhood were portrayed as miniature adults (ed. Hecht 2002:4). Younger children, according to Norwegian sociologist Jens Qvortrup, were understood to be animal-like. Most paintings at the time included children as small people with adult-like features. High infant mortality was one of the reasons why children were depicted as other than children and infants. Another potential argument for why children were dressed and often treated as little adults was because of the adult-

like responsibilities they often carried. Children were simply viewed as actors in society, although small ones (Qvortrup 2005:2).

Another contribution of Ariès is the understanding of how children were exposed to public life during the 17th century. Qvortrup (2005) argues that because children in the Arièsian perspective were so visible in public, this meant that they were often left unprotected as well: they were part and parcel of any local community; they were entrusted with duties like adults; they were not kept away from putative dangerous events — from sexuality to executions; no one prevented them from being witnesses to whatever took place because no one had the idea that children constituted a particular group, or that the child had particular needs (Qvortrup 2005:2).

Of special recognition in the writing of Ariès is the concept of change within the perception of childhood. Ariès was one of the first scholars to argue that the concept of childhood was constructed and changed within different periods of time. For example, Ariès argued that each period of society has a privileged age. Ariès (1962:32) viewed childhood as privileged during the 19th century and adolescence as significant throughout the 20th century. He argued that as society constructs the perceived ideas surrounding childhood, society then casts those perceptions upon the child, resulting in different ways of living for children.

Understanding diverse childhood experiences

The study of childhood is a recent phenomenon within the social sciences. The most robust development of child-focused research and resources can be found in the writings of those belonging to the discipline of developmental psychology. In a distant second place is the field of sociology. Historically, the field of sociology has discussed the socialisation of children. According to Corsaro (2005), socialisation in most traditional understandings:

> [*V*]iews the child as internalising society … the child is seen as something apart from society that must be shaped and guided by external forces in order to become a fully functioning member. (p. 7)

This definition has played a key role in helping to define the process of how children socialise in any given context.

More recently, scholars in sociology have developed a social framework for understanding new theoretical underpinnings for how we appreciate and recognise childhood. This is referred to as the *emergent paradigm for a new sociology of childhood*. This paradigm is found within a larger sociological paradigm known as social constructionism theory. According to the main proponents (James & James 2008:122) of the emergent paradigm for a new sociology of childhood, the social construction theory 'has its roots in the symbolic-interactionist paradigm, which explores the ways in which individuals are involved in the ongoing "making" of everyday life through their actions'.[11]

Social constructionism theory has played a significant role in the development of the emerging perspective on childhood.[12] This childhood theory perceives the child as an active social agent who participates in society and is held in contrast to that of social determinism (James & James 2008:122–123). The deterministic model perceives the child or young person as basically taking a passive role in society. Children are forced, via a structural control, to take a flaccid position.[13] As passive participants, children are often viewed as both having potential and being a threat. The potential and threat are both maintained via control. The control is led by the powerful (Corsaro 2005:7). This is not surprising given that in most cases children lack access

11. For more on this theory, see Berger and Luckman (1967).

12. Several of the major foundational works that have helped to develop the field within a sociology of childhood are James and Prout (1997), James, Jenks and Prout (1998), Jenks (1982, 1996) and Stainton-Rogers (1989).

13. Those most associated with this perspective are Bales (1955) and Inkeles (1968).

to formal power in society (James & Prout 1997:xiv). Deterministic models hold the view that children are appropriated by society. 'Appropriation means the child is taken over by society; she is trained to become, eventually a competent and contributing member' (Corsaro 2005:7). In the meantime, whilst children are in the process of training, they are simply perceived as passive beings moving about and controlled by a larger society. These deterministic models are highly influenced by structural theories.

In their writing, James and Prout (1997) argued for a new paradigm in childhood studies. This emerging paradigm can be described in the following ways:

1. Childhood must be understood as a social construction instead of a universal concept.
2. Childhood is understood as distinct from biological maturity.
3. Childhood must never be fragmented from other social analysis variables, such as gender, class or ethnicity.
4. The relationships of children and even their own specific cultures deserve to be studied, independent of how adults think with regard to childhood; for this to be realised, children must not be viewed as socially inactive objects, as is frequently found in structural determinism.
5. There must be room for constructing and reconstructing childhood in society and children must be perceived as the primary actors in this Role.
6. Ethnography is the method of choice because of the place children are given in communicating their own thoughts and opinions.
7. 'Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present' (James & Prout 1997:3–8).

The double hermeneutic here incites us to go beyond the engagement process of the new paradigm and to respond to the

process of reconstructing childhood in society (James & Prout 1997:8).[14]

A paramount issue highlighted by point 1 above, acknowledges that childhood should be understood as a social construct which varies across cultural boundaries, yet forming structural and cultural workings specific to all societies (James & Prout 1997:3). Given this, it is impossible to identify all of the same characteristics of childhood within all societies and it is probably more accurate to discuss multiple childhoods, rather than a singular childhood, despite some of the global constraints children face (James & Prout 1997:xi). Ultimately, childhood may be understood within the emergent paradigm as 'a status of person which is comprised through a series of, often heterogeneous, images, representations, codes and constructs' (Jenks 1996:32). This highlights the need to understand children within a specific context. Although the phenomenon of children living on the street is global in nature, the particular realities of these children should be understood locally. In the case of street-living and working children, new ways of understanding such children and their social existence will ultimately bring about a change in how childhood issues are dealt with. This has direct implications for street outreach programmes and church-based intervention.

14. According to Burch (2013:268), the double hermeneutic in the social sciences is an understanding that is defined by Giddens (1976, 1984) as an interaction between theoretical positions (as a single hermeneutic) and that which Giddens identifies as 'lay actors engagement with reality (the other single hermeneutic)'. Burch (2013:268) continues by noting that 'James and Prout (1997) identify the double hermeneutic as propounded by Giddens as an essential understanding of the new paradigm given the reflexive components found in everyday social practices. So, there is a theorising engagement within the paradigm that is essentially for the scientific community and there is a process that has been adopted by the larger society and engages with the reconstruction of childhood in different contexts. The way this is understood is that there is both a need to develop theoretical frameworks for understanding childhood and a practical element which does the constructing within society. Children are part of this process as policy discussions now include the very subjects that are being discussed (James & Prout 1997:xv)'.

The emergent paradigm in childhood studies is a helpful approach for contextual analysis on childhoods. 'The "socially constructed" child is a local rather than a global phenomenon and tends to be extremely particularistic' (eds. James et al. 1998:214). This does not mean that certain children do not share characteristics in common with other children; in fact, quite the opposite is true at times. One issue that needs to be acknowledged is the universal traits that all children have.

Although childhood is socially constructed, oftentimes locally, '[c]hildhood also has universal features because all children, by virtue of their immaturity, have similar needs and limitations' (Wells 2015:13). Infants, for example, have similarities in terms of depending on adult caretakers to feed and shelter them. Emotional attachment, whilst varying in form, is another common characteristic that is shared amongst children around the world (Wells 2015:13). When these developmental characteristics are noted, other similarities are also shared amongst children living and working on the street. Children face economic factors that force them to enter into informal job sectors because of failed economic systems around the world. As Mickelson (ed. 2000:13) concludes, street children are 'in the final analysis, very poor children', and this poverty forces many to struggle for survival. Another global reality that children face is the connection between an idealised 'common vision of what the experience of childhood should be, and what children should do' (Kuznesof 2005:860). This promoted vision is often peddled as a vision for right-living, a 'kind of global "morality"' that suggests childhood should be protected and lived out within a universal paradigm that idealises play, educational experiences and other 'normative' practices (Kuznesof 2005:860). This global paradigm creates false expectations and a marginalised experience that glosses over other values deemed as less important by some. As we consider mission action and engagement, the contributing factors that lead to good practice amongst this population of young people must reflect the new sociology of childhood.

Mission action with street children

Street-living children and others found in similar circumstances are central in the kingdom of God as people created in God's image. As human beings, such children have been excluded from the mainstream life, either through their self-exclusion as a result of pain, or by the powerful in society.[15] These constraints must be acknowledged. Christian (1999) includes the concept of relational poverty in his important contribution to the causal factors behind poverty. The poor are excluded from beneficial relationships and powerless to bring any change to that situation. In relation to the poor being excluded, Christian says (1999:25), '[t]he various clusters of power within poverty relationships are designed to exclude the many and protect the interests of the few'. Exclusion from an economic system, whether formal or informal, creates a playing field that is inequitable and unjust (Christian 1999:125). Preventing children from participating in society because of unrealistic moral codes (as noted above), limits agency and promotes deterministic functions that ultimately lead to additional vulnerabilities among young people. Shaw (2004) contends that for the street child, particularly in Latin America, exclusion from mainstream society is one of the more significant issues when it comes to the children seeking to leave the street. 'Even when these children decide that they want to leave the street, their education and the national economy seldom offer the opportunity' (Shaw 2004:25). Children go to the street because they are excluded, and they are often prevented from leaving the streets because they are excluded.

New Testament stories reveal a break from these forms of exclusion that are often experienced in society by vulnerable children. Jesus is presented as someone who includes children as central actors in his kingdom. Jesus presents children as models

15. Contributing factors that lead children to these lifestyles are discussed in detail in Burch (2010).

for what it takes to understand the kingdom of God and God's action in the world. Gundry-Volf (2001:39) states, '[n]owhere in Jewish literature are children put forward as models for adults'. Yet, this is precisely what we see here in Mark 10:15 as Jesus says, '[t]ruly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'.

Scripture portrays Jesus as radically breaking with cultural mores of exclusion and speaking of children in terms of greatness and caring for them by including children in his midst (see Mk 9:33–37; Mt 18:1–2, 4–5, Lk 9:46–48). His vision for childhood does not seem to be limited by societal norms for how these globalised perspectives promote an idealised version of childhood. Gundry-Volf (2001:43) says, '[t]he teaching is, of course, ironic for children occupied the lowest rung on the social ladder and caring for children was a low-status activity'. The resulting priority of mission action in identifying with children who live on the street is noted and requires careful attention from those who engage with such young people. Children are noted as active participants in the kingdom of God and mission action should reflect this form of engagement (see Mt 21:14–16).

Within the noted populations in this study, childhood is represented as an experience where street recreation, work and survival comprise a noted distinction from other childhood experiences.[16] An important emphasis in this study acknowledges that childhood is constructed in different ways, within distinct sociocultural settings.

As the narrative at the beginning of this chapter describes, children have varied lived experiences. The children featured in the story live on the street within a geographical location that must be understood contextually. But what is not described in the story is that other childhoods are also represented, sometimes even in the same geographical space. One distinct group that

16. For an interesting description of one North American perspective on childhood, see Hunt and Frankenberg (1997).

stood out that day as I was visiting with children living on the street in Cochabamba, Bolivia, was the young people who walked hand in hand with mothers and older siblings on the city streets. I also took note of how children from seemingly wealthier households played in parks just several feet away from other children who shined shoes and others who slept on benches. These are distinct experiences in childhood that must be understood from the perspectives of the children themselves.

In re-describing childhood in Cochabamba amongst children particularly affected by living and working in the streets, the construction of such a perspective should be viewed through the lens of the children themselves. As James and Prout (1997:8) remind us, children are involved in constructing their own existence, despite the structural constraints they face. In particular, children who live and work on the streets, whether in Bolivia or anywhere in the world, can be observed re-presenting a childhood that is dissimilar and even unique from other lived experiences.[17] These observed experiences highlight the constraining and sometimes even harmful effects of such a lifestyle for children on the street. '[N]onetheless the children and young people featured are active in social development and are acknowledged as social actors within their context' (Burch 2013:264).

Mission engagement with street children is often focused on removing children from the street at all cost, sometimes even forcibly. The street is viewed as dirty and producing immoral behaviours, and thus it is for some a Christian duty to require children to leave the street before any spiritual change will take place. For Glauser (1997), it is unacceptable:

> [*T*]hat international organisations, policy makers, social institutions and individuals who feel entitled to intervene in the lives of children

17. For a comparison of other childhood experiences in Brazil, Cuba and the United States of America, see Mickelson (2000). Additional country-wide studies are found in Dabir and Athale (2011) and Kovats-Bernat (2006).

> with problems, [*sic*] do so on the basis of obviously unclear and arbitrary knowledge about the reality of these children's lives. (p. 150)

The point being made here is that the contextual and lived experience must be understood before clear intervention and response are taken place. This has implications for mission action also.

Leaving the street is frequently connected to salvation and rehabilitation by many Christian organisations. This is the main goal for many involved with Christian outreach to street children. It is acknowledged that street-living conditions (and some working conditions as well) for young people are not safe, yet removing children from the street is not to be the primary goal of mission action.[18]

Ultimately, the objective of mission engagement must be aimed at restoring human connections as children explore what it means to re-establish their very own relationships with God their Creator. The aim of mission action should prioritise itself on empowering these children towards interdependence with God's creation and a restored identity through Christ who reconciles. Is this not what Scripture is portraying in Mark 10:13–16? This passage reads (Mk 10):

> [*P*]eople were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'. And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them. (vv. 13–16)

The inclusive nature of Jesus' response to children in this narrative demonstrates their central role in his kingdom.

18. Children who are in immediate danger and in need of rescue (especially those caught up in harmful relationships that include abuse, human trafficking, etc.) should be removed and protected in accordance with local law requirements; however, there should be a careful analysis by those involved to determine the adequate means of intervening in this way.

Jesus restores a sense of purpose and inclusion for children who have been isolated from a relationship with him. As human relationships move towards restoration in Christ, these relation ships result in children exploring, through consciousness-raising and the meeting of spiritual needs, their relationship with God. Reconciliation with God is a central motif in missiological studies. As Middleton (2005:207) argues, it is the *imago Dei* that paves the way for equal access to God by all people. It is through the work of Christ and the grace that is available to humankind that we have gained this admission to a relationship with God.

Conclusion

Given the notion that childhood is not developed identically the world over, or even regionally (as in Latin America), mission engagement must be contextualised.[19] This is not a proposal that is relevant for mission organisations and local churches only, but ought to be incorporated into other agencies and organisations as well. This study promotes the idea that policies (primarily human rights legislation) affecting children should seek to carefully understand local realities. In some cases, these policies have not taken into account the idea that childhood is culturally constructed. Boyden (1997:203) suggests that, '[t]he different competencies and incapacities perceived to be associated with childhood in different societies are numerous and often imply contradictory conceptions of the child'. Localised studies and perspectives will result in new practices and ways to engage with children and youth. As Kuznesof (2005) points out:

> [/]nternational human rights groups have actively protested that children have the 'right' to a certain experience of childhood, a vision

19. It is not the intent of this study to try and re-develop the idea of contextual missiology or theology that has taken place in other works (see Bevans 1992; Hesselgrave & Rommen 2003; Kraft 1979; Paredes 2000), but rather, in light of the new paradigm for the sociology of childhood, the study seeks to bring into the conversation the understanding that childhood is constructed and perceived as a local reality (despite some of the global and universal characteristics mentioned in this study).

> created from the specific cultural experience of the US and Western Europe. (p. 860)

Although protecting children remains a central practice, this must be viewed through a local lens as we seek to deal with the global phenomenon of street-living and working children.

O'Kane (2003) states that social constructionism should be upheld as a significant theoretical framework as it contributes to the importance of empowering young people living and working on the street. According to O'Kane (2003:1), '[c]hildren's relationships and cultures are worthy of recognition in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults'. In other words, it behoves society and the Christian Church to recognise the unique role of children in developing their own lived realities. For too long adults in mission outreach to children have assumed to know all the answers to the problems children face, but now, as a result of acknowledging the role that children play in contributing to their own realities and cultural identities, Christian mission must work within a community-based frame work that incorporates culturally aware guidelines and practices. In some cases, children will lead the way in the development of these guidelines. It is time that we recognise, once again, the greatness that childhood reveals as they are placed in the midst of our intervention and policy discussions (see Mk 9:33–37).

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Chapter 3

Globalisation and youth: Restructuring identity formation and religiosity

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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to minutely analyse the impact of globalisation on the identity of the youth as a social category and lived reality. The impact of globalisation on the identity formation of the youth will be informed by a broad overview of globalisation, with specific reference to Africa. The different aspects of globalisation will be discussed utilising the term 'creative destruction', illustrating how globalisation is characterised by a double movement of creativity and destruction at the same time.

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A second focus is on the development of sophisticated technology and media as an integral aspect of globalisation, indicating how these modes facilitate the process of reframing religion and religiosity today.

The two aspects, namely, identity formation and religiosity in relation to the ongoing process of globalisation and mediatisation, are brought into conversation with each other, providing new possibilities and challenges for being church in a globalised world. Special attention is given to religious traditions and how people express their religiosity mediated through various forms of media, and therefore the chapter concludes with several suggestions for youth ministry in light of the impact of globalisation on the youth.

Keywords: Globalisation; Religion; Identity; Religiosity; Youth identity; Youth resistance.

Globalisation

Although the term 'globalisation' is used quite often, I found it necessary to describe it in this chapter for at least two reasons. Firstly, globalisation is one of the core concepts used in this chapter and, secondly, it is a complex term and its impact in different contexts is even more complex. Although the concept that describes this very complex process is not new, the intensity and the speed of the process make it an almost inescapable force to be reckoned with in literarily all spheres of life. Meyers (2017:35) describes globalisation as multidimensional, including all aspects such as economics, finances, politics, governance, religion, crime, disease, culture, technology, et cetera. However, he admits the elusiveness of defining the concept by pointing to the complexity of the process, describing it as an adaptive social system that is definitely happening, although it is not really possible to identify who is in control of it (Meyers 2017:55). The reference to the globe indicates the reach of this process, including everything and everywhere, and, therefore, the aim of globalisation is to expand, intensify and accelerate social relations (Meyers 2017:35).

Taking into consideration these descriptions of globalisation, one could argue that its ultimate goal is to conquer the world. Kumar (2003) states that 'the debate about what to do about globalisation is still very much a debate about what globalisation is'. Therefore, engagement with the concept from different disciplines and perspectives is part and parcel of trying to establish what it is and how it plays out in the everyday life of people. This process impacts people's lives as individuals and collectively in significant ways. Globalisation, however, is not only something that happens with or to people, but also a process that they participate in, contributing to the process that is unfolding, changing us and the world in significant ways.

Mothlabi (2001:121) argues that the dominant forms or elements of globalisation are the economy and politics and even politics in service of economics. Moreover, Western countries are in charge of the economy and are, therefore, the main beneficiaries thereof especially at the cost of developing countries (Mothlabi 2001:121). The West maintains this dominant position in the economy and politics, motivated by power, wealth and cultural imperialism – a form of neo-colonisation under the pretext of globalisation (Mothlabi 2001:124).

A very basic understanding of globalisation entails the flow of money, people and basically every possible thing. As Bauman (1998) puts it:

> [*M*]obility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values … All of us are willy-nilly, by design or by default, on the move. We are on the move even if, physically, we stay put: immobility is not a realistic option in a world of permanent change. (p. 2)

This flow, however, is not linear or equal. In other words, the impact of globalisation is not experienced in the same way everywhere and by everyone, and although in general it is painted as a process that has positive effects, this is not always the case. For some it is bound up with being happy, whilst for others it is the cause of unhappiness (Bauman 1998:1). Therefore, Oyleye (2014:58) concludes that one of the defining characteristics of

globalised neoliberalism is the inequality of benefits. Cole and Durham (eds. 2007:4) corroborate this view by pointing out that the South, specifically Africa and Latin America, is notably poorer than the North.

One could say that a double movement is traceable regarding the impact of globalisation. There is a dark side to globalisation, which includes the flow of illegal deals and practices like terrorism, counterfeiting goods and also fake news (Meyers 2016:43). Oyeleye (2014:65) describes the effect as collateral damage, referring to the messy way of delivering progress, wherein disruption is needed to sustain the process. Although neoliberalism proclaims winners, it seems to create more losers.

With reference to the work of Harvey (2005) and O' Hara (2005), Oyleye (2014:64) describes this double movement caused by globalisation as creative destruction. This means that free-market activities create risks and opportunities, wealth and poverty, inclusion and exclusion, integration and fragmentation at the same time. In light of this description, it can be concluded that creative destruction is an essential part of capitalism, signifying its inherent logic, and, therefore, a useful concept to understand the contradictory tendencies of capitalism.

Generations and globalisation

Globalisation is embedded within, and especially shaped by, the context of family and different generations, and vice versa. This process is described as social reproduction (eds. Cole & Durham 2007):

> [*A*] combination of familial, economic, state and local community structures; changes in these structures shape how, where, and with whom children are raised or the end of life is negotiated. (p. 6)

Therefore, age is a particularly useful lens through which social processes such as globalisation can be understood and examined. Furthermore, not only do generations take social processes forward, but they also shape them because intergenerational

links are some of the most intimate and powerful links in social life (eds. Cole & Durham 2007:2). Jansen (1974:10) conducted a systematic sociological analysis of the core elements of generational theory for the purpose of interpreting human existence in society and variations in this existence. She argued that the prerequisites for a generation include a certain time dimension, a particular historical context and a certain lifestyle. These three elements inform the values and the way of living of a generation. A generation reflects on the existing ideas of previous generations and develops similar, although not radically different, perspectives in a process of meaning-making. 'A generation is the concrete social form of perspectives' (Jansen 1974:13). These perspectives include certain values that give direction to a certain way of living and way of being in the world. Nowadays, youth are affecting change much faster than previous generations because they now have the responsibility to craft a script to live by without much input from previous generations, because the rapid changes in society make existing ways of living outdated and less useful. To a certain extent one could argue that the current generation (the youth) is better suited to assist other generations to navigate a new appropriate way of living today. This, however, does not mean that previous generations have nothing to contribute, but there has been a shift in the power that was previously held by older generations. Philipps (2018:2–3) made a valuable contribution to the understanding of young people within the generational framework from bounded cultural and historical regions. This viewpoint is motivated by one of the most significant generational social changes, namely, increasing connectedness.

Whilst previous generations were shaped by their regional and immediate environment, today's generations are exposed to a world where cultural resources are shared via virtual spaces. This does not mean that they automatically embrace globalisation or that it leads to homogenisation. Moreover, it does not imply that the youth engage with this connectedness and access to global cultural sources in the same manner, and, therefore, we should never generalise with respect to the youth. In Africa, youth

is a decisive category, as it keeps growing whilst the youth populations across the world are shrinking (Philipps 2018:6).

Globalisation and the restructuring of youth identity

The development of the youth as a social category links with socio-economic developments. One could argue that young people as a social category was institutionalised in a significant way since the onset of industrialisation, and is, therefore, still today closely linked with economic conditions and activities worldwide. Root (2007:27) explained that initially children worked alongside parents and, therefore, acted like adults. Size, and not age, was, therefore, a decisive factor as it was connected to the potential for labour. As industrialisation changed the way economy functions and employment became scarce and, therefore, more competitive, children became less favoured as labourers. As a result, in previous generations, adolescence was not considered from a bio-psychological perspective as a specific life stage with specific life tasks, as we came to know it. Neither did schooling play a significant role in children's lives as it does today. As changes regarding labour continued, the impact on family life became more evident. Technological development has been at the heart of the rapid economic, political and cultural changes over the past decades. Mechanisation, electrification and digitalisation have a significant impact on labour around the world, like the fact that fewer workers are needed, leading to greater competition in the labour market. In this context, schools became one of the primary institutions the youth attend, where youth culture is developed, signifying the youth's own way of living and their own meaning-making process. More importantly, it also implies decreasing contact with adults (Cloete 2012:1).

There is, however, no single youth culture, but several subcultures, and, therefore, the need for the continual study of the youth, as it can at best be described as a shifting concept and

lived reality. I found the response of White (2016) to the book of Kriges (2015), entitled *In search of adolescence: A new look at an old idea*, very helpful in understanding what is meant by the youth as a social construction. The idea of being socially constructed is of importance for this chapter, as it demonstrates the fluidness of the social category, as well as the lived experiences of youth. Of course, all generations are affected by globalisation; however, as the focus here is on youth, I single out the impact on them. White (2016:117) explained that social construction means that the same biological entity can be subjected to totally different roles and meanings. Moreover, the meaning and roles of the youth have changed dramatically during modern times.

The youth as a social category is not necessarily new, as Kirgiss (2015) rightly argued in her book, but their lived experiences and how they are perceived change continuously. Part of what seems to be evidence of tracing a moving target is that the youth has been labelled and perceived in almost paradoxical terms. This is reflected in research on the youth with titles like *Makers and breakers: children and youth in postcolonial Africa* (Honwana & De Boeck 2005). Youth (-fulness) is often desired and feared, viewed as full of potential but also inclined to criminality and disorder at the same time. Although Sukarieh and Tannock (2011) noted that there have been noticeable shifts towards a more positive view of youth, everyday experience seems to indicate that the deficit thinking about youth is continuous. As part of this positive discourse on youth, they are, for instance, referred to as assets and resources instead of financial liabilities. I understand this so-called positive youth development, at least partially, as the social construct of youth in a globalised world of capitalism, which looks upon it as a resource to be utilised for their ends, using positive language.

The changes regarding adolescence with specific reference to industrialised society are also theorised by Arnett (2000). The changes are described in terms of changes in family life as marriage and parenthood are delayed. In light of these changes,

Arnett (2000:469) proposed a new theory of development for late adolescence, namely, emerging adulthood, when young persons are neither adolescents nor young adults. According to Arnett (2000:470), '[l]ike adolescence, emerging adulthood is a period of the life course that is culturally constructed, not universal and immutable'. In a similar fashion, Honwana (2012:19) described the extended adolescence, previously described as emerging adulthood, as '...*Waithood,* a prolonged and uncertain stage between childhood and adulthood ... characterised by their inability to enter the labour market and attain the social markers of adulthood'. It is important to note that waithood involves a negotiation of personal identity and financial dependency (Honwana 2012:24).

Honwana (2012:20) argued that the majority of the youth in Africa live in waithood, as they cannot make the transition to adulthood, especially through participating in the labour market. This, however, is not their fault, but because of the changes in socio-economic and cultural factors that are reshaping history. Therefore, we cannot uncritically assume that the youth have a linear timetable of transitioning from one phase to another. With reference to the work of Calvés, Kobiane and Martel (2007), she stated (Honwana 2012) that:

> The traditional path to adulthood has gradually been eroded by urbanization, modernization and globalization, as youth increasingly migrate to urban centers for schooling or employment. Formal education became one of the principal agents of socializing and training the next generation. (p. 23)

The previous discussion makes it clear that how youth are understood, and how they are positioned in society, is intertwined with especially the economic system. Therefore, Oyeleye (2014:58–59) argued that globalisation and neoliberalism have negative outcomes, especially for the youth, because of their neglect and exclusion from the restructuring of the national and global economic and political processes, which, in turn, lead to increased vulnerability of households and social instability. In the words of Ruddick (2003):

> [*T*]he process and politics of exclusion linked to globalisation, therefore, are mapped as much onto divisions between old and young as onto those between rich and poor, white and non-white. (p. 340)

The most recognisable face of exclusion from these processes is the high unemployment rate amongst the youth (Oyeleye 2014:61). Moreover, the inadequate responses from political establishments to address these challenges that young people face exacerbate the experience of exclusion, insecurity and frustration (Oyeleye 2014:63). The question begs how such a system can be allowed to continue when it excludes the biggest section of the population around the world whilst concentrating wealth amongst the already employed and successful (Ruddick 2003:338).

It is, therefore, safer to argue that these consistent and accelerated changes, especially in the economic systems, lead to the redefinition of youth and its meaning. Ruddick (2003:335) also noted that youth and childhood are being reframed, and discussed such reframing around three positions of the youth, namely, exported, eroded and distended. Whilst the modern ideals for the youth have become hegemonic and exported to other parts of the world, the structures and sources that should enable these ideals are lacking. Instead of providing the structures and resources for the youth, policies around them are developed to serve the neoliberal agenda. Therefore, the period of being young is re-organised and displaced. The distention of youth has many faces, like emotional and economical dependency and uncertainty (Ruddick 2003:354).

The process of identity formation from a psychological perspective has always been central to the developmental phase of youth and, as explained in the previous section, structures that should enable this process are lacking. The quest for identity formation, however, has not changed, but has to be undertaken under different circumstances by all, and not only young people. Bauman (2001:146) argued that this identity formation process is now an individualised process because institutions that assist in facilitating the process of identity formation are also dissolving.

Even more problematic is the fact that the shape and content of the process have also changed and they can no longer be approached as pilgrims who just have to be prepared to overcome several obstacles to reach their destination. Today the question regarding identity formation is not where the script is, but how flexible people are at adapting to a new direction and road scheme (Bauman 2001:147). In a sense, the quest is not so much about finding and solidifying certain identity markers, as such a frame will soon be outdated or irrelevant. As a result, settling for some form of identity is, ironically, not the goal anymore. Therefore, Bauman (2001:152) concluded that it is more plausible to speak of identification, implying a continuous, open-ended process, instead of identity as a stable process with an end goal.

Youth resistance

Young people are not passive receivers of the impact of globalised economy and its devastating effect on them. Instead, especially in the last few years, they have actively demonstrated their discontent and even anger at political and economic processes that excluded and marginalised them. Nel (2014:1–2) argued that the structural nature of the challenges the youth face should be understood first in order to understand '… the genesis and the development of youth activism…'. He phrased the new struggle the youth face as 'the struggle against marginalisation'.

Iwilade (2013:1057) pointed out that in this context of crisis (exclusion and marginalisation), the youth create opportunities to engage with this oppressive system. In several African countries, young people utilised different forms of social media to form a critical mass and create platforms for engagement and, more importantly, for raising their voice against the oppression and marginalisation done by their respective governments. For example, during September 2010, protests erupted in Mozambique over the rise in living costs; Twitter, short message service and Facebook were used to denounce the fact that mainstream media

did not cover these protests (Iwilade 2013:1061). Similar protests took place in Nigeria in 2012 after the announcement that the subsidy for fuel would be withdrawn (Iwilade 2013:1062). The use of the media is embedded in the youth culture; therefore, interestingly, whilst globalisation is mainly driven by sophisticated technology that excludes the youth, it on the contrary provides them with helpful platforms to demonstrate their resistance. Other examples worth mentioning here are the campaigns #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall in 2016 in South Africa, which were also mainly orchestrated and driven on social media platforms.

Bosch (2016:4), in an insightful article on the #RhodesMustFall campaign, argued that the Internet and social media play a key role in activism in the Global South. She motivated this by elaborating on the nature of these media platforms. A large number of contacts can easily be reached, forming a critical mass and constructing a group identity. Information can be shared locally and internationally all the time (24/7) to update followers and also to inspire them towards a common goal. The information and discussion are also integrated with offline communication and meetings to strengthen the campaign. Although social media can also be used in very destructive ways, it is clear from these examples that it is extremely helpful for young people to negotiate power and interrupt dominant discourses. In the case of #RhodesMustFall, Bosch (2016:9) argued that social media gave a platform for voicing the pain felt by black people, whilst at the same time providing room for the voicing and acknowledgement of other arguments. It can, therefore, be concluded that the use of social media fosters the participation of the youth in political and economic issues.

Jansen (2016:212) listed similar affordances and usages of social media during the #FeesMustFall protests at different universities in South Africa. One of the important effects of the use of social media to organise the protest was that it was not possible to identify a single leader of the movement, as the group

consisted of participating individuals, and their messages were instantaneous and far-reaching, outsmarting traditional media in several ways. It is important to note that the use of different social media platforms at the same time also bypassed authority (power) at these intuitions, which is often presented in different hierarchical structures. These protests should be seen within the context of growing inequality in South Africa and the promises still unfulfilled by the governing party regarding prioritising education as one of the prominent ways of addressing poverty and unemployment.

Religion in a digital age

Religion is indeed multifaceted and, therefore, several elements can be identified, such as myths, guidelines for living, rituals, experience and transcendence (Singleton 2014:9). Participation in these different practices is informed and crafted by religious traditions within local faith communities. Participation in religious practices and beliefs is often centred on the understanding of certain sacred texts, providing a certain identity to participants that offers motivation for how they live their lives. The meaning of this participation is by and large understood as religiosity. In the recent past, these practices were mostly performed as part of a physical gathering in what is regarded as a sacred place such as a church or mosque. Although this kind of gathering is still prominent in the South African context, other spaces have also become evident, which can be directly related to the usage and affordances of different forms of media. The information era, facilitated mainly by a variety of digital devices and platforms, not only provides information about religion (religion online) but also creates spaces where certain kinds of religious participation can take place and be experienced (online religion) (Cloete 2015:4).

In line with the work of Hjarvard (2011), I argue that these interactive opportunities created by digital platforms imply that the media acquire power to frame and define religion. It is

important to note that the manner in which community is shaped and formed in these spaces is different, but seems to fulfil functions similar to offline spaces. Moreover, the religious identity formed through a combination of online and offline religion is more fluid as participants are exposed to a variety of religious ideas and experiences that do not necessarily represent a specific religious tradition or denomination. Furthermore, commitment is also framed differently as participants can stay or leave on their own terms, implying less mutual responsibility and interdependency, because these networks are built around individualised interest (Cloete 2015:5).

In line with Bauman's (2001) understanding of liquid modernity, where identity formation becomes an individualised project in the context of melting institutions, De Groot (2006:97) argued that people's attitudes towards institutions like churches have also become individualised. This means that it is not a given that churches present and provide symbolic and social structure, as people may choose to make use of an institution, or not, in their process of meaning-making.

Religion is a social construct and is, therefore, shaped and formed by the forms that mediate it, in order to be translated for new generations in a changing context. Therefore, digital religion (online religion and religion online) is different from traditional forms because it is directed and mediated by a specific form of medium (Cloete 2016:2). Because there is greater input in terms of choice to participate or leave according to personal needs and preferences, institutionalised religiosity is giving way to a more individualised form of spirituality. 'Religion in this context is understood more in terms of personal experience than cognitive knowledge often associated with religious institutions' (Cloete 2016:4). The movement to a more individualised form of spirituality, chosen from a variety of traditions (broccoli spirituality), implies that the authority shifts from institutions to the media audience who exercise their choice in a plural world and religious landscape. In my more recent work, it became clear how film as a specific medium has increasingly become a

meaningful source for religious education and faith formation, as well as a rich source for theological reflection (ed. Cloete 2019). Several chapters in that work demonstrate how the youth find films helpful in assisting them in their everyday challenges and provide a platform to discuss personal, societal and religious issues. In brief, it can be concluded that the youth find films, not only as an educational tool but also as fulfilling a religious function for guiding and inspiring them on how to live their lives.

Conclusion

Implications for youth ministry

It is apparent that what it means to be considered a youth or young person is continuously changing, facilitated by cultural, political and especially economic processes. Because youth is a developing concept, we should be asking who we are talking about when we refer to the youth in a youth ministry. Publications on youth ministry, especially from a theological perspective, seldom engage with this aspect. This could imply that we assume we know what the concept and lived reality of being considered a youth means. Do we take into consideration the fluidness of the category and the economic and political contexts that inform this fluidness? To be in constant flux means some sort of instability and uncertainty, and, therefore, our ministry should map a new path for identity formation that is not only a psychological process but also a spiritual one.

The discussion presented in this chapter gave a vivid overview of the inter-relatedness of the youth as a social category and especially economic conditions. Neoliberalism as the current economic policy is affecting young people in an extremely negative way as expressed through the high unemployment figures. The question is: 'does youth ministry take note of this extreme impact on the lives and future expectations and prospects of youth and, more importantly, what responsibilities does this lay on the ministry?' Youth ministry cannot only be concerned with spiritual issues and needs, but has to focus on a

holistic ministry to and with young people. As argued, the youth are marginalised from processes and structures that should help them in their identity formation process. For church ministries to grasp the impact of this marginalisation, we have to become involved in the economic and political lives of the people we claim to serve. For the church, as a social analyst, it is therefore paramount to understand its own role within a specific time and context. Nel (2014:3–4) argued that an important and appropriate way of responding to the marginalisation of the youth from a theological perspective is through discernment. Discernment, as understood from an Old Testament perspective, signifies the process of interpreting in order to understand what is happening amongst God's people. This hermeneutic and analytic process is in service of transformation and not merely mechanical. As we come to understand what is happening in a specific time and context, we should also discern God's continuous presence and action in the world. Furthermore, the cyclical process of discernment is more than an academic endeavour to produce reports and research results, but a spiritual process in which we take responsibility for what is happening and what ought to be happening in the world.

I believe marginalisation is primarily an issue of justice. The term 'marginalisation' suggests that there is a centre that operates in a way that pushes others to the margins. As discussed earlier on the youth and globalisation, the way this complex system operates excludes the most vulnerable in society, that is, children and young people. Although there are certain, often over-rated, gains from globalisation, the lived experience of being marginalised seems to be caused and sustained by globalisation through neoliberal capitalism. Hand in hand with marginalisation goes the division of people along the lines of class and race, especially in South Africa. Therefore, as long as most young people are locked out from economic participation, unity and peace are threatened and is the goal an unattainable dream, particularly in Africa. In such a context, churches should participate in opportunities that teach the youth about democracy, politics and justice, as life is political and not only spiritual.

The salvation that especially Christian churches proclaim is not only concerned with life after death, but it has also implications for life now. The integration of everyday life experiences in what it means to be and live in the world is an important aspect of youth ministry. Christianity has theological resources, namely, religious traditions and texts which speak about life in all its different aspects to be unlocked and appreciated in a context such as this. Hope, as a central aspect of Christianity, should inspire and direct the church to tirelessly work towards justice, as we believe that a different world is possible (Ross 2014:248).

Whilst I am positive and convinced that churches could and should play a role in addressing inequality, and in particular youth marginalisation, I need to return to the fluidness of the world as discussed with reference to Bauman (2001) and how personal choice becomes a decisive factor, also in relation to the church as a social institution. As discussed, other spaces like media platforms that fit better within the youth culture are becoming resources and sources of religion. This has implications for how the youth, for instance, understand being religious and the role of religion in society and their personal lives. The question is: 'how does the church as an institution function in such a fluid context, where its importance and impact partially depend on people's choices?' In a sense, this implies that the church operates on the margin in terms of its impact and influence on people's worldview and everyday living.

These challenges can be described as how the church understands its role to engage (encounter) and counter culture at the same time. In other words, to be accessible and meaningful, the church should participate in culture and at the same time should counter actions and attitudes that are part of the culture and threaten the common good. In my view, the individualisation that seems to be a characteristic of life today should be countered by religion. If we project to the youth that they should only be concerned about what feels good and comfortable to them, without them taking responsibility for their neighbour

and society, we are indeed on a path of destruction. Part of countering this attitude is to expose young people to different contexts, culturally and religiously, in order to not only cognitively learn from them but also for them to become aware of their responsibility towards the other (neighbour).

Moreover, we should rethink forms of being church today. Wyers and Saayman (2013:2) engaged with the question of how people relate to the institutional church in different times. They postulated that being church is an ongoing process in which creativity and a wider understanding of church are important. How does the church stay true to its message and missiological character and mandate, and remain accessible and meaningful in a changing context? It is beyond the scope of this chapter to meaningfully engage with this important but complex question and answer; however, I would like to at least provide a few pointers in response to the challenge. In my view, a good starting point is to acknowledge and appreciate the everyday actions and experiences of young people, as well as the 'new' religious language they use to talk about and seek transcendence. This means that the institutional church should recognise the work of God outside the church and how that should inform being church today.

Wijnen and Barnard (2014:7) formulated the question as follows: 'how can youth ministry respond to both the youth culture and the culture of the church?' They argued that the social context determines the identity and faith development of adolescents to a great extent. In this social context, there is no clear distinction between the church and the world. The institutional church unfortunately operates within a framework in which this distinction is supported. Therefore, the manner in which activities of faith formation within the church are delivered does not acknowledge the life world of the youth, causing a mismatch between how the church presents (teaches) faith and how the youth organise their lives in relation to that faith (Wijnen & Barnard 2014:7) One noteworthy area they mentioned

is the mismatch between traditional faith language, which is mainly focused on cognitive knowledge, and the daily life of youth, which informs the way they think and talk about their lives, also the religious aspect.

From a sociological perspective, the youth is viewed as a suitable lens for understanding other social processes such as globalisation. Dean (2011:35) holds a similar view from a theological perspective and is of the opinion that 'youth ministry's greatest potential may lie in its ability to reimagine church on behalf of the wider Christian community...'. The youth can thus serve as a hermeneutical key to understand culture and how to engage with it as church.

Chapter 4

Christ-connected discipleship as comfort in a globalised world with a fear of missing out

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Abstract

In a globalised world it is important to stay connected; otherwise, you might miss out on some important information. Most emerging adults live with a fear of missing out (FoMO). Emerging young adults are increasingly seeking to build and maintain an online profile and personal network for different reasons. The sad reality is that in their endeavour to maintain global connectedness,

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they tend to, although unintentionally, disconnect themselves from their immediate environment, with profound implications for families, children and youth. Online connectedness gives people a sense of power. It not only empowers but also makes people, especially emerging young adults, vulnerable in a personal, social and economic way. In this respect, this chapter argues for the importance of Christ-connected discipleship, which might be a strange concept in the postmodern electronic context in which many people fear rejection, despair, loneliness and a feeling of worthlessness.

Keywords: Discipleship; Global world; Social media platforms; Emerging adults; Christ-connectedness.

Background

This chapter was written from a South African perspective where international sociopolitical and economic factors have a continuous direct or indirect influence on the local community. In this fast-changing globalised world, almost every emerging young adult in (South) Africa is connected in one way or another to the global world, either through a mobile phone or through access to electronic media, although many may never have worked on a computer. In a post-modern (South) Africa, people are, on the one hand, more connected than ever before via social and electronic media, and on the other hand, they are 'glocally'[1] more disconnected than ever before because of polarisation, populism, protectionism, post-truth and patriarchy, which are also known as the five Ps (Jackelen 2019:14). Associated with the extensive use of social media is a new phenomenon termed the 'fear of missing out' indicated by the acronym FoMO (Alt 2018):

> FoMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing and is especially associated with social media technologies which provide constant opportunity for comparison of one's status. (p. 128)

1. The term 'glocal' refers to both the global and the local context.

The changing face and demands of the globalised world on humanity – for example, climate change and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (digitalisation and artificial intelligence) – are still not clearly known (Jackelen 2019:19). In this well-connected world, as well as in faith communities, there are aspects like the five Ps that endanger solidarity between states, faith communities, families and individuals. There is a centripetal movement towards economic integration (e.g. urbanisation) and at the same time a centrifugal movement towards political anomie and the fragmentation of relations and families (Maggay 2017:2). The wonder of being globally connected has both a positive and a negative influence in an indirect, or direct, way on people as spiritual beings and on their family relationships. The reasons for the fragmentation are more complex and diverse but have mainly to do with the five Ps. Humanity is also in need of solidarity, another kind of connectedness, to cope with and address the challenges of the global world. In this regard, this chapter argues for a Christ-connectedness and human relations.

Essential human relations are relationship with God or a supreme being, with the neighbour, with the self and with creation. From an African and relational perspective within this fast-changing world where to be connected is almost a requirement for a purposeful living, there is a need for an in-depth reflection on the signs of the times and the impact of a post-modern culture on, in many instances, still a traditional African culture as lived in the rural areas of South Africa. Some of the signs related to globalisation are the urge to stay connected globally with 'every important person' and the FoMO, as well as the reality to become disconnected from deep relations with the immediate environment with profound implications for families, children and youth. It is against this background that this chapter attends to themes of connectedness and belonging, globalised FoMO versus local belonging, connectedness as power, empowerment and vulnerability, and transforming discipleship as connectedness.

A probing question is: 'what does the church (in South Africa) witness in this globalised connected world that induces us to participate and testify?' In the discussion that follows, it will be acknowledged that social connectedness (1) brings a sense of belonging, (2) contributes to physical health, and (3) creates power, empowerment and vulnerability. The question this chapter wants to address is: 'how Christ-connected discipleship can enhance connectedness and comfort people who live with a FoMO in a greed-driven globalised world?' The hermeneutical approach that will be used aims to study the needs, wants and characteristics of 'glocalised' people from a Trinitarian missional perspective of transforming discipleship.

Connectedness and belonging

One of the most important characteristics of the Trinitarian God of the Bible is the fact that he is God in communion. He is God in relationships. He is God in connectedness and he is the God of belonging. God remains the same, even though our contexts are continuously changing, and whenever the gospel enters a new context, the respondents to the gospel must decide what they will do with many of the old aspects of their culture. Thinking about Christ-connectedness, Kunhiyop (2012:9–10) argued for the concept of community, especially a redeemed community from the covenant with Abraham (Gn 12), as well as the images that are used for the church in the New Testament. This community embodied an alternative life as a sign of connectedness and belonging to God. This alternative life is also a sign of unity which is no 'longer divided by former distinctions of ethnicity, social status and gender' (Gl 3:28). However, the community connected and belonging to God is also connected and belonging to this world with the purpose of making God known in this world. How are we to deal with this alternative life and unity where social electronic platforms connect a global world?

From a (South) African perspective, connectedness to the globalised and fast-changing world has contributed to a 'greed-

driven economy [that] has effectively replaced the regime of justice and equity with mammon' (Coorilos 2018:315). In this globalised connected world, more than two-thirds of people are being excluded from the 'global middle-class', and therefore it begins to look like a new slavery (Maggay 2017):

> Through global media, our people are exposed to rising levels of wants while at the same time trapped in misery. These rising expectations can be a threat to political safety. Poverty is not bearable when media floods us with images of fabulous wealth, and the glitzy lives of the rich somehow make us feel diminished. (p. 3, 6)

In Africa, violence and murders amongst emerging adults have become more common than what they were in previous decades. Because not much research on emerging adults and the influence of social media within the South African context has been conducted, this chapter assumes that social media is one of the role-players in the growing violence amongst emerging adults in Africa. Barber and Santuzzi (2017:14) indicated that traditional college-aged young adults are more connected via social networking sites than ever before. Pew Research Center (2015) reported that in America the most common usages for smartphones amongst young adults are geared towards social interactions: text messaging (100%), voice calls (93%), email (91%) and social networking sites (91%). With these high statistics, it is important to note what Knausenberger and Echterhoff (2018:1) argued that people with higher belongingness needs use social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) more frequently. The authors indicated that the FoMO creates emotions of sadness and enhances engagement in social activities as an alternative to seek direct personal contact and support. People can and opt to restore belongingness needs by using social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. According to Knausenberger and Echterhoff (2018:2), '[o]ne aspect that is associated with feelings of belongingness is collectivistic vs. individualistic orientation'. The authors argued that most of the above statistics is corresponding or developing in the same directions within the South African context. The FoMO

in South Africa on university campuses probably cultivated aggression and the destruction of institutional property during the 2015 and 2016 students' riots.

Zhang et al. (2019:3–4) stated that about 68% of the world's population view religion as an important aspect of their lives. In South Africa, almost 80% of the population view themselves as Christians. 'Participation in religious groups help [*sic*] religious individuals experience higher levels of belonging and meaning' (Zhang et al. 2019:3–4). However, these levels differ between the diverse religious groups (where belonging is lower) and homogeneous religious groups (where belonging is higher). With such high percentages indicating the importance of spirituality in the lives of people, the question must be asked about the role of religion in a globalised world. More precisely, within South Africa with its high indication of Christianity, the question about the role of Christianity within a glocalised South Africa needs to be asked. Religion and religious groups help with creating a sense of belongingness and connectedness to this world by answering important theodicy questions, such as: 'why do we exist?', 'what is important in life?', 'why is there pain and suffering?' and 'what happens after death?' In general, all these worldview questions are concerned with connectedness and belonging in a spiritual or even philosophical way, whereas social media platforms create a practical sense of connectedness and belonging. The answers to these worldview questions are also concerned with the context and culture from which they are asked, and in many instances, a globalised connectedness gives alternative answers.

Globalised fear of missing out versus local belonging amongst emerging adults in Africa

Ogachi, Karega and Oteyo (2018) conducted a study amongst students in two Kenyan universities about the relationship between pathological Internet use (PIU) and depression and found some interesting results. Pathological Internet use is linked

to the FoMO and can be described as the compulsive and continuous use of the Internet with negative consequences for family, social and academic life. A global social and electronic connectedness and sense of belonging have a negative impact on local and existing connectedness and belonging. Different forms of PIU include pornography, playing games and online chatting (Ogachi et al. 2018). Ogachi et al. (2018:202) found that '27% of Nigerian teenagers with access to the Internet are addicted to pornography', although in South Africa the prevalence of PIU is amongst 5% of the population. One of the reasons is that it is more predominant amongst university students, as they usually have access to free Internet/connectedness on campus 24/7. Research has also found that students use the 'Internet more for socialisation and entertainment purposes than for academic work' (Alt 2018:129; Ogachi et al. 2018:202). Ogachi et al. (2018:202) concluded that the reasons for PIU might be 'low self-esteem, isolation, fear of rejection and the need for affirmation', whereas Alt (2018:129) mentioned that some scholars view depression as 'a result of social isolation associated with internet addiction'. This corresponds with the fact that Facebook addiction shows the same behaviour patterns as, for example, gambling or shopping addiction (Alt 2018:129).

According to Alt (2018:130), emerging adults who do not have a proper sense of belonging and connectedness with their immediate environment 'reported higher levels of FoMO and increased behavioural engagement with social media'. However, not everything is negatively related to global connectedness and belonging. There are a number of significant benefits for students who frequently use online social networks for active and collaborative learning. These include 'delivering educational outcomes; facilitating supportive relationships; identity formation; and, self-esteem, and promoting a sense of belonging' (Alt 2018:129).

What does the church witness to and how must it testify? The church that is relevant will testify towards its social presence in public spaces, which includes, in this case, a presence on social

platforms through space-making, hospitality and compassion. The church's presence in social spaces includes testifying to the Trinitarian God within the paradigm of his love and reimagining these spaces (Adiprasety & Sasongko 2019:21–22). Love as the main characteristic of the Trinitarian God is being preached in many ways and may be described in the following three forms: *agape, philia* and *eros* (Adiprasety & Sasongko 2019):

> *Agape* is God's 'creative love', a love which emphasizes life in all its bountiful manifestations, a love which delights in the existence of others and nourishes them. *Eros* is God's 'salvific love', a love which desires the others to find wholeness and liberation, a love which draws the others to Godself. Meanwhile, *philia* is God's 'sustaining love', a love which expresses the joyful relationship of all beings with one another and with the wellspring of being – the God of life. (p. 23)

In a globalised world where people would do almost anything to stay connected and belong, the church is found in the *agape* love of the Father, inspired and formed by the *eros* love of Christ, and living the *philia* [friendly] love under the guidance of the Spirit to create public spaces of connectedness and belonging. This links well with John 15:13 where *philia* is described as sacrificial love, when this love is proved by laying down one's own life for that of one's friend. From the above it is clear that connectedness and belonging in the faith community are concerned with love and relationships. From this perspective, we will now attend to connectedness as power, empowerment and vulnerability.

Connectedness: Power, empowerment and vulnerability

Social media platforms are used in different ways by different people for different purposes. Examples of how mobile phones were used by emerging adults to gain power are, for example, the #FeesMustFall movement in South Africa and the Arab Spring in Egypt, which forced the respective governments to make profound changes in their policies (Knoetze 2017:6). Some

individuals also use social media platforms to gain power over other individuals through blackmailing or threats of blackmailing, for example, in instances of human trafficking. Social media platforms, however, are in many instances also very empowering, for example, through providing new knowledge and creating contact and important services to very remote areas. Again, the examples of the Arab Spring and the #FeesMustFall movements may be used as examples of how social media put power in the hands of the people. Thus, social media also serves as examples of the vulnerability of powers, governments, institutions, families and individuals within the context of social media platforms. In the rest of this section, attention will be given to the unique use of social media platforms in Africa.

In a study in sub-Sahara Africa, more specifically the rural areas of Uganda, Pearson, Mack and Namanya (2017:n.p.) found that mobile 'phones are important tools for social connection and therefore beneficial for maintaining family ties', especially for the well-being of emerging adults with no family nearby, for example, because of urbanisation. They indicated that this is different from findings in the developed world where mobile phone connectivity contributes to technology-related stress.

The research in 'sub-Saharan Africa indicates that mobile phones may be very important tools for social connection, banking, for accessing help and health care, income generation, safety and even resistance and activism' (Pearson et al. 2017:1). However, because of economic reasons, it was found that 'many Africans share phones and use them on a pay-per-use basis' (Pearson et al. 2017:1). The contribution of mobile phones, especially iPhones, in the connectivity of sub-Saharan African people can be summarised along the following aspects: participation in money transfer systems, for example, M-Pesa application in Kenya; 'improving the physical health of people in developing countries' (Pearson et al. 2017:1), for example, in health education; and the app SIMpill that reminds patients to take their medication. However, in poor families there are also

indications that spending more money on phones has a destructive impact on family earnings and buying basic life necessities (Pearson et al. 2017:3). The conclusion is made that the oral cultural context of sub-Saharan Africa has an influence and impact on mobile phone use. Again, African countries are different from developed countries where this technology contributes to negative mental health issues resulting in poor sleep, information overload and compulsive phone usage (Alt 2018:129; Pearson et al. 2017:3).

Within the African context, it is clear that social connectivity through mobile phones has an empowering influence on society, regarding banking, health issues and distant relations. However, in the American context where there are many more options for banking and health options than that in Africa, Barber and Santuzzi (2017:14) reported the following personal characteristics: individual differences in impression management, rejection sensitivity, self-control and the FoMO on social activities. They (Barber & Santuzzi 2017) also stated that the way we react 'allocating more resources to "have to" versus "want to" demands can lead to poorer health and well-being':

> [*A*]lthough all types of social interactions qualify as time demands, employed students may see their social obligations at work as 'have to' demands that significantly interfere with more 'want to' social interactions with friends or family. (p. 14)

Within the global context and the enhancement of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and human nature in the emerging adult years, it is important to pretend to be invulnerable, strong and powerful, and not to make too many mistakes. Therefore, within this context, the first testimony of the church must be about its own vulnerability, lack of power and mistakes, because the church is also connected and also belongs within this context and, therefore, has to deal with it in a way that testifies to its connectedness and belonging to a powerful and vulnerable God. Both God's power and vulnerability are found in his love for this world.

Therefore, when Christ-connected discipleship is lived or practised from the position of power and invulnerability, the church has lost its Christ-connectedness, identity and integrity. 'One may say that "learning" and coming to terms with "our" own brokenness is almost a prerequisite for disciple-making churches' (Nel 2015:4). In this fashion, I would argue that vulnerability is a prerequisite for the church to testify in this global context. Nel (2015) also stated from different perspectives the imperfect church, the broken church, the 'inside' church and the 'outside' church:

> Even the most convinced Christians should recognize themselves as 'outsiders'. We who are in the church should remember that the church is indeed a 'heathen church', a 'tax collector church' – meaning that we as people in the church plead with God to have mercy on us 'pitiful sinners'. To be faithful in mission we are asked to 'turn around' (convert). (p. 5)

The second testimony of the church relates to an openness to the future and its unpredictability. However, one may ask, what is the future? Many Christians think of the future in eschatological terms, but in John 17:3, Jesus prayed, '[n]ow this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent'. Therefore, the future is not about the end time, it is about the life that we live now. A life connected to Christ which we cannot master or predict because it is always beyond our efforts. Jesus who calls us his friend – *philos* – invited us to live to our full potential here and now, and when we say 'yes' to his invitation, we become part of his community.

Connected to the Trinitarian God and belonging to his community, the third testimony of the church is a testimony of compassion. Many documents (e.g. World Council of Churches 2013) and confessions (e.g. Belhar Confession 1986) teach us that the Trinitarian God is a God for the marginalised, the vulnerable and the lonely. 'Because the three persons can be seen as ultimate community of friends, the divine friendship always extends towards those outside, inviting the others to be companions' (Adiprasety & Sasongko 2019:30).

Profile(s) and identity

By accepting *agape* – God's 'creational love' – we need to acknowledge that God has finished with creating, but he has never finished his creation. As such, we are who we are as God created us, but we are also always *becoming* as God has not finished with us. Therefore, identity is always developing, growing and evolving. This can be best observed in the way people are constantly changing their profiles without being able to change who they are. Having a socially accepted profile is important, especially for emerging adults who prefer virtual communication, using social networks that are characterised by the importance of everyday life. I agree with Direktor et al. (2019) that the place and importance of social media platforms to build a profile in the individual's experience are increasing day by day:

> Sharing something on social networks can be counted as self-representation, self-promotion and making themselves public to others about their feeling, opinions, political opinions, likes, dislikes and other personality features that only be knowable by individuals who are close to them. (p. 319)

Two-thirds of Internet users are members of social media networking sites. People, particularly emerging adults, like to be socially accepted in certain environments, and it seems as if social networks and other social networking places give emerging adults the opportunity to create their own safe, socially accepted environments in cyberlife (Direktor et al. 2019:319). Although emerging adults are connected globally on social networks, many try to escape the reality of their everyday circumstances by creating a dream or false identity through fake profiles. Maggay (2017) explains it as follows:

> An African village could juxtapose some of the signs of pre-modern, modern and post-modern lives in a single space, encompassing the plough, the automobile, Coca Cola and Madonna's songs and semi-nude pictures. (p. 6)

This might also lead to an identity crisis for some emerging adults.

Although our identity is influenced by our world, and in that sense may be called a 'social construct', there is a biblical view on human identity that is much more than a social construct. As Christians we believe that human beings are created in the image of God [*imago Dei*], which implies that the creation of people was a purposeful act of God, and that the image of God is intrinsic to humankind; it is part and parcel of our identity. Because we are created in God's image, we cannot discover our real identity, if we ourselves and our happiness are the highest of our values (Erickson 2001:165–166). True identity is found in the connectedness to the Trinitarian God and the different faces of his love – *agape, eros* and *philia* – as discussed above. The implications of being created in God's image, according to Erickson (2001:168–169), are that we are not created to be independent and individualistic human beings; instead, we are – part of, connected and belonging to, and interdependent on – creation. However, human beings have a unique and special place in creation – we are stewards of creation. Furthermore, having dominion over it, we need to care for creation, especially as a group, because there is a common bond amongst human beings and because we share a common descent. Therefore, we are also connected to God and belong to God. Although humans are wonderful and special beings, having dominion over creation, they also have definite limitations because they are creatures and not God. It is especially in these limitations and vulnerability that our unique identity, which cannot really be captured by profiles, is visible. Therefore, from a Christian perspective, true human identity can only be discovered in the discipleship of Christ.

Discipleship and connectedness

In his discussion on mission as disciple-making, Bosch (1991:79–83) describes the context of the Matthean community as a community in transition, as well as a divided community. Similarly, the (South) African society is also in transition and pretty much divided, being 'made up of enthusiasts and legalists, with the main body probably somewhere in between' (Bosch 1991:80), with the five Ps – polarisation, populism, protectionism, post-truth and

patriarchy – also influencing the society. In addressing the identity of his community, Matthew 'clarifies the community's identity as an identity-in-mission' (Bosch 1991:80), more specifically, in disciple-making (Mt 28:16–19). In this regard, Matthew depicts Jesus as Immanuel– God with us (Mt 2:23) – until the end of time (Mt 28:20), and as the One with all authority in heaven and on earth. Accepting Matthew's paradigm, the church in (South) Africa must help Africa's communities, especially children and emerging adults, to find a new identity-in-mission, participating in the *missio Dei*. It is in this sense that connectedness to Jesus is an empowering comfort in a world of globalised and social media platforms. His *eros* – salvific love – connects us to him. He is with us till the end of time, not the other way around. 'In developing his missionary paradigm, Matthew is both traditional and innovative, a disposition which enables him to communicate with both "wings" of his community' (Bosch 1991:81). To become a disciple means to acknowledge Jesus' connectedness to us and irrevocably turning to both God and neighbour. 'To be a disciple is not just the same as being a member of a local "church," and "making disciples" does not simply mean the numerical expansion of the church' (Bosch (1991:82). In the Gospel of Matthew, Christians find their true identity when they obediently participate in the *missio Dei*, making disciples, communicating and living a new way of life, looking anew at reality and, because of Christ's connectedness, staying connected in a new way to others and creation, especially to the marginalised. With Christ-centred discipleship (Bevans 2018):

> Mission becomes central in Christian life because the disciple is connected to Christ in a powerful way through both baptism and Eucharist. The aim of mission is to connect people to Christ… (p. 375)

With the focus on emerging adults, I want to emphasise the need for a new understanding or a reinventing of the concept of discipleship to be understood as a call to mission, rather than a static concept like church membership, or personal relationship

with Jesus. 'If we do not transform local congregations into disciple youth we are, in a sense, labouring in vain' (Nel 2015:1), and the positive engagement with social media platforms may enhance our connectedness to emerging adults in Africa. It is in this regard that 'Christ-connectedness' is a more adequate expression of life in Christ, than the more traditional 'Christ-centredness'. Discipleship as a call to mission implies a certain openness towards the transforming work of the Spirit in our personal and communal lives. This openness to the work of the Spirit implies a certain Christ-connectedness which not only involves a personal connectedness to Christ, 'but also to be connected to Christ by walking the same walk that He walked' in the Spirit (Bevans 2018:366). Discipleship involves being sensitive to the needs of others, to live with open hearts and minds, and to recognise injustice, suffering, oppression and marginalisation. When discipleship is understood as a call to mission, discipleship becomes transforming discipleship. Discipleship is to be seen in all acts 'toward the eradication of any injustice, slavery, discrimination, exclusion, greed, and violence' (Bevans 2018:367). This is the role of the church in the global world: to hear the warnings and the fears of those with traditional views regarding the dangers of social media platforms and to take them seriously, and also to get excited about the innovative new testimony possibilities, new relations and new life possibilities via social media platforms.

It seems that in the global context the use of the term 'Christ-connectedness' as describing discipleship has several advantages. Firstly, it resonates well with traditional generations and with the innovative digital generation for whom 'connectivity' is important. Secondly, 'Christ-connectedness' is found in some of the images used in the Bible by Paul and John, giving it a more spiritual tone, for example, being clothed with Christ (Gl 3:27), being members of Christ's body (Rm 12 and 1 Cor 12), becoming a brother or sister of Christ through adoption (Rm 8:15), being connected as

the branches to the vine (Jn 15:5) and 'remaining' in Jesus' love (Jn 15:10). Thirdly, 'Christ-connectedness' has a more relational feel, 'we are connected to Christ as disciples, and Christ is connected to us' (Bevans 2018:375).

Transforming discipleship is about challenging 'the empires of our times', as well as the idolatries 'that try to replace the sovereignty of God with human power and money' (Coorilos 2018:315). Transforming discipleship includes 'mission from the margins', described in the World Council of Churches (2013) document *Together towards life* as a counter-cultural missiology. The purpose of mission as transforming discipleship is to challenge systems, cultures and people that want to remain at the centre, keeping others on the margins from our Christ-connectedness. Transforming discipleship is about being 'other and other-centric' whilst participating in the *missio Dei* and changing people's lives, particularly those from the margins of society.

Unfortunately, in a global world, discipleship is not a term in everyday use (Bevans 2018:365). Nel (2015) also elaborated on the lack of discipleship in what he referred to as 'the missing link' in ministry and continued to indicate the gap between evangelism and discipleship:

> The decisions we are looking for in evangelism should be for a commitment to a life of discipleship – and not to book a place in the waiting room of heaven. (p. 3)

Discipleship can be described as Christ-connectedness, but Jesus was shaped and formed in the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:18–19), 'so Christian disciples are led and formed by the same Spirit as they stay connected to him' (Bevans 2018:364). Spiritual formation as a lifelong process is thus an integral part of discipleship. With this understanding, Bevans (2018) concurs with Nel (2015:3) 'that discipling youth is about celebrating initiation, giving guidance on a road of fulfilment in life, and facilitating discernment on the journey'.

Conclusion

The chapter attests to the importance of the comfort that Christ-connectedness can bring to emerging adults in a divided 'glocal' society where everyone and everything is connected. Although there are many benefits derived from living in a globalised connected world, it is also argued that the social media platforms in some ways disconnect us from other important relations, without us sometimes even realising it. However, the main argument in this contribution is that Christ-connectedness does not only connect us to the Trinitarian God but also to our neighbour, our context and the global world, and not to criticise but to participate in the *missio Dei* through discipleship.

Chapter 5

Globalisation and politics: The shift in traditional values and its impact on families and children of Christian background in Europe

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Abstract

This chapter examines some aspects of the European context of globalisation and the way they have been used by different political powers and public bodies to achieve equal understanding and practice of basic human values for the member states of the European Union (EU) and beyond. The issue of 'traditional values' is briefly dealt with, especially as they have been practised by Christians for many centuries, and the new understanding of some values is compared with centuries-old moral principles.

The chapter seeks to clarify whether some EU directives abolish certain traditional values and what the response is from families and children. It is asserted that the church has always been 'the family' to the child, and today we wonder whether this continues to be the case. If the child's faith is the faith of the church to which he or she belongs, in what way has the shift of values today impacted Christian families and their children? The conclusion provides a summary of what Christians could do to preserve God-given moral principles for Christians and for the whole of humanity.

Keywords: Globalisation; Politics; Gender; Traditional values; The church.

Introduction

The new millennium came not only with anticipation but also with fears: the 'millennium bug' in computers and computer software, the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, political and social crises, wars, et cetera. Then the world seemed to have relaxed for a whilst until the 2008 financial crisis. It was somehow overcome, and the people of the world continued their life in a more or less steady way. Time and again some events would surface and make people and nations uneasy (e.g. terror attacks, Middle East crises and wars and mass migration, 'rose' and 'orange' revolutions in some countries, some countries wishing to

leave the EU and, more recently, the virus pandemic that has affected all of humanity).

Children of the world were unaware of all of these – they had childhood to live and to enjoy life with their closest families and friends as much as possible. In the years and the decades before the new millennium, family ties were relatively strong and children understood themselves as happy (or unhappy), healthy (or unhealthy), loving (or unloving) girls and boys. Their parents were also happy/unhappy, worried/relaxed, but they lived for their children – for their girls and boys. This was true for families and children coming from either religious or secular or atheistic or any other background. In the past, both adults and children lived under the law (more or less observed in the different countries of the world) and under certain moral principles pointing to what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable in relations and in behaviour and what is unacceptable; some (or most) of these morals were confirmed in the law, too.

The turn of the millennium dramatically changed that, especially in the developed countries of the world and in the field of human rights, discrimination/non-discrimination and morals. Our focus in this work is on the changes that the Council of Europe (CE) and the EU institutions have made in their legislation and regulations in the last 20 years and what impact these new rules have had on the lives of the member states' peoples, in Europe and in the world in general. As most recent data have been used, a number of online references are quoted here, in addition to scholarly research on the above-mentioned areas in the lives of people.

How we used to teach children from Christian families

Children from Christian families were taught the truths of the Holy Scripture, the truths of the gospel. Not only Sunday schools were

the main truth-carrier, but also other Christian educational establishments tried to instil in children certain biblical moral principles; children's parents in their Christian families endeavoured to do the same. Sunday school children, especially older ones, learnt these truths and principles and accepted them as firm and invariable postulates of the Christian faith; they did not challenge the precepts of the gospel and were not confused as to the validity of the truths. In this chapter, we will try to focus on a couple of issues that today have confused (and continue to confuse) parents, children, teachers and other professionals working with children and their parents (including medical workers, legal authorities, educational establishments and organisations, etc.) – we want to discuss how gender and sexuality are considered today in some countries, especially in Europe and more specifically in the countries of the EU, and what impact these considerations have on children and their families, especially those coming from a Christian background.

At Sunday schools, we used to teach children about a loving God whose name is Jesus Christ and who offers every human being the way to salvation. With older children we would start discussing life – what good and wrong we do and what way is there for us to choose to only do good (in addition to our firm faith in Jesus). Further in their participation in Sunday school classes, and towards their teenage years when abstract thinking and reasoning have developed to a certain level, we as teachers would expand the understanding of wrongdoing and introduce such notions as fall and sin, including sinful thoughts and sinful acts. We do this by telling children what human nature actually is and what can be done to manage and ultimately defeat our sinful inclinations. Understanding what a human being is means understanding what a child is, and Christians would often point to 'the little ones' of the gospel – the ones that are dependent (on people and on God), obedient (to people and to God) and 'other', that is, not like the adults whose sinful nature is so much evident in their thoughts and actions (Kozhuharov 2016:232).

At this stage we would certainly discuss such Bible truths as '[o]ut of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander', and that '[t]hese are what defile a person' (Mt 15:19–20).[1] Christian children at school would well understand that the command of the faith 'is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith' (1 Tm 1:5). Then, as the apostle continues, we would affirm that 'some have departed from these … and want to be teachers of the law but they do not know what they are talking about'. We would then discuss the apostle's affirmation that the law is made not for the righteous but for the evil-doers, such as 'lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality', and also 'for slave traders and liars and perjurers' (1 Tm 1:9–10).

The above moral principles are not only Christian, but also used to be part of legislation in many countries of the world, and laws aimed to keep people from wrongdoing. Here the important words are 'used to be'. Not anymore, some would say. As we will see below, human rights laws and regulations (including those relating to discrimination and non-discrimination, hate speech, etc.) would over-ride centuries-old normative prescriptions about the relations between people based on certain moral rules and truths. Today many people have the feeling that globalisation and the processes within many countries in the world 'cancelled' these rules and truths; more than that, they seem to have adopted their opposites as new rules and new truths.

Globalisation and politics

When considering globalisation and its 'initiators', researchers often ask the question, 'is it economy (the markets and money,

1. All biblical quotations in this work have been taken from the 2011 edition of the New International Version of the Bible.

and also technology) *or* politics that necessarily brought certain processes of globalisation?' Both views have been equally affirmed and rejected, and no one has ever proved which one is the true (or the first) initiator of globalisation. In the same way, there is no unified or equally accepted definition of what globalisation is. It is interesting to note that many researchers would see globalised connections in the world through goods and services crossing borders of thousands of miles afar. One morning in a person's life can be described in this way: we would notice her robe made in Guatemala; the bed sheets in her bedroom coming from Hong Kong and pillows from Canada; the coffee-maker designed in Sweden but manufactured in Germany and the coffee beans grown in Brazil; the mug made in Mexico; and her computer made in Thailand but assembled in Taiwan (Brawley 2008:77).

However, globalisation seems to be much more than markets, goods, services and money; it is essentially about relations. As I have been considering the situation with human rights and laws that affirm those rights in many countries of the world, but especially in the developed nations, I tend to adopt the view that globalisation is fundamentally a political phenomenon that did not arise 'naturally but rather was the product of policy decisions taken after the Second World War among the Western allies' (Kapstein 1999:23). In my view, it is the policy decisions of the wealthy nations that continue to affirm globalised connections up to this day; markets, money and technology 'enabled' globalisation whilst 'obeying' political forces.

Policymaking in Europe, and especially in the EU institutions, such as the EU parliament and its committees, and the European Commission, only partly concerns markets, goods, services and money; it is increasingly about relations between member states, and the EU leaders are more concerned about human rights and freedoms because the observation of these would enable a more successful exchange of goods and services and free movement of people. By affirming new rules and regulations in the area of

rights and freedom, including discrimination and morals, the EU wants to create not only one European market and economy for all member states but also one 'European nation' living according to the same moral principles, notwithstanding the different and specific cultural backgrounds of each country; specific cultural expressions are 'allowed' but only as far as they do not violate the EU laws and regulations.

This makes many people think that politics not only continues to expand and strengthen various globalised connections but also introduces and affirms (impose, as I see it) a new globalised moral system that would create new relations between peoples and between specific persons within their society and their closest environment (e.g. their families). We are here especially concerned about children and young people in different countries, and more specifically in the EU countries, because children think and do what we as adults tell them and because today's politics may form tomorrow's globalised human race that would live in keeping with a morality and principles – completely different from those that have characterised the world's peoples for many centuries, and especially in Europe that used to be Christian.

An international convention on politics: Concerns and caution

Human rights are fundamental for today's societies, and this has been confirmed by hundreds of legislative acts and regulations adopted by the United Nations and more specifically the CE and the different EU institutions. Over the past several decades, preceding the new millennium, numerous civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights were adopted and made 'universal' through various international conventions, declarations, charters, et cetera. These rights applied to men, women, children (boys and girls), families (consisting of a man and a woman), social groups and whole nations. It was the turn of the new millennium that introduced 'new' rights and freedoms for homosexuals,

bisexuals, transgender people and the like. Neither the Treaty of the EU (1992) nor any other international or all-European legislative acts that entered into force before the era of 'the Y2K glitch' have ever dealt with the rights of these groups of people.

On 07 April 2011, the Committee of Ministers of the CE (2011a) adopted a legally binding document entitled 'Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence'. It was offered to the 47 European countries to consider, sign and then ratify it (McQuigg 2017). Who would not want to see an international legislative act applied in their country if this would truly reduce and even stop instances of violence against women? Such a benign thought made some European countries sign it without much reflection: in the same year, 2011, it was signed by 16 countries (Council of Europe 2020). Other member states took a more careful approach and first discussed the Convention within their national assemblies and governments before signing it. Many of those who signed the document, then ratified it, and still there are many parliamentary assemblies that have never attempted ratification, especially those of Eastern and Central Europe. Were these member states against preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence? The answer is certainly 'no'.

All member states were eager to adopt a European legislative document that would truly combat violence in any form. However, what made them cautious, and ultimately prevented them from ratifying the Convention, was gender-related phraseology of the document where 'gender' means something different from 'male' and 'female', and also the abundance of terminology, such as 'homosexual', 'gender identity', 'sexual orientation', et cetera. In addition to the positive and useful recommendations pointing to efficient mechanisms that would enable actual resolutions to domestic abuse and violence against women in general, they noticed that the CE's Convention is especially concerned with the discrimination or non-discrimination of certain groups of

people, not only the victims of abuse and domestic violence; much caution caused the specific understanding of the word 'gender', which in such traditional countries as those in Eastern and Central Europe has always meant (and continues to mean) 'male' and 'female'; this was the meaning for the countries in Western Europe – but not anymore. Many specific meanings in the Convention were explained in great details in an accompanying document called 'Explanatory report to the Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence' (CE 2011b).

Article 3 of this document, offering definitions of some terms used in the Convention, clearly states that '"[g]ender" shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men' (CE 2011b:Art. 3); the report clarifies that 'the term "gender" under this definition is not intended as a replacement for the terms "women" and "men" used in the Convention' (CE 2011b:para. 43). In other words, there is something more than male and female. Article 4 of the Convention, entitled 'Fundamental rights, equality and non-discrimination', appeals for the non-discrimination of people irrespective of sex, gender, race, colour of skin, et cetera, and also irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, et cetera (CE 2011a:Art. 4); the Explanatory report is more specific by naming such victims of discrimination as 'gay, lesbian and bisexual victims of domestic violence' who are often excluded from support services because of their sexual orientation (CE 2011b:para. 53); further down the same line, the document stresses that discrimination on the basis of gender identity should be prohibited, too, and the groups of people who identify themselves differently are mentioned: 'transgender or transsexual persons, crossdressers, transvestites and other groups of persons that do not correspond to what society has established as belonging to "male" or "female" categories' (CE 2011b:Art. 4).

In this work, we are specifically interested in the way children are taught and what values they need to share. Article 14 of the Convention (CE 2011a) entitled 'Education', puts an obligation on the member states – signatories to the document – to undertake 'the necessary steps to include teaching material on issues such as equality between women and men, non-stereotyped gender roles', et cetera, and this should be done 'in formal curricula and at all levels of education' (CE 2011a:Art. 14); the report adds that '[t]he promotion of gender equality, mutual respect in interpersonal relationships and non-violence must start as early as possible' (CE 2011b:para. 94).

By the time of writing this chapter, 13 European countries had rejected the document and had not ratified it[2]; non-European countries[3] were invited to sign and ratify it too, and none of them have done so yet. The EU signed the Convention only recently, in June 2017 (Lawson 2019:519); however, it has not ratified it yet.

We will see below that it is not the Convention's appeal to combat violence and promote non-discrimination of people, including homosexuals and those who identify with a gender different from the one they were born with: all European countries are eager to fulfil their obligations concerning violence and discrimination, and they all agree that specific measures and legislation to combat these are needed; everyone accepts that tolerance, respect and human dignity have no alternative in today's world. What makes Europeans and other nations of the world cautious are the legal consequences that follow from some formulations in the Convention, and it is the laws that were adopted in many European countries (Western Europe, most of all) by which people may suffer accusations, penalties and court decisions and sentences that would affect people's lives in a profound way.

2. These are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and the UK.

3. These include Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the USA.

Before we come to some examples and practical application of the above-mentioned gender and sexuality-related formulations and legal requirements in the member states, let us first briefly mention how these formulations came to exist and what influence they have had, and are having, on people's lives in Europe and in other countries in the world.

The Council of Europe's and the European Union's new understanding of gender and sexuality

Before 2000, in international legal documents and decisions, the term 'gender' has always been used in its original meaning when referring to people: 'male' and 'female'. The term 'gender identity' was not mentioned at all, at least not in the sense of gender that is different from male and female. For the first time, the EU used the term 'sexual orientation' in its 'Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union' (European Commission 2012), which entered into force on 18 December 2000. Point 1 of Article 21 ('Non-Discrimination') of the Charter (European Commission 2012) prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. However, although the document was adopted in 2000, it 'became formally binding in late 2009' and 'it enjoys the same binding legal status as the EU Treaties, and is part of the preliminary law of the EU' (Craig & De Burca 2015:196); before 2009, the Charter functioned more like a recommendation rather than as a legal prescription.

It seems that the CE and the EU were not so eager about monitoring the different cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation; this could be one of the reasons that in 2002 the Committee of Ministers of the CE adopted a recommendation to member states on the protection of women against violence (McQuigg 2017:17), and that in the EU Directive 2004/113/EC, entitled 'On equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services', there was no mention of sexual orientation. It was only in 2006, when the EU parliament

issued a Directive on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation, that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation was re-introduced (Official Journal of the European Union 2006:23). And yet it was acknowledged that 'the implementation of international human rights law has been inconsistent, to say the least', and that it is difficult to force member states to comply with their obligations (McQuigg 2017:24).

Meanwhile, in November 2006, an international meeting of human rights groups took place in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and the outcome was a document called 'Yogyakarta Principles' adopted in 2007. It deals with human rights in the areas of sexual orientation and gender identity and tries to set certain precepts intended to apply the standards of international human rights law to address the abuse of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. These principles have never been accepted by international organisations, and the United Nations was quite reserved about them. In its 'Human rights and gender identity' document of 29 July 2009, however, the CE stated that Principle 3 of the Yogyakarta Principles is of particular relevance. The Commissioner for Human Rights (2009) insisted that 'persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities shall enjoy legal capacity in all aspects of life' and that 'each person's self-defined sexual orientation and gender identity is integral to their personality and is one of the most basic aspects of self-determination, dignity and freedom' (De Beco 2012:6).

We can understand that the Treaty of the EU of 1992 could not mention any rights and freedoms of homosexual people; morals were different at that time, and many consider them still to be 'traditional'. In 2007, however, this Treaty had to be enlarged, and also explained, so that everyone knows how, in fact, the EU functions; this is how the Treaty on the functioning of the EU

came into existence (Official Journal of the European Union 2020). In addition to appeals on eliminating inequalities between men and women (Official Journal of the European Union 2020:Art. 8), the document insists on combating discrimination based on sexual orientation (Official Journal of the European Union 2020:Art. 10, 19). It was only in 2006 and 2007 that expressions such as 'gender identity' and 'gender reassignment' were included in the CE and EU legal documents. The above-mentioned Istanbul Convention (its texts were prepared in late 2009 and then in 2010) is one example, then follow other legally binding directives and documents; many member states introduced their own 'equality acts', for example, the *UK's Equality Act of 2010* in which gender reassignment is specifically quoted to be one of the protected characteristics of people when a person, who wants his or her gender to be 'reassigned', should be protected by law if he or she is (UK Public General Acts 2010):

> [*P*]roposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. (s. 7)

A number of organisations were initiated to protect and affirm the rights of transgender people, one of them being 'Transgender Europe' (Keuzenkamp 2015), and they regularly issue publications that in many cases influence both public and governmental bodies and judiciaries; they regularly inform their membership about the legal protection that can be used when a transgender person suspects instances of discrimination, homophobia, hate speech, et cetera. Quite often, the European Directive 2012/29/EU (Official Journal of the European Union 2012) is quoted – this directive establishes minimum standards for the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. It specifically stresses that no discrimination may occur on the basis of gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation (Official Journal of the European Union 2012:Cl. 9); that any violence that is directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity

or gender expression; or that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately is understood as gender-based violence (Official Journal of the European Union 2012:Cl. 17).

It is not the purpose of this study to examine all legally binding documents coming from the CE and the EU. However, one conclusion can be made: as the numerous European institutions discuss gender and sexuality issues, they become increasingly concerned with adopting laws and regulations on equality, non-discrimination, hate crimes and homophobia, human rights and freedoms for people who feel that their gender is different from the one they were born with and have changed it (or intend to change it) or live in same-sex marriages. Since January 2014, when the European parliament discussed a report on the EU roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity and took steps to adopt a resolution, many EU member states followed its precepts and adopted their national legislation (European Parliament 2014). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to list all documents and legal acts on the above-mentioned protected characteristics, for now we could only ask the question: 'is there any scientific evidence on the need for gender change (reassignment) and homosexual practices or are all discussions on gender identity and homosexuality only opinions and views?' It is more than clear that there are two opposing answers to this question. It seems worth pointing to some suggestions in this direction.

Experiencing gender identity and/or homosexuality: Scientific evidences and views

Researchers would agree that establishing when exactly in a child's life the understanding (or 'feeling') of gender identity develops is a difficult task. Some would suggest that even at their one and a half years of age, children may be aware of their gender and may attach some significance to it (Money 1996), others

would suggest that gender identity cannot develop before the age of three when children would choose toys and activities that are appropriate for their gender (Newman & Newman 2012:243–245) and still others would point to later ages when personality develops and young people become fully aware of their gender, including their gender preferences (Brannon 2017:128–131) and of their sexuality and sexual inclinations. Much attention has been given to the cognitive view of gender development (Brannon 2017:129–131): children can 'know' their gender, rather than accept it as it is at birth.

Scientists researching on children and their development, especially from psychological point of view, would rather talk of a sense in human beings that 'suggests' their gender; from this, gender identity is described as 'a person's inner sense of himself or herself as male or female' (Money 1996:65). Gender identity can be formed by the child's parents or closest environment, for example, if the child is steadily raised into the opposite sex, then a feeling would develop that would convince the child that he or she belongs to that sex, notwithstanding biology (Colapinto 2006).

This discussion led scientists and pedagogues to the idea of 'nature versus nurture' in which different opinions have been expressed. Socialisation is viewed as the most important developmental factor in children's lives. The way children are raised is crucial for their sense of belonging to one or another gender or none, as researchers insist that bringing up girls as boys inevitably makes them feel and act like boys until the moment when they have fully realised that they are girls (Golombok & Fivush 1994:44). Scientists insist that this 'transformation' actually happens and shows that 'a Y chromosome is not necessary for gender development to proceed in a male direction' (Golombok & Fivush 1994:44).

Social environment can be so strong and influential in a child's or young person's life that any attempt to change their sexual orientation can not only be ineffective but also harmful and even

dangerous; this was proved when the so-called 'conversion therapy' was used on children and young people with the intention of 'turning them back' to their biological gender at birth (Ford 2001).

Without too much further deliberation, we could conclude that 'knowing' one's gender and sexuality and 'feeling' them seem to be quite subjective. The fact whether a child or a young person thinks that they belong to the opposite sex or to none in many cases would suggest a view or an opinion (however deep it may be) that develops over time and may prompt the young boy or girl into changing their gender or behaving differently – as homosexuals or trans people or simply transvestites. Once they have fully realised ('understood') that they actually belong to the opposite sex, and even more if they have already undergone gender reassignment surgery or hormonal treatment, young boys would view it as an offence in some instances when somebody refers to them as 'he', according to their gender at birth, instead of 'she' – the way they feel and want to live – and vice versa 'former' girls would be offended if they are called 'she' instead of 'he'.

The important point is that today 'gender' is considered to be not so much personal or individual (although it is – it concerns the individual in a most personal way) – in fact, it is thought to be social, and it is most often politically confirmed through laws and regulations adopted by governments and courts of law. Gender identity and sexuality have become a public issue that is widely discussed in society at all levels of life but especially in politics and the courts of law; it is important to note, however, that 'gender' is increasingly discussed in education and in family life. Numerous examples of people being discriminated against on grounds of gender and sexuality can be provided for both sides of the debate – for those who fight for their rights and freedoms as transgender and homosexual people, and for those who hold to tradition and find some new expressions of sexuality and of gender identity as immoral and unacceptable.

Traditional or new, Christian or secular?: Can we teach Christian values today?

There is no doubt that culture changes, and today's cultural aspects of life are very different from those of the past, say, 50, 100 or 1000 years ago. There is no doubt also that rationality has occupied the minds and hearts of millions of people on vast territories across the world: some countries accepted the reason of this age earlier, some later in their historical life, but all are now living in the era of technology, instant communication and the sharing of grievances and joys, and the era of widespread global connections of different types – political, economic, social, cultural, religious, et cetera.

And yet there seem to be some all-human values that have existed throughout the history of humanity: what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what is correct and what is improper or unacceptable. Although these varied from one culture to another in the past, since the time of the Enlightenment and up to the end of the 20th century, such opposing values were well recognised in many countries of the world, especially those whose culture used to be Christian. 'Good' and 'evil', 'right' and 'wrong' were understood in the same way by both humanists and religious people. In Europe, they were considered 'traditional' values as they were inherited by the Christian tradition on which Europe had been founded for many centuries.

After the terrible decades of wars (the First World War and the Second World War, and many local but not less devastating conflicts) and famine, the latter half of the 20th century (especially the 1960s–1990s) brought relative peace and possibilities for growth and progress. It was mostly during these more or less peaceful periods (despite the Cold War between the Communist Eastern European countries and the West) that reason took exceptional priority in human life, along with an unprecedented advance in technology and communication.

It was towards the end of the 20th century that scientists and humanists made the difference between 'traditional' values and 'secular-rational' values. The two types of values are not simply different but two ends of the pendulum: scholars insist that '[t]raditional values and secular-rational values are the poles of a single fundamental dimension of cultural variation' (Baker 2005:7). Although at opposite ends, they are not incompatible; in fact, life shows a continuum of traditional and continuum of secular-rational at the same time; life also shows instances of survival and instances of self-expression at the same time. That is, values can be arrayed 'along two dimensions: a continuum of traditional versus secular-rational values, and a continuum of survival versus self-expression values' (Baker 2005:17).

However, how can 'traditional' be kept and followed if one is not allowed to do so? In Christian Europe, and in our Christian Sunday schools, we used to live according to prescriptions, such as '[m]arriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral' (Heb 13:4) and '[y]ou must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler' (1 Cor 5:11); then the apostle affirms, '[d]o not even eat with such people' (1 Cor 5:11). People well knew that 'neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers' – none of those people would enter the Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9–10).

There have always been in human history idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, sexually immoral, adulterers, et cetera; there are such people today also. The point, however, is that today the law dictates: 'you must name the black white and the white black' – not literally but in actual fact. Because how otherwise a Christian would perceive a requirement ordering them to call homosexual marriage 'an arrangement of God's love', or to turn to a boy with feminine pronouns and names (and vice versa – to a girl with masculine pronouns and names), or tell their employees not to

mention the Bible or to pray for anyone under any circumstances whilst they are at their workplace?

There are hundreds of cases in Western European countries and in many countries of the Global North where Christians are fired from work or sentenced to pay substantial fines or go to prison because of their faith and conscience telling them what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. In almost all cases, it is the law and certain legal regulations that citizens must comply with, irrespective of their cultural or religious background. 'Christian doctor loses trans beliefs case', and under this title we read that the doctor refused to use transgender pronouns as people's chosen sex (in this case the doctor refused to refer to 'any 6ft-tall bearded man as madam) (BBC News 2019); 'Virginia teacher fired for misgendering transgender student…', then we learn that the teacher was fired because he turned to a girl with the pronoun 'she' in spite of her wish to be called 'he', as she had undergone a transgender procedure to become a boy; and the judge ruled that through his behaviour, the teacher was creating a hostile learning environment, and that he had been very disrespectful to the former girl (now boy) and his or her parents (Wong 2019); or 'Teacher accused of "misgendering" child was told by police that she committed a hate crime' – this case exposes the ways schools 'sow confusion' in children's minds and encourage them they 'unlearn' the difference between boys and girls (Turner 2018).

There are numerous cases of nurses saying a prayer for their dying patients, of military men and women dismissed from service because of their Christian beliefs, of hotel owners fined because of refusal to offer one bed in a room for two homosexual men, of bakers refusing to make a 'homosexual cake', of ordinary people being fined or fired for 'hate speech' when saying that homosexuality is a sin and you should 'expel the wicked person from among you' (1 Cor 5:13).

Many Christians are concerned about children and young people: how to teach them the truths of the gospel and at the

same time tell them to be dutiful citizens who must live the values of the society in which they abide and avoid any word or behaviour that would offend others. This is why the question of 'can we teach Christian values today?' is a difficult one and different churches give different answers nowadays. One can easily note that in European countries, where 'traditional' values still prevail in a society, Christians continue to teach children at Sunday schools the truths of the gospel, and the reason for this is that these societies have not adopted the new Western liberal understanding of man and family; most Eastern European societies continue to reject the 'new values', but one wonders: for how long? In fact, in all countries of the Global North, where the changed understanding and practice of gender and sexuality was imposed on their peoples, numerous organisations (most of them Christian) fight governments and courts of law whenever cases of 'discrimination' or 'hate speech' or any such offence are involved. That is, the issues discussed in this chapter are not only a European problem but also a problem in the world, and some processes of globalisation are further contributing to make the problem even more acute.

Pressure on the countries that still hold to 'tradition' is enormous; they are accused of upholding discrimination, of violating rights and freedoms, of encouraging hate speech, et cetera. This is an ongoing development (hence the website links in this work), and only time will tell which direction the relations between 'traditional' and 'innovative' ideologies and countries will take; here we are mostly concerned about the future relations between Western and Eastern Europe. News about 'undemocratic' governments and national assemblies can be found almost on a daily basis. Two recent examples about Poland are taken from the website of the European parliament: 'MEPs [Members of the European Parliament] condemn criminalisation of sex education in Poland' (European Parliament 2019) and 'Parliament strongly condemns "LGBTI-free zones"' (Tilles 2019). In November 2019, the European parliament adopted a resolution on the first accusation, condemning Poland, and on 18 December 2019 – another condemnation on the second

accusation. The MEPs strongly rejected Poland's view that Polish people do not discriminate against anyone in the country, including homosexuals, but that they do not accept the homosexual ideology which EU wants to impose on the peoples of Europe.[4] Countries, such as Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, which painfully remember what 'ideology' means (albeit communist ideology), are very much aware of what consequences another ideological pressure (now new-liberal) might have, especially as it teaches and imposes sinful practices, as viewed by Christians.

Therefore, we should be clear: discrimination against any group of people in today's Europe (and in the world, for that matter) is not an option anymore: both religious and non-religious people must tolerate and respect every human life in all its variations and types. The law is a warrant for this to be the case. And at the same time the law must give freedoms and rights to everyone and every society so that they live a life in accordance with their understanding, tradition, values and principles, including religious ones.

Conclusion

What are Christians supposed to do in such an European environment? The churches affirm that today everyone needs to enjoy equal rights and freedoms and that no one should suffer from discrimination or hate speech, including homosexuals and transgender people. Christians affirm that tolerance is a must today, and that in their life they respect the choices people make. And as everyone enjoys equal freedoms, in the same way Christians want to be free to teach children and young people

4. In fact, the resolution of 18 December is not about LGBTI-free zones but about 'zones free from LGBTI ideology'. See also https://notesfrompoland.com/2019/12/18/european-parliament-resolution-condemns-lgbti-free-zones-in-poland/. Although the EU adopts resolutions against other Eastern European countries, too, Poland is in the focus of the EU parliament because of the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic Church against sinful (as it views them) practices that the EU wants to impose on the peoples of Europe and, through education, on children.

the truths of their faith without fear of persecution because of the law.

Fears, however, do exist, as the law becomes increasingly stricter and its clauses seem to reflect mostly humanistic views as grounded in modern liberal ideology and theories that would reject any religious understanding of life. Today Christians notice that the notion of human dignity has been redefined: to honour and to respect others is understood differently nowadays, in comparison with how the law and liberal politics used to understand it just two decades ago. The above-mentioned case of the Christian doctor, who was recently sentenced for rejecting to call the 6ft-tall man 'madam', prompted Christian researchers to point to the changed meaning of dignity; more than that, at one of the court hearings the doctor expressed his belief that 'God created male and female' and the judge concluded that the doctor's views were opinions rather than serious beliefs; and Hitchens (2019:n.p.) continues, '[a] whole string of foster parents, nurses, and wedding registrars have already found that Christian beliefs have no more status in the courts than any other opinions'.

If religious beliefs are considered by the law to be opinions, then what could Christians (and other religious people) do to be able to freely and without fear speak and act in accordance with their conscience and faith? How can governments and members of parliament ensure that in a democratic society, every citizen enjoys the same rights and freedom and is able to live in accordance with the values system that they hold as precious and eternal? It seems that it is not so much globalisation that brings new meanings and new legislation in many countries of the world, mostly wealthy countries, but rather (humanistic) reason that reflects on human values in its own way. And yet globalisation reinforces and intensifies the new understanding of what human beings are and what the purpose of life is. Politics in different countries may agree with many aspects of globalisation and the ways in which they influence societies, or they may reject some of them and try to 'agree' with the traditional views and

practices of their culture with the newly introduced legislation, especially the one that concerns gender and homosexuality; political leaders today take enormous responsibility for the future of their countries.

Our conclusion can take the form of a question: '[w]ill globalising processes gather momentum, or will a political backlash arise' (Brawley 2008:12)?

The future will tell.

Chapter 6

The impact of pornography on Cambodian youth through the globalisation of technology

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Abstract

Globalisation of products around the world has included pornography, not only 'soft' porn on television and in advertising but also pornography on mobile phones, tablets and laptops. Children know more about sex than their parents; however, the type of sex they know about is often bizarre, violent and may include children. These are then considered normal, so that children feel their own bodies to be inadequate and shy away from real relationships.

This chapter explores research conducted in Cambodia over a period of time, including recent original research. A literature review of the accessibility of pornography showed a trajectory from the use of pornography in a culture where girls would be unlikely to know the word 'penis', to a culture in which pirated digital video discs (DVDs) became popular on cheap smartphones enabling children and the youth to access porn online, with gang rape being frequently reported. Valentine's Day became a concern for women and girls out in the evening. Cambodia was one of the first countries to use webcams in a programme called 'Rape Camp', and online pornography of children is becoming an increasing problem.

How can we challenge the Christian community to take this seriously, not only for their own children but also for children around the world? How can we educate children to make better choices? How can we challenge the porn industry?

Youth in Cambodia were asked about their experiences of using porn by a range of youth workers in several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and this information was then used to produce a toolkit 'Youth against Porn', which is now in Khmer language and is being translated into Thai.

Keywords: Globalisation of technology; Pornography; Christian communities; Youths; Child protection.

Why is addressing the access of youth to pornography so important?

Pornography is damaging to users. It creates an illusion that one needs a particular body type to enjoy sex. Pornography users feel inadequate in themselves and about their partners. Pornography has an addictive quality. Neuroscience has found that it has the same qualities as addictive types of drugs. Users who once accessed free porn would then start paying for more explicit and more violent porn and use up time that is meant for work and family. This can lead to debt, work loss and family breakdown. People want to try out what they see; therefore, it increases the sexual exploitation of their partners. The church needs to do something to address the issue, as this is even more urgent when it comes to children and the youth who have unfettered access to pornography and therefore unlimited exposure to its harms.

As important as it is to protect children for their own sake, it is also vital to address the access young people have to pornography if we ever hope to stop the demand. Christians and the church can help end the demand through changing attitudes and other means. By faith, we hope to make an impact on the demand so that in generations to come, exploitation and trafficking will no longer be issues. How long will that take if the rate of the demand remains constant? One generation? Two? More? And yet, because of rapid changes in the Internet and communications technology, more and more children are being exposed to pornography than ever before in history. How many generations will it take to address the demand if the rate of pornography use increases exponentially? Through faith alone we cannot stop that tide, unless we begin to do something to prevent the exposure of young people to pornography.

An evolving threat

Pornography is not a new problem, but modern technology has changed its nature and reach. In the past, pornography was available only in printed form to those adults who sought it out, usually at a price. Now it is freely available, even to children, at the click of a mouse. The pervasiveness of online pornography extends to all corners of the globe; even children in developing countries or remote villages can gain access through increasingly available 'smart' mobile phones. Although branded smartphones are expensive, cheap imitations are widely available.

Pornography is not the only online threat that children face. The anonymity of the Internet makes children feel safer than they really are. This false sense of safety, coupled with changing modes of interacting with one another (screen-to-screen rather than face-to-face), has created new ways in which children can be harmed – and even cause harm to themselves or each other – via technology.

The posting or texting of nude and compromising images of oneself or others is a rising concern. 'Sexting', cyberbullying and related practices take place not only by adults but also by young people whose judgement is not fully developed, and who are not fully aware of the permanent nature and potentially damaging consequences of their actions. They often do not realise that once the images are posted there, they are there *forever* and therefore could be accessible to anyone. What was done to have fun in the moment can cause trauma that lasts for a lifetime, or worse. In some cases, young people whose pictures were posted without permission have even taken their own lives out of shame.

Furthermore, old-fashioned predators use newly popular online media to groom and exploit their victims. Social media, online games and other applications encourage children to post personal information, giving paedophiles the very information they need to build intimacy and gain access. Once a connection

has been established, predators may exploit children virtually (through sexually explicit conversations or the use of a webcam) or in person (through meetings arranged during online conversations; often the predator posed as a fellow child). Predators also use child pornography to groom children into believing that it is normal for adults to have sex with children.

Finally, pornography is a problem that is exacerbated by the Internet, but not limited by it. Even offline forms of pornography, such as DVDs, are finding wider distribution amongst children, especially in developing countries where pirated videos are for sale cheaply and without any restriction on who buys them. Moreover, in the shops where these DVDs are sold, hardcore and softcore versions are often mixed together and children, as well as adults may be seen rummaging through the selection with little, if any, understanding of the dangers posed. Once purchased, DVDs are easily shared. For example, children exchange pornographic DVDs for minimal 'rent' on some school playgrounds in Cambodia. Furthermore, in some parts of the world, pornographic DVDs are shown publicly on buses or in waiting areas, even when children are present.

Meanwhile, the evolution and accessibility of smart phones mean that children even in rural areas can have access to pornography through their phones. The first mobile phone came out in 1980 and now mobile phones are available at every corner of the world. Often even the poorest families own them. A study was conducted among young people in schools and universities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in 2015. Several NGOs were keen to understand the extent and impact of pornography on the people they served. Under the direction and support of the Chab Dai Coalition Prevention Forum, a research team conducted surveys among 284 children and young people of whom 64% were male participants and 36% were female participants. The United Nations' definition of 'a youth' was used to select the participants: from 14 to 24 years. The highest proportion (50.19%) of

respondents were in the age group of 18–21 years, whilst the second highest group (27%) were within the age range of 22–24 years.

Watching porn rated high amongst the youth of Phnom Penh at 84%, with 154 male and 48 female respondents saying 'yes' to the question whether they had watched porn, whereas only 16% said they had never watched porn. In Phnom Penh, Internet cafes are easily available and some Internet companies provide cheap Internet facilities and services for just $4 per month. Cheap Chinese mobile smartphones with WiFi capacity are also available in the market.

Many of the youths understood the dangers of pornography. A typical response was: '[i]t corrupts the mind and the future of those who view it constantly'. Other youths described additional ways that pornography can negatively impact individuals:

> 'It doesn't help, it only wastes my money and gives me a bad reputation.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)
>
> 'It does more harm than help and diverts me from my study.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)
>
> 'It can lead to rape and even worse sometimes murder.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)
>
> 'It corrupts society and damages relationships and self-confidence.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)

Some solutions to this were suggested as follows:

> 'Prostitution and distribution of porn in all forms of media should be banned.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)
>
> 'NGOs and relevant organisations should raise awareness and educate people.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)
>
> 'I quit porn and tell my friends to don't do the same.' (Youth, gender undisclosed, date unknown)

The study examined several facets of pornography use amongst youth. When asked at what age they started watching pornography, the respondents replied that the peak age was 18—21 years, followed by 14—17 years as the second next peak age. However, a few girls and boys said they began watching pornography between the age of 6 and 9 years. When asked about what mode they used to watch pornography, the majority of the young people affirmed that they used mobile phones because of their ease and privacy, with boys dominating the proportion (83 boys vs. 17 girls). The second most common mode of watching pornography was the Internet (either privately at one's house or at an Internet café), with the ratio of 59 boys to 14 girls. Interestingly, cable television (TV) was used more by girls than by boys, with a ratio of 14:11, but still small, probably because of it being less private. A total of 104 boys admitted to be using pornography weekly. Only 16 boys and 12 girls said their parents knew that they were watching pornography; 52 boys and 27 girls said their parents had talked to them about pornography. A disturbing 29% of all children and youths surveyed said that they had seen child pornography.

When asked from whom they learnt about sex, 62 boys and 13 girls said they learnt about it through pornography, 42 boys and 49 girls reported to have learnt from teachers, and only 10 boys and 3 girls said they learnt from their parents. Forty-one boys and five girls said they learnt about sex from friends.

When given a statement and asked to comment, the following results were obtained from the respondents:

1. 'Watching porn is normal for youth': 58% said they agree or somewhat agree.
2. 'Watching porn can lead some men to rape': 84% agreed or somewhat agreed.
3. 'Porn teaches you to do sex better': 50% agreed and 50% disagreed.

4. ‘Porn can damage your life’: 84% agreed.
5. ‘Porn is addictive’: 75% agreed.
6. ‘Porn should be illegal’: 82% agreed.
7. ‘Watching porn makes people want to visit prostitutes’: 82% agreed.

The conclusion of this study was that a large number of youths are exposed to pornography through different modes, with smartphones being the most common mode. Although girls viewed pornography less often, they are still at risk. Most children and youths stated that pornography is unhelpful and should be banned or become illegal because of its negative effects on people.

The production and distribution of porn in all kinds of media should be reduced through legal reform and implementation of the law. Laws should be made to punish and fine those who make porn a business, especially pornography involving children. Youths in the survey agreed with this fact, saying that it should be illegal for pornographic DVDs to be shown in public places where children can see them.

Youths and children should be informed about the dangers of using pornography to help them make good choices about spending their time. Those who have authority and influence over the youth and children, especially teachers, should have knowledge about the negative effects of pornography so that they can educate children and youths to make good choices. Children and young people want to learn from teachers according to this survey. Parents and guardians should be aware of how their children use their time. They should talk to them about pornography before giving them access to mobile phones and the Internet.

As a result of this research, the ‘Asian Youth against Porn’ flip chart[1] has been developed and is currently being used and distributed in Cambodia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.[2]

1. See www.asianyouthagainstporn.org.

2. Please contact the authors for more information.

Understanding the nature of harm

So, why does access of young people to pornography matter? Is it true that pornography, especially in 'softer' forms, is really 'no big deal', as some people believe?

Studies have shown that pornography can cause documented harm, not only to children but also to adults. These findings are being confirmed by advances in neuroscience that can actually show how pornography changes our brains, which in turn impact our behaviour.

Pornography harms people in a myriad of ways. This is even more so the case with children and young people because of their incomplete stage of development. Repeated exposure to pornography can cause damage to every part of a child's being, including mental and emotional development, emotional health and relationships, views about themselves and others, attitudes about sex and sexuality, and even neurophysiology. Although all of these areas are important, this chapter will focus on the last two effects because of their direct relationship to demand.

Effects on views of sex and sexuality

Pornography shapes how children think about sex. But it does so in a way that distorts developing values and perceptions about human sexuality. Far from being a good method of teaching children about sex, as some may claim, pornography 'teaches without supervision or guidance, inundating children's minds with graphic messages about their bodies, their own sexuality, and those of adults and children around them' (Brooks 1995:n.p.).

The messages that pornography imparts are false. It teaches about body parts and sexual acts, rather than integrated beings and relational intimacy. It teaches dehumanisation and self-gratification rather than the inherent value of others and self-sacrificial love. Children who learn about sex from pornography will be led to believe that sex is an entitlement, in which the man is dominant

and the woman is there only to satisfy his needs. They may learn a variety of sexual positions, but what will they comprehend about the unique beauty of true commitment and love?

Effects on the brain

Pornography not only changes how we think about sex, but *also changes the brain itself*. This is an important realisation when it comes to adults (and understanding addiction to pornography), but it is an even more critical fact when it comes to children whose brains are still developing and will not be completely developed until their early 20s.

New developments in neuroscience reveal exactly how pornography changes our brain. Morgan Bennett's (2013) article, 'The new narcotic', clearly distils the findings.

Firstly, pornography affects the brain in the same way as other addictions.[3] Bennett (2013) explains the process as follows:

> [*W*]hile the term 'drug addiction' typically has been reserved for chemical substances physically ingested (or inhaled or injected) into the body, internet pornography – taken in through the eyes – affects the brain chemically and physically in a manner similar to that of illegal chemical substances. William M. Struthers, Professor of Psychology at Wheaton College, explains in his book *Wired for intimacy: How pornography hijacks the male brain* that pornography works 'through the same neural circuit, has the same effects with respect to tolerance and withdrawal, and has every other hallmark of an addiction'. This is because the same parts of the brain react to both illegal substances and sexual arousal. Dopamine, the chemical triggered by sexual arousal and orgasm, is also the chemical that triggers addiction pathways in the brain. (n.p.)

3. In fact, pornography affects the brain in *worse* ways than do other addictions. Because it simultaneously stimulates and relaxes the brain unlike other drugs that do only one or the other, pornography 'is a type of polydrug that triggers both types of addictive brain chemicals in one punch, enhancing its addictive propensity as well as its power to instigate a pattern of increasing tolerance. Tolerance in pornography's case requires not necessarily greater quantities of pornography but more novel pornographic content like more taboo sexual acts, child pornography, or sadomasochistic pornography' (Bennett 2013).

Secondly, pornography changes the actual wiring of the brain. Again, Bennett explains (Hilton 2013, cited in Bennett 2013):

> [*Neuroscientist Donald L. Hilton*] argues that sexual images are 'unique among natural rewards' because sexual rewards, unlike food or other natural rewards, cause 'persistent change in synaptic plasticity'. In other words, internet pornography does *more* than just spike the level of dopamine in the brain for a pleasure sensation. It literally *changes the physical matter* within the brain so that new neurological pathways require pornographic material in order to trigger the desired reward sensation. (n.p.)

The reason that pornography changes the brain is because of a phenomenon called 'neuroplasticity', which Bennett (2013) explains through an analogy:

> [*T*]hink of the brain as a forest where trails are worn down by hikers who walk along the same path over and over again, day after day. The exposure to pornographic images creates similar neural pathways that, over time, become more and more 'well-paved' as they are repeatedly travelled with each exposure to pornography. Those neurological pathways eventually become the trail in the brain's forest by which sexual interactions are routed. Thus, a pornography user has 'unknowingly created a neurological circuit' that makes his or her default perspective toward sexual matters ruled by the norms and expectations of pornography.
>
> [*T*]hese 'brain trails' are able to be initiated and 'paved' because of the plasticity of brain tissue. Norman Doidge, MD – a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and author of the *New York Times* and international bestseller, *The brain that changes itself* – explores the impact of neuroplasticity on sexual attraction in an essay in *The social costs of pornography*. Dr. Doidge notes that brain tissue involved with sexual preferences (i.e., what 'turns us on') is especially malleable. Thus, outside stimuli – like pornographic images – that link previously unrelated things (e.g., physical torture and sexual arousal) can cause previously unrelated neurons within the brain to learn to 'fire' in tandem so that the next time around, physical torture actually does trigger sexual arousal in the brain. This in-tandem firing of neurons creates 'links' or associations that result in powerful new brain pathways that remain even after the instigating outside stimuli are taken away. (n.p.)

Neuroplasticity is not only important to understand in terms of the process of addiction but also vital to understand in terms of how profoundly pornography affects and harms children.

Finally, pornography's re-wiring of the brain has lifelong effects (Bennett 2013):

> [*A*]nother aspect of pornography addiction that surpasses the addictive and harmful characteristics of chemical substance abuse is its permanence. While substances can be metabolized out of the body, pornographic images cannot be metabolized out of the brain because pornographic images are stored in the brain's memory. While substance abusers may cause permanent harm to their bodies or brains from drug use, the substance itself does not remain in the body after it has metabolized out of the body. But with pornography, there is no timeframe of abstinence that can erase the pornographic 'reels' of images in the brain that can continue to fuel the addictive cycle. (n.p.)

This means that the pornography viewed by children will, in a very real sense, stay with them for the rest of their lives. Even as the specific images fade over time, their impact will become ingrained. What better reason is there to protect children from harm?

Stopping the tide of demand

We must protect children from the harm of pornography for their own sake. But we must also protect children for the sake of stopping demand.

Demand is built upon unhealthy attitudes about sex and gender. Pornography amplifies these attitudes and rehearses them in graphic detail. Not only that – the harmful attitudes instilled by pornography are actually installed through permanent pathways in children's brains.

Neuroplasticity means that pornography not only influences *what* children think about sex now, but also determines *how* they are able to think about sex for the rest of their lives. This has a

profound impact not only on the child's own health, development and relationships, but also in the wider issue of demand. We are unwittingly programming an entire generation to have brains that are permanently re-wired to have views about sex and sexuality that are the very same attitudes that underlie the demand for and exploitation due to pornography.

Furthermore, it is not just attitudes underlying demand that are at issue. Pornography can also generate demand for actual sex and exploitation. Although the porn industry might tell us otherwise, people who watch pornography – including violent forms – want to try out what they see (Fordham 2005; O'Shea 2003). Pornography shapes people's expectations about sex and what they expect from their partners (and, for some, what they expect from prostitution). What was 'normal' for them 10 years ago is different now. What is normal in a few years' time may be very different than what it is normal for them now. Will it be more violent? More selfish? More bizarre? It is yet to be seen.

However, one thing is clear: unless we stop the tide of demand through protecting children from pornography, exploitation will continue to occur for generations to come.

Protecting children from harm

This section deals with two main questions: how do we protect children and young people from the harm of pornography and online threats? What is the best way to do so without scaring them and causing further damage?

Teaching healthy sexuality

Firstly, we must teach children about healthy sexuality. Parents need to talk to their children about pornography, but firstly they need to talk to them about sex. They should not just leave it to others, and they should certainly not leave it to pornography, which is from which children will learn if no one else teaches them.

The best place for children to learn about sex is the home, but this is not always possible. If parents do not feel comfortable talking to their children about sex, or if children are embarrassed to hear it from their parents, then realistically teachers and youth leaders may be the best people to talk to children about what is good, healthy sex, about the dangers of pornography and about the things they can do to protect themselves against sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

There are a number of resources that can be used to teach children. Programmes such as 'Good Touch, Bad Touch',[4] developed by Chab Dai, provide information in a narrative style to girls and boys to protect them from sexual abuse. Stairway Foundation uses a series of animated videos to teach children and young people about the risks of incest or sexual abuse, paedophilia and sex trafficking, as well as how to protect themselves.[5] In the United States of America 'Tell Your Friends'[6], developed by Fair Girls, covers topics such as human trafficking, the pimp culture, the use of language and victim blaming. 'My Life, My Choice', developed by the Justice Resource Institute,[7] is a more in-depth curriculum for at-risk girls.

When teaching children about sexuality, we must rid ourselves of misassumptions about vulnerability that are based on faulty views about gender. Girls look at porn. Boys are sexually abused. Both girls and boys can be sexually exploited, pimped and trafficked. Both boys and girls need protection and care. It is also good for boys and girls to learn together and to hear each other's perspectives in a safe way, led by trainers who are adequately knowledgeable regarding child protection.

4. See www.good-touch-bad-touch-asia.org.

5. Cf. www.stairwayfoundation.org.

6. See www.fairgirls.org.

7. See www.jri.org.

Parents and others must also be aware of what messages they are sending to children about sex and sexuality, especially the ones communicated without using words.

Picture this: a mother comes into her son's bedroom and he quickly switches the screen to what looks like homework. However, the mother is not fooled; she saw enough of the previous screen to know that he has been looking at porn. She leaves the room upset and her son is left alone in shame. When the mother tells her husband what happened, he smiles wryly and says, 'don't worry about it. Boys will be boys!' Rather than talking to his son, he silently condones it (perhaps conveniently, forgetting the way in which porn negatively affected him in his youth).

Now picture a similar scene, but this time it is the father who catches his daughter viewing porn (as more and more girls are doing). The father is upset and goes to his wife. How will they react in this situation? Most likely, the wife will not say, 'don't worry about it. Girls will be girls!' Instead, as concerned parents they will likely sit down and work out how they are going to talk to their daughter and try to discern why she feels the need to look at pornography. Hopefully, they will seek to create an environment where uncomfortable questions can be asked without the fear of judgement or shame. Ideally, they will seek to impart biblical views about gender and sexuality, model godly male–female relationships and instil healthy views about body image and self-esteem.

Such a response is needed for both boys and girls, but unspoken assumptions about gender and sexuality often speak louder than the words we actually say.

Teaching young people to be safe

Secondly, we must teach children and young people how to be safe. We have seen how changes in technology have increased vulnerability to pornography and online threats. Do we unplug

children from the Internet? The answer is 'no'. We must remember that the increasing reach of the Internet can be a good thing, empowering more and more people, including young people, to have better access to good information and resources. But, unfortunately, those same highways for good may also lead to bad.

Therefore, how do we keep young people safe online? There are a number of tools available, including online safety tips and Internet filtering software. A few of these tools are listed in the References, but there are many more out there, and more are being developed all the time.

However, even the best tool will not have optimal effectiveness if we have not first prepared ourselves. We must be willing to talk to children at their own level, and not in a way that causes them to feel fear, punishment or shame. We must also not be afraid of honestly talking to them about the threats. The threats will not go away simply because we are embarrassed to talk about them. In fact, Stairway Foundation, which has trained hundreds of children to be safe online, has found that most often young people are more concerned about what their parents' reactions will be than they are bothered about the content of online safety material itself.

Supply-side connections

Although pornography, prostitution and trafficking are different aspects of the sex industry, they are also related. Some experts would even argue that pornography is integral to prostitution (Farley et al. 2003:44).

Firstly, many people who are in prostitution or who have been trafficked have been subjects of pornography. In one study of people in prostitution in nine countries, about half (49%) of the participants reported that pornography was made of them (Farley et al. 2003:44).

Secondly, pornography can be used for 'seasoning' or 'training' into prostitution (Peters, Lederer & Kelly 2012):

> [*N*]ew research provides evidence that Johns show pornography to prostituted women to illustrate the sexual activity they want to participate in or observe. Other research demonstrates that pimps and traffickers use pornography to instruct and desensitise their victims. (pp. 8–9)

In the nine-country study, 47% of those interviewed were 'upset by attempts to coerce them into imitating pornography' (Farley et al. 2003:44).

Thirdly, pimps and traffickers can use pornography as a tool for trafficking into prostitution. Sometimes traffickers will take pictures or videos of their victim whilst she or he is nude or engaged in sexual acts. The trafficker will then threaten to show the pictures or videos to the victim's family unless the victim agrees to engage in prostitution. For some, the enduring threat of harm from the pornography can be fatal. In a visit to Costa Rica, Victor Malarek (2009) heard the following from a woman in a bar, who was hoping to sell sex that night:

> [*T*]his girl I knew was videotaped and then she found out it was on the Internet. She went to a café for Internet and found herself. She ran screaming from the place. She begged people if there was anything to remove this from the Internet and was told it was there forever. The next day, she was found dead. She cut her wrists. (p. 146)

Finally, pornography can be the purpose of trafficking. According to expert Donna Hughes, 'production of pornography and Internet sex shows are markets which often rely on trafficked victims' (Hughes 2005:25). In some cases, pornographers force victims of trafficking to make pornography or perform live Internet sex. But coercion is also common in the pornography industry as a whole (Peters et al. 2012):

> [*L*]ess extreme forms of coercion involving the production of pornography may occur with greater regularity. Often, women

> involved in the production of so-called mainstream hardcore pornography are pressured by their agents, directors, and fellow performers to engage in sexual activity that they do not want to participate in, such as anal sex. This pressure can cross into sexual assault, but in some circumstances it can also be a form of human trafficking. (p. 7)

Because of these supply-side connections, it is essential to tackle pornography if we are ever to address prostitution and trafficking.

Demand-side connections

It is also necessary to tackle pornography to stop the demand for prostitution primarily (and for victims of trafficking secondarily).

According to some experts, pornography fuels the demand for prostitution and/or trafficking (Peters et al. 2012:8). However, even if direct causation is difficult to establish, there are proven connections between prostitution and pornography. As discussed below, some research indicates that men who purchase sex may be more likely to use pornography, and the use of pornography can lead men to seek out prostitution.

Firstly, studies have shown a correlation in the usage of prostitution and pornography. Stack, Wasserman and Kern (2004:83) found that men who had paid for sex were almost four times more likely to use pornography. Similarly, Monto and McRee (2005) found that men who had been arrested for trying to patronise a street prostitute were much more likely to participate in other aspects of the sex industry, including using pornography. Their study, which compared the behaviour of more than 1600 'offenders' with that of men in two 'nationally representative samples of US households', found that 66.1% of the offenders had purchased an X-rated film in the last year, compared to 24% and 36.2% of men in the comparison groups (Monto & McRee 2005:11). Farley, Bindel and Golding studied 103 men in London who had purchased sex and found that 58% used pornographic videos at least once a month and that 51% used pornography on the

Internet at least once a month; in fact, 20% viewed Internet pornography once a week and 15% did so more than once a week (Farley, Bindel & Golding 2009:21). On the other hand, Tewksbury and Golder (2005:107) found in their study of more than 1300 offenders that 25% had never used pornography and that '90% of the respondents who did report using pornography claimed to do so less than once a month'.

Secondly, some studies suggest that the use of pornography may promote prostitution. Macleod, Farley, Anderson and Golding found that among men who had paid for sex, the more pornography they used, the more likely they were to seek out a prostitute (Macleod et al. 2008:16). Their study of 110 men in Scotland who had purchased sex, found 'a statistically significant association between these punters' pornography use and the frequency of their use of women in prostitution' (Macleod et al. 2008:16). The study reports (Macleod et al. 2008):

> [*W*]e compared men who were high frequency users of prostitutes (once a month or more) to those who were low frequency users (once or twice, ever) with respect to their use of print, video, and Internet pornography. Those who were most frequent users of pornography were also the most frequent users of women in prostitution ($r = 0.26$, $p = 0.006$). (p. 16)

The study recognised two possible explanations for the connection (Macleod et al. 2008):

> [*O*]ne interpretation of this finding is that more frequent use of pornography supports and stimulates men in their use of women in prostitution. It is also possible that men who are infrequent pornography users may be less likely to use women in prostitution. (p. 16)

Interviews with men who had purchased sex, showed that some men engaged in prostitution to act out what they had seen in pornography. In the words of one participant, '[m]any times in my life I start out watching porn, [the] next thing I know I am in my car looking for the real thing' (Malarek 2009:194). A man in

the Scottish study explained how pornography and prostitution are connected (Macleod et al. 2008):

> [*S*]ome guys watch a lot of pornography and expect their partners to perform certain acts. They'll either pressure their partner to a certain point or then go and get what they want. (p. 24)

Another man in the 2009 London study said (Farley et al. 2009):

> [*T*]he more I've watched pornography, the more specific my wants have become. Watching pornography has shaped my sexual desires. I watch pornography and I discover, 'hey, that really turns me on' and I want to recreate what I've seen in porn. (p. 22)

Often men seek to recreate those acts through prostitution: '79% of the punters told us that it was easier for them to ask a prostitute to perform certain sex acts than to ask their regular partner' (Macleod et al. 2008:24). These accounts show that pornography may not pull the trigger in making a person go out and purchase sex, but it seems to be a contributing factor as it normalises such behaviours (Eberstadt & Layden 2010) and acts as a permission giver (Taylor, Quayle & Holland 2001).

There is also a scientific reason behind the connection of seeing an act in pornography and seeking to act it out (for instance, through prostitution). Advances in neuroscience allow us to observe the effects of pornography on the brain (Doidge 2007):

> [*P*]ornography, by offering an endless harem of sexual objects, hyperactivates the appetitive system. Porn viewers develop new maps in their brains, based on the photos and videos they see. Because it is a use-it-or-lose-it brain, when we develop a map area, we long to keep it activated. Just as our muscles become impatient for exercise if we've been sitting all day, so too do our senses hunger to be stimulated. (p. 108)

The result can be addiction. Mental health experts on pornography and sexual addition describe an escalating cycle that begins with the use of pornography, graduates to the use of more explicit material and desensitisation and culminates in the acting out of

the pornography through the use of prostitution or other forms of commercial sex (Carnes 1992:23–24; Cline 2001).

To date, social science research about the demand side of prostitution has been limited, and there is insufficient data to conclusively show a causal connection between pornography use and the use of prostitution.[8] However, it is clear from neuroscience and psychology that pornography gives users an appetite for something they want to act on, and social science research has shown that prostitution is a common place for the acting out of such sexual desires. It is also clear that men who engage in prostitution have an increased prevalence of using pornography. Despite all that remains unknown, one thing is certain: we must continue to understand and address the role of pornography if we ever hope to address demand.

What about ourselves?

In 2005, *Christianity Today* reported that 57% of pastors surveyed said that 'addiction to pornography is the most sexually damaging issue to their congregation' (Christianity Today 2005). A brief rundown of the numbers shows how prevalent pornography usage appears to be: the Barna Group reported that 12% of Christian respondents admitted to have used pornography in the past one week (The Barna Group 2008), ChristiaNet.com polls indicate that 50% of all Christian men are addicted to pornography

8. The studies discussed vary on numbers, and there are no truly representative samples in any study available that would give numbers to be used to make any generalisations. Also, the studies by Tewksbury and Golder (2005) and Monto and McRee (2005) both had samples of men who were arrested for patronising street prostitution; men who purchase prostitutes via indoor prostitution are not as likely to be arrested. Furthermore, prostitution is occurring more and more indoors than it is outdoors, thus making it even clearer that those studies do not have representative samples. Also, it can be assumed that men who purchase prostitution indoors may have more access to the Internet, which is how they were able to gain access and information to indoor prostitution. This section of the book is heavily based on the insights from Miles and Crawford (2014).

(ChristiaNet 2006), and 63% of the men who attended Focus on the Family's 'Men, Romance & Integrity Seminars' admitted to be struggling with pornography in the past year (Barbera 2012:ch. 12).

Church leaders are also at risk. In a 2001 *Christianity Today* survey, 51% of pastors indicated that Internet pornography was a possible temptation, 43% admitted visiting a pornographic site at least once and 37% said viewing pornography was a current struggle (Christianity Today: Leadership Journal 2001:22,1). In another survey, 30% of pastors admitted to have viewed Internet pornography in the previous 30 days (Bergin 2005).

Conclusion

Whilst pornography and online threats pose very real risks to children and raise very sobering implications for the perpetuation of demand, there is hope for the future. By recognising the importance of these issues, addressing the underlying dynamics and availing ourselves of effective tools, we can begin to make a difference in the next generation – one child at a time.

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PART 2

Perspectives on mission and its impact on children, youth and families

Chapter 7

Neuroplasticity, pneumatology and the church as a therapeutic community

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Abstract

Drawing on the concept of *plasticity* in the development of human beings, and upon *pneumatology*, this chapter explores how God, through the Holy Spirit and God's people, brings new life to children and young people. The ability of human beings to discover resilience even in the midst of deepest suffering and anguish is a sign of God's faithfulness and ability to bring healing in the midst of trauma. Such a resilience lies within humans by virtue of their created-ness, but the healing of body, mind or

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spirit is ultimately an eschatological reality, only partially realised in this current life.

It is this eschatological dimension that brings this discussion into a missiological framework. Mission concerns God's gracious benevolence being expressed and experienced by people such that they become God's people, not only in terms of *belonging* to but also in terms of *becoming* like God. Thus, the Christian community is called by God to re-enact the story of Jesus in the midst of human misery, in the messy places and spaces where we find ravaged people. It is the sick who need a doctor, not the healthy. The Christian community is also to be the Body of Christ, the community in which healing can be experienced through the loving acceptance of a family created and inspired by God. This communal experience is the hermeneutic of the Good News.

Our mission and calling is to go to the sick with the wholesomeness and winsomeness that come from a life devoted to following the subsistence-level carpenter from Nazareth.

Keywords: Neuroplasticity; Pneumatology; The church; Therapeutic community; Eschatological reality.

Introduction

Consider the story of a 6-year-old boy, held with a knife to his throat by an 8-year-old neighbour. Or of the same 6-year-old boy held at gunpoint and locked in a dark stable by an avenging farmer. Or again, the same child peering round the kitchen door at home and seeing his father throwing a huge wooden chair at his mother in a room with the floor practically covered with broken crockery, the floor splattered with spilt milk and blood, with his parents shouting or crying. Such experiences leave a lasting impression upon a young, developing mind and soul. It was that impression which shaped the boy's life for many years, resulting in a dread of conflict and argument, in unhealthy coping mechanisms to keep the fear at bay and in anxieties about attachment to other humans. An extrovert child found the world frightening and became withdrawn, which in turn led to difficult teenage years.

Two events of healing

The first event happened at the moment of conversion. For me there was a profound and lasting awareness that I was loved and accepted by God. I had an experience in which I felt that I was 'made clean' – not only in the sense that I was forgiven by God, but that many of the sins committed against me also lost their power. I was able to forgive many of the people who had, in one way or another, caused me harm. However, this was the start of a process rather than the end in point. We will come to the second event below.

Consider the more harrowing stories of child soldiers; or children trafficked into the slave and/or sex trades across borders and continents; or children abused by the adults whose role was to provide safety and security; or unaccompanied minors fleeing war or extreme poverty. The statistics are easy to find, for traumatised children and young people are found throughout the world; it is a global problem. We know from first-hand testimony, and some of us from direct personal experience, that traumatic experiences, such as these, usually leave an imprint which can and does blight the lives of victims.

However, it is a matter of debate as to whether it is inevitable that the children caught up in violence are destined to lead lives that are overshadowed by their trauma for ever. There are stories of hope and healing, some dramatic and some less so. Each story points towards the possibility of children having a destiny different from the one offered by violence. It is apparent that children and young people are not obligated to be shaped only by trauma. We need to ask what interventions or agency makes the difference between destinies, and to consider how we, as followers of Jesus, can be empowered to work for positive and constructive outcomes for them.

I think it may be helpful to highlight early on the inherent paradox that exists within the argument presented in this chapter. Trauma is caused by contravention – usually violent contravention – of human intimacy: the healthy and normal context needed for

human flourishing is disrupted by an external imposition of experiences that undermine such thriving. In contrast, the process of healing is directly related to intimacy, whether between client and counsellor, the individual within community and/or the individual and the wonderful counsellor of the Spirit of God. This intimacy is vital to healthy human flourishing and to the therapeutic process itself. Yet, trauma so often weakens or destroys the ability of vulnerable children to have such emotionally intimate relationships, which are the bonds that are essential in the therapeutic process.

Often children-at-risk are identified by their presenting behaviour. For therapists, teachers, family members and others, the desired outcome is behaviour modification. We want the children-at-risk to become adapted to the social context in the hope and expectation that by so doing they may be able to thrive, or at least survive. However, for children it may well be that they do not see or feel the need to adapt their behaviour. They may, indeed, see that such behaviour attracts the attention that they feel they need. The behaviour is a symptom of a deeper need and becomes both a barrier to receive the social and personal support from their carers and simultaneously the only mechanism that the children have at their disposal to attract that attention. Inevitably then, there will be a time when the children need to learn about other, healthier mechanisms to attract attention and the carers need to accept the current behaviour for what it is: the cry for attention.

A note on theological method

Theological method is contested. For an overview, see Yong (2014). In the following, I aim to identify how I 'do' theology, by which I mean what are the primary narratives upon which I draw in writing this chapter. This is important to acknowledge, in part, because some of the areas I shall touch upon are beyond my competence. I shall mention, for example, some deep aspects of psychology. I readily admit that a criticism of this work is my lack

of psychological training and knowledge. Therefore, what follows is tentative. It is intended to sketch out possibilities, to imagine ways in which the Spirit of God may engage with the human mind and spirit. I make no claim that the mechanisms are correct – only that they may be.

This is because the argument helps me make sense of my two primary narratives. The first one is my theologising about my Christian faith, which both informs and is informed by my other narrative: my own story, my experience of what God has done in my own life. As such, there is an auto-ethnographic dimension to this research. It is where these two narratives collide – theology and human experience – that forms the basis of my theological method. Theology here concerns the biblical narrative itself, alongside the voices that have sought to understand and interpret the biblical texts through the ages, and alongside other dialogical voices. But theology is, for me, intimate; it is, as the Spirit works through the texts and with the community of Christians, the Body of Christ that becomes embodied in my own being and life. I bring my own experience of life and of God to the theological table. However, the third strand of my method is to subject both theology and experience to further reflection through the lens of other disciplines, subjects in which I have limited knowledge or skill, but which nonetheless can shed more light upon my theologising, sometimes affirming and at other times challenging my tentative conclusions.

One example of this may act as an illustration of the broader principle and will lead us into the deeper issues that I am seeking to explore.

I was converted at about 19:45 on Sunday 06 July 1980, sitting at the back of a small Baptist church in rural England. It was a defining moment in my life. And arguably was *the* defining moment in my life.

There was a pre-conversion process of about six months, running from the moment I encountered a local family who self-identified as 'born again, bible-believing Christians'. These

categories were unknown to me until this time, being more familiar with a staid and dry form of institutionalised Christianity which I did not appreciate or understand.

The process was threefold. Firstly, I was deeply impressed by the lives of these people – both the family and the wider group of believers I met through them. There was a quality of life, a joyful and deep awareness of God within their lives, and I knew that I wanted what they had. Secondly, I was trapped in a downward cycle of self-destruction and saw this faith as a way of escaping from that cycle – indeed, of it being reversed into an upward virtuous cycle that would give my life direction and purpose. But the third dimension comes to the foreground here: I was not prepared to commit my life to Jesus if it was not true: I was and am only prepared to make such a radical commitment if I could be persuaded about the historical evidence of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, I drew upon the discipline of history, seeking out evidence for the resurrection. It was only on concluding that there were reasonable grounds for a belief in the resurrection that I was willing to follow Jesus. My human experience and my reading of the Scriptures, by themselves, were not sufficient. The third, supporting narrative, provided sufficient additional light for me to make the leap of faith – not blind faith into the dark, but reasonable faith into the light.

Unbeknownst to me at that time, I had discovered a theological methodology that is – for me – sufficient.

This chapter continues to use the same methodology, but I suggest that it can be – indeed, should be – pushed beyond my own limited experience and knowledge, as a basis for exploring and developing reflection of God's Spirit working in the lives of children and people who have suffered deep trauma.

Plasticity

In this chapter, I will be using the term 'plasticity'. It refers to the ability of some inanimate materials to have a characteristic degree of flexibility and to the ability within plants and animals to

recover from some diseases or injuries. Within psychology it refers to the ability of the human brain to adapt to external stimuli, including trauma.

As such, in this chapter, plasticity refers to the ability of humans to grow not only physically but also psychologically and spirituality. Growth here is not thought of as linear, particularly in the context of vulnerable children. Indeed, a characteristic of such children is that their growth has been impeded by external intervention and trauma. Therefore, plasticity is a concept used to help explain the mechanism by which vulnerable children can fully, or partially, overcome these interventions. Plasticity operates at the structural level of the brain, as well as in the coping mechanism children use.

I assert that this plasticity is a part of the gift of creation.

Neuroplasticity is 'a very loosely defined term that simply means some kind of change in the nervous system' (Costandi 2016:1). Costandi offered a brief and helpful summary of the history of neuroscience, including the discovery of neurons as the basis of nervous systems. However, he (Costandi 2016:1) pointed out that 'just 50 years ago, the idea that the adult brain can change in any way was heretical'. The assumption was that 'the immature brain is malleable' but it 'hardens, like clay poured into a mould, into a permanently fixed structure'. Recent research has suggested the opposite: that the adult brain is in a constant state of change, responding and learning from external stimuli and internal, subjective experience (Costandi 2016):

> [*T*]oday, synaptic modification is widely regarded as the cellular basis of learning and memory, and … long-term potentiation (LTP) is … the most intensively studied and best understood mode of neuroplasticity. (p. 10)

Contemporary 'neuroscientists can visualise the brain in unprecedented detail and manipulate neuronal activity with great precision'. Researchers now postulate 'two main types of neuroplasticity. Functional plasticity … and … structural plasticity' (Costandi 2016:14). The latter includes the ability of the brain to

lay down 'new neural pathways'. Costandi (2016:74) mentions some of the experimental evidences that 'finally broke the long-standing conviction that the mammalian brain lacks the ability to regenerate itself', referencing the work of Elizabeth Gould and others. 'Environmental factors can … affect the rate at which new neurons are produced', including 'physical activity, environmental enrichment, and learning tasks … whereas stress, certain types of inflammation, and sensory deprivation have the opposite effect' (Costandi 2016:75ff.). However, despite significant growth in understanding the human brain and its relationships with behaviour, 'our understanding of neural stem cell biology is still far from complete' (Costandi 2016:82).

Thomson (2010) writes that:

> [*T*]he way we understand and make sense of our story is reflected in the wiring of our brain. This networking (via Hebb's axiom: neurons that fire together wire together) tends to reinforce our story's hardwiring, in this case at the location of the prefrontal cortex, and will continue to do so unless substantially acted upon by another outside relationship. (p. 163)

Ekstrom (2018:5), summarising LeDoux, reinforces this point: '[m]emory … is the result of specific neurons working or firing together; a process also known as *Hebbian plasticity*' .

Thompson's (2010:163) argument is that 'we find ourselves on the low road of functioning … when the integrating function of our prefrontal cortex is not adequately balanced'. This 'low road … represents a *disintegration* of the prefrontal cortex' (Thompson 2010):

> [*W*]hen we hide from what we feel – from emotion – we hide from the truth … emotion is not a debatable phenomenon. It is an authentic reflection of our subjective experience, one that is best served by attending to it. (p. 164)

The key point is that of the 'wiring of our brain'. Thompson calls upon the work of Daniel Siegel, particularly *The developing mind*, which draws together research from a number of scientific disciplines, such as 'psychiatry, genetics, developmental and

behavioural psychology, psychoanalysis, neurology, develop mental neuro-biology and structural and functional neuroimaging' (Thompson 2010:5). Siegel named his integrated model *interpersonal neurobiology*. The human mind is 'a dynamic, mysterious confluence of the brain and experience … The interactions within interpersonal relationships deeply shape and influence the development of the brain' (Thompson 2010:6). He explores this in greater detail in his chapter on 'Attachment: The connections for life' (Thompson 2010:109ff.). There are four attachment patters: 'secure attachment' (Thompson 2010:118), 'insecure attachment – avoidant' (Thompson 2010:122), 'insecure attachment – ambivalent/anxious' (Thompson 2010:127) and 'insecure attachment – disorganized' (Thompson 2010:130). By definition, children who experience significant trauma fall into this category (Thompson 2010):

> [*T*]heir narratives tend to be quite incoherent, sometimes punctuated by gaps in the stories where they omit portions of traumatic experience … Telling [*their*] stories in such a jumbled fashion correlates with the lack of connection of neural networks in parts of the brain that are responsible for social organization. (p. 130)

Thompson (2010:132) notes that '[l]earning to regulate a traumatized brain requires long, hard work', but 'attachment patterns *do* have the capacity for change' (Thompson 2010:133, emphasis in original), which can lead to 'earned secure attachment'. Such a process of transformation 'requires collaborative interaction … [which] facilitates the integration of various layers of neural structures and brain systems, which in turn creates new neural networks' (Thompson 2010:138).

The author believes that this brief sketch would be sufficient to give the reader a (very) basic introduction to the complex concept of plasticity. In the next section, I would discuss pneumatology.

Pneumatology

Plasticity by itself is only a partial aspect of the process. For children to grow into their full potential, there is a need for

reconciliation not only within their own self but also between their self and God, which leads to a deeper sense of healing and recovery. In this context, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is therapeutic. I draw upon three principal passages of Scripture in developing this theme, each one illustrating the role of the Holy Spirit in human physicality: Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, Luke's narrative of Pentecost and John's Prologue and the Incarnation.

The central argument of this chapter is that the Christian faith can be deeply therapeutic to individuals (and communities, but I focus here on persons and not on social groups).

The faith can achieve this through two main mechanisms:

1. The activity of the Holy Spirit, working within the soul or spirit of the troubled individual in ways that we cannot fully comprehend: there is mystery involved. But, I suggest, at least part of the therapeutic role of the Spirit here must lie in changing or reshaping the deep connections that exist in the mind–brain relationship (Hebbian plasticity).
2. When the Christian community functions as God intended, it is a therapeutic community. Both its characteristics of love and acceptance and the careful practice of pastoral support and discipline create a welcoming social group in which social and personal attachments can be made and the context in which personal growth can be encouraged and shaped.

Both of these characteristics can exist in any human institution. But they should exist within the Christian community by default. Therapy and counselling can also help the individual recover from trauma. Often I suspect they are indispensable in the healing process. However, the Holy Spirit's direct activity can – and does – enhance the role of the therapist by bringing a mysterious – supernatural – dynamic that lies beyond human ability alone.

A note of caution is that it must be acknowledged that the church does not always characterise love and acceptance. There are far too many people who have been injured by un-Christian

behaviour patterns in churches. Within this chapter I talk of the ideal, of what the Christian community *should be*.

Can these dry bones live?

This passage from Ezekiel is perhaps the best known of the prophet's pericopes. It starts with the phrase, '[t]he hand of the Lord was on me' (Ezk 37:1), the third of four occurrences in the book (Ezk 3:22; 8:1; 37:1, 40:1). It introduces a 'vision narrative' in which the prophet is in a 'state of trance' (Blenkinsopp 1990:170). It is a disturbing image of the battle dead, bones picked clean by vultures and worms and bleached by the sun: a portrayal of a lost people who perished long ago but who, by the Spirit of God, are resurrected. One can almost imagine the rattling of the bones, and the rather Gothic image of tendons and muscle growing, and the bodies being covered with skin (Ezk 37:7). There is a duality enshrined within the text: the bodies, even when reconstituted by the direct activity of God, still lack *life*. In the same way that the imagery of Genesis 2:7 shows the body to be a shell and not the whole person, so here the bodies need the *ruach* of God to give life, to give the material that additional element – the spiritual – which results in genuine life. There is an intimacy in the imagery of God breathing 'into his nostrils the breath of life' in Genesis, and again as God's creative Spirit recreates life, rebuilding the bodies of the slain in Ezekiel 37. Although there is much more that can be said about Ezekiel's vision, the key point for this chapter is rather simple: God's intimate involvement with the physicality of bones, tendons, flesh, skin and breath.

Of course, there is an uneasy dualism in the modern context of missiology: is mission about saving souls *or* social justice? The biblical evidence, emphasised by the ministry of Jesus, is that such a question is a category error: it is not a binary choice of one *or* the other, but *both* physicality and spirituality are the domains in which mission is to be exercised correctly: as was Jesus, so are

we called to minister to the whole person, mind, body and spirit within local communities across the world.

However, this passage is clearly a vision. Although we can interpret the opening phrase as indicating a 'trance' or otherwise, it remains the case that Ezekiel is not claiming he witnessed actual bones being clothed in sinew and flesh: he is not claiming that he witnessed a historical event. It remains a vision of God's intimate engagement with human physicality but in visionary form.

Luke presents similar occurrences but with a historical narrative.

The revolution of the intimate

A second illustration is the experience of Pentecost – a well-known narrative – which contains so many surprises and theological depths still to be explored. Here I wish to focus on the speaking in tongues – illustrating the global reach that Luke expands upon throughout his text – by the 12 and the hearing of the same by the crowd.

The Spirit fell upon the 12 disciples and they 'began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them' (Ac 2:4), followed by the crowds in Jerusalem who 'heard them speaking in their own language' (Ac 2:7). The Spirit 'enabled' them. 'The word *apophtheggomai* seems to imply such utterance as proceeded from immediate inspiration, and included oracular communications' (Studylight n.d.:n.p.).

The level of intimacy involved in this – whether in the speaking or hearing of the 'other tongues' – is deeper than that portrayed by Ezekiel's vision. An extended quote from Willie Jennings, who calls the 'miracle of Pentecost, *the revolution of the intimate*' (Jennings 2017:loc. 715; [*emphasis in original*]), forces this point home:

> Here we must not draw back from what is being displayed in Luke's account. This is God touching, *taking hold of tongue and voice, mind, heart, and body*. This is a joining, unprecedented, unanticipated,

> unwanted, yet complete joining. … This moment echoes Mary's intimate moment. … The Spirit creates joining. The followers of Jesus are now being connected in a way that joins them to people in the most intimate space – of voice, memory, sound, body, land, and place. … The miracles are not merely in ears. They are also in mouths and in bodies. … God gestures the deepest joining possible, one flesh with God, and desire made one with the Holy One. (pp. 724–759; [emphasis in original]).

In some manner God had taken a level of control over the speaking and/or hearing in the human body by the Spirit. There was a deep intimacy between the human bodies and the Spirit of God who also acts at the level of the human brain and mind. The disunity that emerged after the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 is reversed here with a new unity built upon the Spirit of God – God, in Christ, reconciling a disparate and broken humanity to God's-self and to each other. It is Christ we now turn to.

Tabernacling

The third example is more intimate still and provides a strong theological basis for my argument: the incarnation of the Son.

The pneumatology of the incarnation is profoundly intimate, especially for Mary. The angel Gabriel told Mary that 'the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Lk 2:35). Nolland (2000:45) notes that '[t]he Spirit's coming upon Mary here … is, rather, the eschatological coming of the Spirit by means of which the wilderness becomes a fruitful field (Is 32:15 …)'. It is to be understood (Nolland 2000):

> [/]n line with that creative role attributed in Judaism to the Spirit from the original creation (Gen 1:2 …), through the ongoing creation and sustaining of life (Job 27:3; 33:4; Ps 104:30; …), to the eschatological renewal of God's people (Isa 32: 15; 44: 3–4; Ezek 37:1–14; …). (p. 45)

Furthermore, the terminology (Nolland 2000):

> ἐπισκιάσει, 'will overshadow', like ἐπελεύσεται, 'will come upon', has probably been influenced by the LXX text of Exod 40:35, perhaps via the transfiguration account (Luke 9:34): Mary's experience is to be

> compared to the dramatic way in which God's glory and the cloud marking his presence came down upon the completed tabernacle. (p. 54)

As 'the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle' (Ex 40:35), so too did 'the power of the Most High overshadow' Mary (Lk 2:35).

The pneumatology continues in John's Gospel with reference to the incarnation of Jesus, the Word, echoing some of the same themes we see in Mary's encounter (Beasley-Murray 1999):

> Into that condition of human weakness the Logos 'pitched his tent' (ἐσκήνωσεν, from σκηνή, 'tent') and revealed his glory (cf. shekinah, having the same consonants as the Greek σκηνή). The language is evocative of the revelation of God's glory in the Exodus – by the Red Sea, on Mount Sinai, and at the tent of meeting by Israel's camp (especially the last; see Exod 33:7–11; for the glory in and upon the Tabernacle[,] cf. Exod 40:34–38). The Exodus associations are intentional, and are part of the theme of the revelation and redemption of the Logos-Christ as fulfilling the hope of a second Exodus. (p. 14)

In these quotes, we see the intimacy both of Jesus' conception and the bodily formation and growth of Jesus himself. God is engaged with both the Son and his mother at an intimate biological level. There is a mystery here which goes beyond human reasons; we do not know the mechanisms of this engagement but accept that they must have happened by faith.

This is a pneuma-physicality, and these three biblical illustrations show to us that God is able and indeed interacts with human beings. There is no reason to believe that such interactions cannot or do not happen at the level of Hebbian plasticity.

Re-wiring the soul: The second healing event

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that my conversion experience was a therapeutic event, *and* the start of an ongoing process of healing and growth. The deeply ingrained memories of a

6-year-old self continued to exert an influence over my life, expressed in subtle and not-so subtle ways – sometimes consciously, but often hidden from my conscious mind. An example of the former would be a fear of naked blades, especially sharp kitchen knives, or books and movies in which violence was graphically portrayed. For examples of the latter, this becomes more problematic, for they are more intimate. As I write, even now, there is a reluctance to be *too* transparent, *too* truthful. The desire is still to deny the emotional pain, but emotion is, to quote Thompson (2010:164) again, 'an authentic reflection of our subjective experience, one that is best served by attending to'.

For many years, this 'attending' is something I did not do. It was superficially easier, but psychologically more damaging, to ignore the fears and darkness within, to deny their reality in the groundless belief that denial of their existence would rob the memories of their power. However, secret fear of the darkness gives strength to the darkness, as Rowling (2005) illustrates:

> 'There is nothing to be feared from a [*dead*] body, Harry, any more than there is anything to be feared from the darkness. Lord Voldemort, who of course secretly fears both, disagrees. But once again he reveals his own lack of wisdom. It is the unknown we fear when we look upon death and darkness, nothing more'. (p. 566)

This changed, quite unexpectedly, when I was driving along the A43, an A-class road in England. I was listening to a CD of worship songs which included *Come, now is the time to worship* (Vineyard Music 2004). The lyrics triggered something deep within (Doerksen 1998):

> Come, now is the time to worship
>
> Come, now is the time to give your heart
>
> Come, just as you are to worship
>
> Come, just as you are before your God
>
> Come. (n.p.)

For reasons I cannot explain, at that moment, without conscious intent, I realised that I was to come, *just as I was*. I was to give my heart to God, with the shadows, fears and darkness that I had long denied. I knew that God, in Christ, would accept my brokenness, that God would not reject the fears and darkness connected to memories of a six-year-old boy: that they could be brought in to the light and that in the light their power vanished.

I remember pulling over to the side of the road and crying – tears of joy that these shadows were no more. I remember the events – the knife blade against my skin, the muzzle of a shotgun pointing at my face, the shouts and mess in the kitchen, but the emotions of terror no longer exist. The connection between the memory of the events and the emotions they triggered was broken.

Neurological plasticity provides an explanation of the psychological mechanism affected by the power of the Spirit, which broke the emotional power of these early memories.

I offer this narrative as my lived experience. It is personal to me and is, therefore, anecdotal. Other people might have experienced significantly more extreme trauma. However, it is problematic to define a hierarchy of trauma too precisely. Individuals react to trauma in different ways, and cultures and contexts across the world have different thresholds of what is classified as trauma. Creating a scale of affliction, which compares suffering from person to person, or culture to culture, is not constructive within a therapeutic approach. Rather, it is the behaviour patterns which can indicate the neurological damage that has been done, and the objective of therapy must be, in my opinion, to bring healing to sufferers such that they can, at the minimum, learn to function well within their society, moving through to a point where they can thrive within a community.

Resilience: The Christian community as a therapeutic community

One of the implications of this chapter is the need for the local church – wherever it is found in the world – to actively

develop programmes, ministries and support structures that could promote resilience amongst vulnerable children and young people.

This entails an intentional approach to develop such programmes and ministries. Thus, an understanding and appreciation of resilience models is needed, drawing upon biblical models of resilience (I tried a Google search for 'resilience models', and it gave me 12 800 000 links in 0.93 s). Perhaps we often, too often, hold up biblical narratives that portray resilience but view them through the eyes of Western individualism. Thus, David in the Old Testament and Paul in the New Testament are held up as examples of those who cling on in the midst of troubles and setbacks: what they illustrate is the individual strength of character that we should imitate. We see the individual hero. Thompson (2010:135ff.) echoes this individualism in his chapter 'Earned secure attachment: Pointing to the new creation', although a key plank in his argument is shaped by the Trinity (Thompson 2010:139). But what if we interpret the narratives through different lenses and place more emphasis upon the spiritual disciplines of community living, drawing upon a strength that is not their own, coupled with the active support of their communities? Their determination then becomes a product of the role of the Holy Spirit, both within their own selves and within their community. The roles of David's loyal soldier-comrades and Paul's fellow workers then become central to the success of the heroes. They do life together and it is through the togetherness that strength of purpose grows.

The concept of resilience is contested. Titus provided a helpful explanation in his PhD thesis entitled 'History of Resilience: Cultural Origins, and Disciplinary Lines'. Shean (2015) gave a more recent review of the literature and debates surrounding resilience, comparing the works of Rutter, Garmezy, Werner, Luthar, Masten and Ungar. Shean (2015:26) explored the 'points of convergence/divergence' noting that 'the theorists' definitions … contain two core ideas – that a person has experienced serious risk and has demonstrated positive functioning in some way'. The theorists 'all agree that resilience is not a special quality that only

some children are born with', although there are different emphases amongst the researchers (Shean 2015:26). For example, different weights can be placed on the individual in the specific cultural and social context. However, all of Shean's (2015:27) theorists 'conceptualise protective factors at three levels: the child, the family and the community'. The chapter goes on to offer some critical perspectives. Although it is acknowledged that (Shean 2015):

> [/]nterventions should be implemented at multiple levels… Most of the theorists focus their suggested interventions on identifying and changing individual-level characteristics of children… This focus would suggest that there is still a belief that the most effective way to promote resilience is through the child, rather than the environment. (pp. 27–28)

Additional problems include 'ambiguity in terminology and measurement' (Shean 2015:29). These include 'the selection of outcomes that indicate resilience … Measures of competence' and the understanding of risk and protective factors. Additional problems include, according to Shean (2015), the absence of the voice of young people in the research, an 'absence of culture and context in research', and the lack of testing of the resilience theory.

Many Christian communities (whether a local church or mission team) will not have skilled psychologists who are trained in childhood trauma. They may also lack skilled academic researchers. Therefore, many such communities are not well placed to address the criticisms noted by Shean (2015). However, all of these Christian communities across the world have access to three primary and impressive resources: the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and each other. Each follower of Jesus has their own story, and together the communities carry the narratives of God working in people's lives, bringing strength in adversity, mutual support, forgiveness and healing, and spiritual experience and depth. These narratives, coupled with the retelling and

re-enactment of the biblical narratives (e.g. in baptism and Holy Communion), reinforce the communities' self-identity and feelings of belonging. They can also help establish patterns of behaviour, which are encouraged throughout the New Testament. For example, St Paul refers his readers to the ethical consequences of faith 'in Christ'. He uses the phrase more than 70 times in his writings (numbers depend on the Bible version in English language). Noelliste (n.d.) highlights six features of biblical ethics: covenantal or communal, grace-motivated, transformational, counter-cultural, integrative and eschatological. The particular thread of interest for this chapter is the first ethic: *covenantal or communal*, the doing life together (Purvis 1996):

> [*A*]t the heart of Paul's ethics is the value of a relationship with the risen Christ, and life led in a community of persons structured so as to enhance that relationship. Paul's ethical thought is in service of forming and maintaining Christ-shaped community. (p. 415)

His concern is that the community of believers reflects the nature and character of Christ, only achieved by being 'in Christ' as the Spirit empowers the community. Attachment *to* Christ and *in* the community can bring the communal and personal transformation: as Purvis (1996) writes:

> [*W*]e can characterize Paul's work and thought as an attempt to re-socialize persons in accordance with structures and norms and values centred on the cross of Jesus Christ.... The creation of a new symbolic world centred on the cross ... and the foundation of new communities to live out that world is at the heart of Paul's life and thought. (p. 416)

St Paul makes this 'new creation' explicit in 2 Corinthians: therefore, he writes, 'if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!' (2 Cor 5:17). This is an eschatological context (2 Cor 5:1–10), and a description of Paul's ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11–21) and his motivation – the love of God (2 Cor 5:14). Arguably, therefore, Paul understands the gospel to be more than Christian initiation; it encompasses Christian ministry, maturity and growth.

Conclusion

But what relevance has this ethical reflection for Christian mission work with vulnerable and damaged children and young people? Let me suggest some signposts for further consideration.

The human brain, like the human body, has remarkable powers of therapeutic restoration. The brain has the characteristic of plasticity. The experiences of violence, abuse and destructive behaviours, which are laid down in the neurological networks during childhood and adolescence, can be amended. This is a natural feature of being human, a gift settled upon humanity through creation. The intimate activity of the Holy Spirit can and does enhance this natural ability. God, through the Holy Spirit, can and does heal people's brokenness. Such a healing creates new narratives, which not only benefit the person, but in the telling also reinforce and strengthen the bonds that should bind believers together 'in Christ'. This healing can be as a direct result of God, acting through the Spirit. Often, however, it is also by God acting in and through the community of believers.

Thus, as followers of Christ, wherever in the world we are, we must live in such a manner as to 'tabernacle' God's presence within our midst. We are to imitate Christ, exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit in our communal life: love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control (Gl 5:22–23). The community should have porous boundaries so that we 'shine as lights in the world' (Phlp 2:15).

Such a community is a therapeutic community and of immense value to the least, the last and the lost.

Chapter 8

On becoming 'home' for the destitute: An African congregation-based missional and pastoral perspective on families uprooted by migration

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Abstract

The chapter is written from a South African perspective as one of the major host destinations for inter-regional migration in Africa. It relates globalisation and migration whilst arguing that the resultant loss of home is one of the greatest challenges of migration because of the central importance of home for African families. The loss of home is sadly compounded by various other challenges in host countries, such as prejudice and xenophobia. As in the rest of Africa, Christian faith communities in South Africa are ideally positioned to reach out to migrants. Considering the biblical notion of 'home' [*oikos*], missional and pastoral perspectives are brought into focus, which highlight the calling of local congregations to become a home away from home for migrants. This idea is strengthened by arguing that the biblical notion of *oikos* resonates well with the African notions of *khaya* and *ubuntu*, which can motivate congregation members to reach out to the stranger in their midst – and in so doing – heeding their missional and pastoral callings as the body of Christ.

Keywords: Globalisation; Migration; Families; Congregation-based pastoral care; African churches; Home.

Introduction

This chapter reflects on the pastoral and missional calling of Christian faith communities in host countries to become 'home' for families uprooted by migration. It relates the growing trend of migration to globalisation resulting in the loss of the familial home. This is regarded as detrimental to the well-being of families in which different members, such as parents and children, may experience the migration process differently. Especially when the strong bond between Africans, home and land, is considered, it transpires that leaving the familial home behind represents an existential challenge for African families.

From an African perspective, local congregations represent one of the most strategically placed bodies or organisations on

the continent. Scattered across the African landscape in many different forms, they are most likely represented in many of the typical settings where migrants settle, like informal settlements. This places congregation members in a favourable position to reach out to migrants and welcome them in communities as part of the missional and pastoral callings of the church. As the notion of home [*oikos*] in the Christian tradition can be regarded as both descriptive of and imperative for the church, congregation members have the calling to create a home (Louw 2016:7), where the desolate can dwell and flourish because their presence is rooted in the love of God, hospitality and care. When congregations become set on not only 'being the house of God' but also '*offering* the house of God' to strangers in this way, it might counteract the instability and void caused by the loss of home for migrants. This in turn can provide the much-needed stability for migrant families to flourish in their new environment.

Theoretical framework and method

This chapter is written from a missional and pastoral perspective. This dual perspective approach is a deliberate attempt to highlight the mission and pastoral work of the church with migrants as two sides of the same coin. In other words, to say that to be missionary is at the same time to act pastorally – or, that the pastoral involvement of churches should be driven by the passion to reach out to the stranger. Where the idea of mission underscores the outreach function of the Christian community, the idea of pastoral engagement underscores the healing and caring function of all such outreaching to the 'other'. Whilst being 'sent' to others is usually accepted as belonging to the heart of the Christian calling (Lk 14:23; Jn 20:21), providing pastoral care over time became shunted to the clerical side of the church: a specialised function of clergy who were trained for it. In a congregation-based pastoral approach, pastoral action is, however, framed within its root meaning – designating all caring actions of the Christian faith community towards the world and having as only

prerequisite the love for their neighbour, including the stranger (Brunsdon 2017:111). An approach to pastoral care involves all church members and not just the pastor, hence a congregation-based approach.

The mission-driven pastoral involvement contemplated here will be focused on African migrants, who had to forsake their familial home and became uprooted in search of a new home. In the broad sense of the word, 'home' is understood to designate a new host country, a specific area in a country, a physical place to stay and new social networks and economic opportunities. Although there are many causes and reasons for the current high occurrence of migration, it is argued that within Africa a significant number of people migrate as a result of poverty, which relates to the economic effects of globalisation. Also known as inter-regional migrants, such individuals and families do not have the means to leave the continent and instead seek outcomes in another country on the same continent that they think will offer them better opportunities.

Although the term 'family' is used in a generic sense, it is also recognised that migratory families usually include children and youths on whom the disruption and loss of the familial home impact differently as they are still developing towards adulthood.

Ultimately, in this contribution the point is how members of Christian faith communities, amongst whom these strangers will dwell, can give expression to what will be imagined here as congregation-based pastoral care. This is a type of pastoral care whose main concern will be to bring stability to migrant families so that they can experience their new environment as 'home', which is regarded as a basic requirement to flourish as human beings.

To integrate these issues theoretically, the chapter will unfold as follows: firstly, it will relate globalisation and migration to come to a better understanding of why so many people leave their current homes in search of an alternative one. Then, it will ponder

the notion of home, as it will be argued that one of the biggest challenges of migration is to negotiate the loss of what people regard as home. Subsequently, the place of African churches in host countries will be discussed as being favourably positioned to engage migrants where they are seeking a new home. In light of the churches' calling within the Christian tradition to be and become the house of God and the understanding of home in the African culture, the missional–pastoral calling of local congregations will be re-imagined. Methodologically, the research is executed by means of a literature study.

Globalisation and migration

The phenomenon of globalisation can supposedly be viewed through different lenses. Viewed through a positive lens, one could argue that globalisation shrunk the globe, shared information and technologies and created work and new economic opportunities in previously excluded parts of the world. This at least can be deduced from some of the multiple definitions of globalisation that abound, such as the World Health Organization's (2020) definition, which states:

> Globalization can be defined as the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries. It is generally understood to include two inter-related elements: the opening of international borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas; and the changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows. (n.p.)

Through a critical lens, however, the effects of globalisation cannot necessarily be seen in a positive light, especially from the viewpoint of developing countries that are not able to tap into the benefits of globalisation, like increased wealth. From an African economic perspective, it can, for example, be argued that globalisation in fact widened the gap between the richest and the poorest members of the global village. This is mainly because taking part in global trade requires capital, technology and industrial infrastructure, which developing African countries do

not have. Subsequent economic agreements between developing countries and larger powers often result in a form of neo-colonialism as donor countries end up governing the economies of African partners, keeping them from sustainable and independent economic growth. Although they are able to supply raw materials and labour, they are not able to develop the type of industrial infrastructure needed to make them independent producers of goods and captains of their own destiny. Therefore, 'in many African countries, such as the former Zaire and present day, Uganda, [*sic*] Washington bureaucrats run the ministries of finance and economic planning' (Buthelezi 2005:6), thus making developing countries dependent upon larger economies.

The resultant economic manipulation then translates into persistent poverty that still characterises most of Africa, despite the positive economic possibilities of globalisation. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]) (2018), this is amongst the reasons why Africa became one of the highest contributors to the worldwide phenomenon of migration as many Africans are forced to seek life-sustaining incomes elsewhere. Although this type of 'economic migration' may seem voluntary at first – as opposed to fleeing one's home and country as a result of conflict and war – it is only partially true, as the dire poverty of many Africans eventually brings them to the crossroads where they are confronted by the choice between lifelong suffering with no long-term opportunities of education or healthcare for their children and seeking a better future elsewhere. This is where neighbouring countries such as South Africa, with a perceived better economy and opportunities, become the proverbial land of milk and honey (Sichone 2005:72). Although economic inequality because of globalisation is by far not the only reason why migration has become a characteristic of millennial Africa, it is certainly an important contributor to the estimated 20 million people, of whom nearly half were under the age of 18, who were being displaced towards the end of 2016 (UNHCR 2018) in sub-Saharan Africa.

The notion of 'home' and its importance to families

As this chapter builds a case for a congregation-based pastoral care, aimed at church members becoming a 'home' for the destitute, this section will reflect on the notion of home within the framework of familial African life.

In this regard, it is pivotal to grasp the central role of the notion of home in the being and becoming functions of African families and the members thereof. In terms of the being function, home is understood as the safe space where parents create familial room for children to flourish. In terms of the becoming function, home is seen as the space where parents model to children how to live, the space where identity formation takes place. In brief, it is the safe space where parents prepare children for life. Simultaneously, home is also the space where parents become who they are called to be, affording them the space for their own becoming as adults. In this view, home is the inadmissible foundation for the being and becoming families and children of all ages.

This philosophical view of home does not mean that the notion of home is a mere 'idea'. The meaning of home is always localised in spatial reality. That is, irrespective of what home is understood to be, home is always *somewhere* to be found. It can be a brick and mortar building nestled in the suburb of a developed country, or a shack in an informal settlement of a developing country, or even a dilapidated tent in a temporary refugee camp. Because of the inherent spatial locality of home, home also becomes a link to the human network we often think of in terms of 'we' and 'them', hence that which places us in – and links us – to a particular society. In this way, it becomes easy to align with Taylor's (2015) understanding of home:

> Home is not just a singular physical building, but is the network of streets, buildings and communal spaces that make up a neighbourhood. It is the complex web of social relations which include family, friends, acquaintances, business associates and enemies. It is the water from the spring, the blossoms on the trees, the crops on

> the field and the food on the table. It is the conjunction of all these things at a particular moment in time. (p. 155)

I would thus like to argue that home, in both its philosophical and physical meaning, is of foundational importance for the stability of familial life and the development of family members. The meaning of stability is best understood when comparing it to the concept of instability (Baldridge 2011:2; Sandstrom & Huerta 2013:5). Sandstrom and Huerta (2013:10) defined instability as '[t]he experience of abrupt, involuntary, and/or negative change in individual or family circumstances, which is likely to have adverse implications for child development'. Disruptive changes in parental union, economic security and residence seem to be some of the major contributors to instability. Conversely, stability is present when disruptive changes are mostly absent, creating an environment which is characterised by continuity providing a framework for the positive and unhindered development and being of families.

Also known as residential instability, dramatic changes in the home environment especially affect younger children in adverse ways. High stress levels, a weakened sense of security and challenged cognitive development are some of the known effects (Sandstrom & Huerta 2013:29). Because young children have not yet developed language and cognitive skills, they are not able to process and verbalise the anxiety and insecurity that disruptive changes in residential circumstances present (Sandstrom & Huerta 2013:29), causing unresolved inner anxiety. Like for all members of families, having to leave the familial home also means that young children are forced to detach themselves from known surroundings, social networks and the comforting familiar context – all of which are important in terms of stability – whilst not having the emotional coping skills of older family members. For youths who would typically be young adolescents, residential instability also poses a myriad of challenges of which social adaptation and cognitive skills may be the worst (Sandstrom & Huerta 2013:32).

The meaning of home is also linked to – and deepened by – the cultural situatedness of families. In the African context, the meaning of home is often related to attachment theory, also known as sedentary theory. Attachment theory is used to underline the 'profound' bond of certain cultures towards their homes and land (Lambo 2012:9). This is especially the case with African people who nurture and value the bond with home, the land and the social networks they form to give meaning to and sustain life [*ubuntu*]. This close relationship between Africans and their homes transpires in the Zulu name for home, namely *khaya*. Although *khaya* refers to the physical structure of a house, *ekhaya* refers to the meaning of home and the experiences that thrive there, such as empathy, sharing, belonging and a familial homecoming (Louw 2017:4). In the African context, home thus relates to the meaning of life itself, rendering it central to the being of African people.

Migration and the loss of home

Contemplating the church's missional stance and pastoral work with migrants, a suitable frame of reference to guide such engagement can be beneficial to pastoral caregivers. It follows that it is important to reflect further on the experiences of migrants: what are some of the challenges that they have experienced during the daunting process of leaving the familial home behind and entrusting their lives to a new country with foreign people? Or, is it possible that there may be a common need shared by the destitute that can guide the thinking and actions of the church? Certainly, there are the obvious and common physical and emotional experiences that most migrants share. These include vulnerability because of being in transition, exposure to unhealthy environments, the destruction of social networks, intense psychological distress and isolation from basic necessities (Alobo & Obaji 2016:28). One could, however, also imagine that all migrants share the common experience of loss, the loss of the familial home as

migrants are in transition, in limbo and therefore experience the longing for home. In this regard, I found the work of Button (2018) as helpful, which reflects on the urban homelessness of particular meaning when it relates homelessness to the yearning to 'belong' again. This longing emanates from the intense experiences of liminality common to the experience of being without a home. Button (2018) borrowed from the work of Hopper and Baumohl (1996) who described liminality (derived from the Latin word *limen*, meaning 'threshold') as the experience of people who are in a state of passage, finding themselves '"betwixt and between", suspended between the familiar social niche they have left behind and the one they have yet to assume' (Button 2018:155).

Liminality is, however, a complex principle that does not exist in isolation from other experiences associated with the loss of home. As was shown by the discussion on the meaning of home, home strongly relates to the being function of people and, therefore, to the identity of humans. In this regard, one's home also contributes to the so-called extended self or identity. This means that what we have, such as home and the personal belongings that constitute home, is intrinsically part of our identity (Button 2018:156). Losing one's home hence not only puts one in a liminal position but also robs individuals of their unique identity. Therefore, once families plunge into the disruptive stream of migration, they become liminal travellers in search of home which is key to their identity.

Although many other such universal possibilities may exist to inform the church's engagement with migrants, I would like to contend that all migrants could be regarded as liminal brothers, sisters and children yearning for home, which will enable them to regain or form a new identity. Therefore, 'becoming home' for migrants should provide a valuable clue to the church in its engagement with migrants (Louw 2016:7).

Migration and 'home' [*oikos*] in theological framework

Both migration and the notion of home seem to be firmly rooted as some of the main themes in the Christian Scriptures and traditions. The biblical salvation narrative ensues with God's first human creations being evicted from their 'home' (Gn 3:23) in the guise of the Garden of Eden. As the biblical narrative unfolds, the important covenantal figure Abraham is perpetuated as a migrant whose migrant mission seems to be Godly ordained as he was commanded by God to 'go from your country' (Gn 12:1, NIV). Others, like Joseph, also ended up in a foreign country (Gn 37:28) as part of God's elaborate providence to create a temporary abode for the Israelites who would remain in Egypt until the stage was set for exodus to the Promised Land, cementing the movement of people towards another home as part of the biblical narrative. Hence, Rodríguez (2020) alluded to the possibility that one of earliest confessions of faith in the Bible relates to migration:

> Then you shall declare before the Lord your God: 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous' (Dt 26:5). (p. 30)

Following the Scriptural thread of migration not only affirms it as part of the human condition but also sensitises us about the vulnerability of migrants in a foreign country, like the Israelites experienced: '[b]ut the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor' (Dt 26:6).

On the vulnerability of migrants, Rodríguez (2020) commented:

> This is the crossroads at which most migrants find themselves. In the reduced conditions where they are usually found, they are forced to carry out less prestigious and more menial tasks. But at the same time, they awaken the schizophrenic paranoia typical of empires,

> which are powerful, though fearful of the foreigner, of the other, especially if that foreigner resides within their borders, and becomes densely populated. (p. 30)

Within a Christian framework, the faith community is called to express the opposite of 'fear of the foreigner', but rather to have empathy based on the historical experience of once being a foreigner themselves – a theme which is repeated in passages such as Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 10:19, Leviticus 19:34, Psalms 146:9 and Matthew 25:43. A closer investigation of these passages shows a progressive development from empathy to love, from sympathy to actively protecting the foreigner as God himself is the protector of the stranger (Ps 146:9). Consequently, Jesus radicalises this principle to the acid test of true adherence to the living in the Kingdom of God (Mt 25:43). But ultimately, because being 'foreigners', 'strangers' (Heb 11:13) and exiles (1 Pt 2:11) themselves belong to the heart of being Christian in this world, Christians should take the lead in welcoming the stranger in their midst.

As such, the Christian faith community is challenged to give expression to empathy, sympathy and love – and in this way it becomes actively involved in the protection of vulnerable migrant families. A charge, which is in no way simple, given the many complexities surrounding the current migrant situation in South Africa, ranges from prejudice towards migrants from the general public (Coetzee 2019) to xenophobia (Louw 2016:4), leading to violence against foreigners and looting of their property. Complexities are further exacerbated by migrants who are allegedly making themselves guilty of crime in an already crime-ridden South Africa (Van Lennep 2019). And, ultimately, South Africa is already fighting a growing battle against poverty, unemployment and providing sufficient opportunities to those already within its borders. This results in the difficult question of how the Christian faith community can give expression to the ethical challenges imposed by the migrant question whilst at the same time being responsive to a real current-day phenomenon.

The theme of this chapter is that the above challenge can be addressed by members of the faith community by 'becoming

home' (Louw 2016:7) for foreigners who are in search of a new home. In Scriptures, the notion of home runs parallel to the theme of migration as explicated earlier – as migration in Scripture supposes leaving one home in search of another. The Bible relies on the term *oikos* to put forward what is biblically regarded as home. At least two meanings are imbedded in *oikos*, namely, the physical structure of a house and the family who resides there (Fowlkes & Verster 2006:327). Home, or *oikos*, is thus both a structure and the converging and focal point of familial life, deriving its true and ultimate meaning from the family members who dwell there. A house, hence, becomes home because of the family who lives there.

The meaning of home is, however, also theologically extended in Scriptures. Its meaning was enhanced by the writing of St Paul to the Christians in Corinth where he referred to the faith community as 'God's building' (1 Cor 3:19). Through this metaphor the notion of home is personified in and through the lives of believers, in whom God dwells through his Spirit. In this way, 'God's building' moves where believers move, making God's house and, eventually, himself present in the world. In a still wider context, Conradie (2007:1) discussed *oikos* as a 'theological root metaphor' in the current ecumenical discourses that relate to the *world* as the 'whole household' of God. Integrating the three core ecumenical themes of economic justice, ecological sustainability and ecumenical fellowship (Conradie 2007:1–2), one can conclude that *oikos* is an indispensable hermeneutical key to develop the church's understanding of its function in the world, namely, an institution which must provide 'hospitality' and 'nourishment' (Conradie 2007:2–3). It is indeed also an appealing metaphor for 'those … in Africa, who has [*sic*] been denied a home' (Conradie 2007:3), making it imperative for faith communities to relate their missional and pastoral purpose to becoming *oikos* in this world.

In support of the theological meaning of *oikos,* Louw (2017:5) called for an 'ecclesiology of *oikodomein*', which heeds the faith community to create spaces where others can live, dwell and inhabit. It pre-supposes that there should be a reorientation within the church from a 'cathedral theology', which is focused

on the upholding of 'eternal truths' towards a 'praxis approach' – to (Louw 2017):

> [*L*]earn life and the gospel from below … It is about critical reflection through the eyes of those who are weak and who don't count for much by the standards of successful people and institutions. (p. 8)

To realise the theological ideal of the church to become *oikos* in this world, hence calls for a new and humane approach to understand ourselves as church in a globalised world – or what also can be denoted as '*oikos*-thinking'. Louw (2017) referred to this as a 'grassroots approach to ecclesiology':

> With a grassroots approach to ecclesiology is meant a model of being church wherein the interaction between believers is focused on mutual support (*koinonia*); service and outreach to all people in the community irrespective of culture, race or descent (*diakonia*); compassionate caregiving (*paraklesis*); hospitable presence for vulnerable people and strangers (*charitas*); celebration of grace (*leitourgia*); and cruciform love (*eucharistia*). (p. 8)

An African congregation-based missional and pastoral perspective on families uprooted by migration

In search of a meaningful response to the migrant dilemma in Africa – and to address the multidimensional needs of migrants – it is argued here that the role of local congregations in the African context should be reconsidered. Apart from having the theological agency to become *oikos* in and for the world, there is also a practical consideration on which this argument rests, because the African church in its many expressions is ideally situated in areas where migrants are likely to settle, such as informal settlements (Choabi 2019:53), as well as inner-city locations of metropolises. In other words, the church is already present and represented by congregation members where migrants often want to start a new life.

Irrespective of its theological calling and its geographically ideal position to contribute to the alleviation of challenges

associated with migration, there are a number of realities that need to be mitigated before one can start to imagine how such contributions can become church practice. Thus, the following question arises: what are some of the current challenges prohibiting *oikos*-thinking in relation to the migrant crisis?

Globally, as well as from a South African perspective, governments and citizens of host countries experience feeling threatened and being overwhelmed by the challenges imposed by migrants. From a statistical viewpoint, it is estimated that South Africa currently hosts more than 268 000 refugees and asylum seekers (Shoba & Tobias 2019), which reflects a small percentage of the estimated 2.8 million immigrant population (Heleta 2018). This supports the view that South Africa is perceived by many migrant families as a desirable destination because of a seemingly viable economy and the relatively peaceful coexistence of citizens. Its desirability is further enhanced by the fact that it boasts some of the world's most progressive rights for asylum seekers and refugees that allow them to settle, work and study anywhere in the country (Amit 2017:1). Partially, this has caused South Africa to be the top recipient of asylum seekers for six years in a row, prior to the dawn of the Syrian crisis (Amit 2017:1). The effect of this on citizens is unfortunately the same as in many parts of the world, that is what Louw (2017:3) referred to as a growing 'global network of fear' towards the stranger. Consequently – and irrespective of relaxed policies on migration – South African government officials, according to Amit (2017), greet migrants with antagonism at entry points to the country:

> The country's response to these migrants has followed a now familiar path – discounting the legitimacy of their humanitarian claims in order to deny them the rights afforded to refugees and avoid the concomitant obligations placed upon the state. It is a path in which the refugee becomes economic migrant, security risk, or, to remove any lingering doubt, constitutes both. (p. 1)

When migrants eventually are allowed to enter the country, they are in turn greeted with hostility from locals that is deeply rooted

in prejudice and mistrust towards them. Most probably this prejudice is rooted in the dire poverty many South Africans already face, especially in the informal segment of the society where poverty has become one of the defining characteristics of such settlements (Simiyu, Cairncross & Swilling 2019). With a current unemployment rate of 29.1% (Stats SA 2020) of which the biggest percentage (55%) is amongst South African youths aged 15–34 years (Stats SA 2019), it somehow affords the perspective of why many citizens see migrants as a threat to their own economic security. However, prejudice is also fed by stereotypes that abound about migrants, for example, that they are usually criminals wilfully 'stealing' jobs from locals (Manik & Singh 2013:1).

Another reality that generally causes South Africans to 'tighten their borders' against foreigners pertains to the general vulnerability of most people in the so-called informal sector of the South African society. Informality broadly refers to the African trend towards informal economies and settlements (Myers 2011:71). Not being able to access formal, regulated economic activities that require formal schooling or advanced skills, many Africans are forced to turn to unregulated economic activities (Myers 2011:72). Inhabitants of informal settlements typically turn to economic activities in their immediate vicinity, such as selling firewood, homemade beer or recyclable material scavenged from rubbish dumps (Turok 2015:3). The informal sector is volume-sensitive. The more the stakeholders become, the less likely it is that such a society can sustain all members. This sector is also time-sensitive. The longer people remain in this sector, the longer they suffer from economic exclusion as they eventually find themselves too far away and too poor to compete in the formal sector that typically favours those with formal schooling and specialised skills. The vulnerability of informal settlements at the same time – and maybe most importantly – vests in the general social exclusion common to informality. As these environments currently develop outside of regulated and serviced

urban areas, these areas are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, such as fires, floods and health epidemics like the Corona virus that was sweeping the world at the time of this research.

It should be clear then that there may be psychological and spiritual resistance to *oikos*-thinking that will lead to welcome migrants. In light of this, the cultivation and nurturing of *oikos*-thinking is imagined in at least the following ways.

Evoking compassion for uprooted families through '*oikos*-preaching'

A congregation-based missional and pastoral perspective on becoming home for the destitute puts the responsibility to act pastorally towards the stranger firmly in the hands of ordinary congregation members. De Jongh van Arkel (1995:196) referred to this as the most basic form of pastoral care that encompasses mutual care, hence accepting the neighbours, irrespective of ethnicity or creed, and showing them hospitality. Amidst a sense of global xenophobia and distrust towards foreigners, this is not an easy task and African congregations will need to be guided by Scriptures and driven by the Holy Spirit to show the compassion needed to heed this call. As the inhabitants of informal settlements are themselves poor and fighting their own constant battle for survival, spiritual leaders must not only expect resistance from congregation members, but also a sense of numbness or indifference towards the suffering of others because of personal hardships. In this regard, congregations will need to be sensitised about the needs of migrants to cultivate compassion for them, despite personal needs, or as Louw (2016:5) referred to it, 'the infiltration of compassion … despite paradox and contradiction'. Initiating such sensitisation will most probably happen through '*oikos*-preaching', a homiletic of home, through which awareness of and the Christian compassion for the homeless can be evoked from passages such as Exodus 23:9, Deuteronomy 10:19, Leviticus 19:34, Psalms 146:9 and Matthew 25:43. Heeding the biblical call

for migrant compassion should transcend mere behavioural change to translate into a true responsive Christian lifestyle as it is anchored pneumatologically.

Cultivating hospitality by appealing to the African notions of *khaya* and *ubuntu*

The notions of *khaya* and *ubuntu* are integral to the African world view and philosophy. Although the Zulu word *khaya* denotes a physical home, *ekhaya* describes to be 'at home; a kind of homesickness and the longing to be part of a place called home' (Louw 2017:4). *Ubuntu* refers to the belief that one is a human being through others. According to Cilliers (2008:3), 'it articulates a basic respect and compassion for others. As such, it is both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic, both descriptive and prescriptive'. It is contended here that compassion for migrants can also be cultivated by appealing to these notions, especially in view of the argument that they are descriptive and prescriptive. Africans, maybe more than others, understand and appreciate the basic need for a home through their intimate experience of *ekhaya*, although *ubuntu* reminds them of their personal responsibility towards others to relieve this yearning for the familial homecoming. In the process of globalisation, the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of humankind became vulnerable and made us dependent on others in the global village – even if we do not know them. *Ubuntu* might just motivate us to work towards creating *ekhaya*.

Becoming home through a ministry of presence

In the last instance, the questions remain: 'how can local African congregation members express a pastoral care in their missional engagement with migrants?' and 'how can they express *ekhaya*?'

The answer to these questions dwells in themselves as members of the body of Christ in a form of embodied pastoral caregiving – or what can also be referred to as a ministry of presence. A ministry of presence reminds of the importance of the physical presence of Christians amongst others afflicted by the needs of the broken reality (Paget & Cormack 2006:7). As migration has made it a reality that informal settlements are no longer home only to South Africans but also to Africans from the whole of the continent and others from across the world in search of a hospitable home, the presence of Christians is required to have a spiritual healing function. A healing function can be expressed not only through embracing the stranger (Holm 2009:31) but also through actions such as listening, praying and offering hospitality (Paget & McCormack 2006:28). Through a ministry of presence, solidarity with the homeless is shown in a practical and visible way. In the Christian tradition, solidarity is resonated in the incarnation of Christ, through which God showed true solidarity with humans (Phlp 2:5–8). Rooted in the love for God and thy neighbour, it finds expression in a practical identification with others and especially the stranger who is still in search of home. A true Christian solidarity that transcends mere human virtue opposes fear of the other by making room for true *ekhaya*.

Conclusion

This chapter reflected on the notion of becoming 'home' for the destitute by providing an African congregation-based missional and pastoral perspective on families uprooted by migration. It identified globalisation as one of the causes of migration and particularly related it with 'economic migration' on the African continent. The ensuing loss of the familial home was described as one of the greatest challenges of migration because of the central importance of home for African families. The loss of home was further explicated as a major form of instability that decentres families as it puts them in a state of liminality. Compounding

challenges in host countries, such as prejudice and xenophobia, were also highlighted as some of the adversities in the search for a new home. In light of this, the strategic position of Christian faith communities in South Africa was brought into play, as they are ideally positioned to reach out to migrants because of their positioning in areas such as informal settlements where migrants often settle. A closer investigation of the biblical notion of home [*oikos*] highlighted the calling of local congregations to become a new home for migrants. This idea was strengthened by arguing that the biblical notion of *oikos* resonates well with the African notions of *khaya* and *ubuntu*, with a view on '*oikos*-thinking' that can lead to hospitality. In imagining the praxis of a congregation-based pastoral caregiving to migrants, it was suggested that compassion for uprooted families can be evoked through '*oikos*-preaching', although hospitality can be cultivated by appealing to the African notions of *khaya* and *ubuntu* so that 'becoming home' can be materialised through the ministry of a presence and solidarity.

Chapter 9

Child sacrifice: The life or death of a civilisation

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Abstract

The destructive consequences of the processes of globalisation for family, the youth and children are quite clear. These are reflected, amongst others, in the sad statistics of family breakdown, low birth rate and Western culture's dominant attitude towards abortion. Western culture seems to be a culture that sacrifices children because of greed and self-serving gratification (mirrored in the Bible by the child sacrifices of pagan religions).

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The Bible, however, reveals that the biblical God has an immense, clear global agenda. God's redemptive focus, since human globalisation started in Genesis 11, was on all the people of the world (Gn 12). Within this global redemptive endeavour, God focuses on a covenantal relationship that included families and generations, and it certainly includes child 'sacrifice'. Within the context of the rapid expansion of a post-Christendom global Christianity, the Christian church needs to rethink its mission regarding its covenantal calling towards family and children.

Keywords: Child sacrifice; Abortion; Civilisation; Covenant; Family relations.

Introduction

Globalisation is not only a popular academic buzzword these days but also a real, unstoppable and irreversible process that is engulfing the whole world. It is a process that opens nation-states and societies to many influences that originate beyond their borders (Rizzini & Bush 2002:373). It has become synonymous with the inundation of Western culture (Stark 2006:1568). The processes of globalisation are transforming culture, which then transforms everything else. Although there are indeed benefits to globalisation, the International Anglican Family Network (IAFN) already concluded in 2007 at their consultation in Seoul that the overwhelming sense of globalisation has its negative impact on society, community and the family (IAFN 2008a:1). When specifically focusing on what had happened since in this regard, it is quite clear that the forces of globalisation have produced enormous changes in the lives of children in particular (Rizzini & Bush 2002:373).

According to Tucker (1999:30), the most prominent symbol of Western civilisation is a sacrificed son. It is alleged that the central and most prominent myth[1] of Western civilisation is about attempted

1. A myth is a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form (Dundes 1984:1). 'Myths of origins may not point to "real, true" historical origins, but they are important representations of origins: they provide a framework within which people

or actual parental sacrificial killing of children (also known as paedocide or infanticide). The future survival and prosperity of a civilisation depend on the way it treats its children. This chapter, by using the ancient civilisation of Phoenicia as an example, casts a dark shadow on the future of Western civilisation in light of the Phoenicians' horrific treatment of their children. The growing demand for abortion (as a progressive planned parenthood philosophy in modern America), through globalisation now being 'exported' to the rest of the world, is like child sacrifice in ancient Carthage at the height of its civilisation, an unmistakeable parallel (White 2017:37). The future of global humanity is in the balance because of the way this pagan attitude of child sacrifice is resurfacing in our 'perceived' modern world. At the height of its own 'civilisation', our modern world is moving towards its own extinction. In this appalling and deteriorating globalising context, the Christian church must rethink its mission. In this chapter I want to focus on the biblical perspective of child sacrifice as a way to enhance (and not destroy) the life of our civilisation.

Why the word 'sacrifice'?[2]

Atekyereza, Ayebare and Bukuluki (2014) provided a clear description of sacrifice:

> [*T*]he word sacrifice embodies the ultimate value of life being received from or given to somebody. In spite of the variations in understanding the meaning of the word 'sacrifice', the underlying principle common to all is that of 'value for value'. It means that the higher the value of the blessings to be sought or wrongs to be atoned, the higher the value of the sacrificial item. Through the centuries, this principle has been expressed in varied forms, including human sacrifice in general and child sacrifice, in particular. These practices are closely

Footnote 1 text (Continued)

situate and interpret their lives; they affect people's identity and orientation in that world; and most important, they provide answers to the questions: "Who are we?; Where do we come from?; Where are we going?"#' (Delaney 1998:20).

2. 'If you sacrifice something that is valuable or important, you give it up, usually to obtain something else for yourself or for other people' (*Collins Dictionary*).

> associated with the dominant culture's value systems regarding what people hold as valuable in relation to what is important in life and how to get it. Despite economic progress of economies characterized by sophisticated wealth computations, predictions and protection through insurance, sacrifices remain part of the social fabric for solicitation, utilization. *Maintenance and protection of wealth*. (p. 53)

In light of the meaning of the word 'sacrifice', as it is reflected upon in the above-mentioned quote, in this chapter I want to investigate the intricate values of the dominant (globalising) culture to identify and determine what is deemed valuable and important within it. The goal is to clearly perceive the 'life-value price' that people will be willing to pay to gain something they consider valuable and important to them.

This chapter is also written from a reformational perspective wherein the Bible is considered as the only true revelation of God to humanity. In this revelation, the word 'sacrifice' occupies an important and central place and is associated with the most important '*kairos* times' (the right, critical and opportune moments) in God's merciful dealings with humanity.

What is happening?

Introduction

There is much to be worried about in the state of the family in Western countries and elsewhere in the world (Giddens 2002:65). Since the 1980s, the world has been experiencing a series of broad transformations, a set of economic, political and cultural processes heralding globalisation (Mills 2013:249). These global economic and political restructuring has been accompanied by significant social transformations (Trask n.d.:3). It not only transformed virtually every aspect of modern life (IAFN 2008b:2), but also created an endless disturbance in all social conditions (Stark 2006:1558). This process of globalisation directly and indirectly affects families because it brings about a fundamental shift in the way families live their lives (Mills 2013:259). According

to Stark (2006:1551), it transforms families by tearing them apart, creating new families and radically changing the meaning of family. Everything affecting families, consequently also affects children, because they are reliant on their families. When it is realised that children make up one-third of the world's population, it is quite clear to see that children are arguably the most physically, economically and socially vulnerable group (Trask n.d.:7). They are most intensely experiencing the consequences of transformational changes brought about by globalisation. It is therefore of utmost importance to understand the complex relationship between globalisation and family issues in order to understand how it influences and affects the lives of children.

Relationships are changing

Globalisation has created an environment of uncertainty (Mills 2013:252). The central engine of globalisation, the economy, has created economic realities that ultimately influence many important life-course decisions that individuals and families make. The most important life-course decisions are about employment and partnership formation, especially which option to choose and when to choose it. The world is, therefore, witnessing a dramatic increase in dual-earner households, and the expanding culture of consumerism and materialism is luring more and more women to become part of the market force (Trask n.d.:2). The globalising world also stimulates and facilitates economic migration. According to Mills (2013:257), the feminisation of migration is also increasing. In some way it can be called 'forced' migration, which also creates fault lines within families that result in an increase in marital breakdown (Stark 2006:1566). This is the reason why individuals postpone entering into long-term relationships such as marriage and parenthood.

Since the 1960s, the industrialised world has been witnessing the weakening of the traditional forms of family as an institution (Mills 2013:257). Traditional patriarchal structures are continually

being questioned and slowly but surely being dismantled (Castells, cited in Trask n.d.:4). According to Trask (n.d.:2), there is no longer a primary value to the biological family. This also means that the overall concept of marriage is shifting (Trask n.d.:6). This shift is creating greater family diversity like the rise of single parenthood and unmarried and even remarried families. This meltdown of traditional family structures also gives rise to an increase in the divorce rates. Women are even postponing or abandoning parenthood altogether (Mills 2013:254). A further result of globalisation is the decrease in rates of fertility and the increase in voluntary childlessness (Mills 2013:257). A significant ageing of the population, with less and less children being born, is becoming a demographic reality in the industrialised world. According to the United Nations, old people will far outnumber the children in 2050 (Trask n.d.:5). Children under 18 are only 21% of the overall population in the developed world, which is facing a looming demographic crisis.

Significant changes are also seen within the developing world. Although the same acceptance of diverse family forms, as in the developed world, is not seen (yet – *IWF*), the influence of globalisation is surely making a very significant impact on family and children in the developing world. There are certainly more children within the developing world. It seems as if families in the developing world are seeking more certainty about the future by having more children (Mills 2013:254). According to the United Nations, children under 18 are already 48% of the population in the developing world with the numbers rising. The IAFN, which has conducted extensive research within the developing world, has identified quite dramatic and negative circumstances that impact families and children. Migration is very real within the developing world and the prevalence of migrant mothers, international marriages and transnational mothering is increasing (IAFN 2008b:6). They identified the following challenges in Singapore: non-traditional family forms are increasing; the lack of parenting is on the rise; and there are inadequate family care, family neglect and violence in families (IAFN 2008b:5). In Korea,

they identified the problem of bride trading and human trafficking (IAFN 2008:6). In Hong Kong, an increase in student suicide is identified; school bullying is on the rise; and teenage violence and substance abuse are rampant. In Australia, they have seen a rapid rise in the demand for child care and paid caretakers. These are all functions once performed in families. The developing world is also experiencing a high level of divorce, family separation and single-headed predominantly female households. In Africa the problem of AIDS and child-headed households is becoming significant. According to the United Nations, child labour (aged 5–14) is already 158 million and is still increasing (Trask n.d.:8). In both the industrialised and the developing world, the rate of child poverty is abysmal (Trask n.d.:7).

It can be concluded that the most intimate relationships within families are rapidly deteriorating in the developed and the developing world, and that children are the most vulnerable and also the most affected in this globalising change.

Changes in the views on sex and sexuality

Not only family relationships but also gender roles are changing (Trask n.d.:6). It can be called the Second Demographic Transition.[3] Family decisions are conditioned not only by economic factors but also by the emergence of self-fulfilment, choice, personal development and the emancipation in making these choices (Mills 2013:257). The result of this transition is the changing ideology regarding reproduction. Rothman (1985:189) calls it 'an evolving American and potentially worldwide value system regarding children and parenthood'. According to (Trask n.d.:2), '[g]lobalisation transmits new concepts about gender, work,

3. 'References to the second demographic transition (SDT) concept or theoretical framework have increased dramatically in the last two decades. The SDT predicts a unilinear change toward quite low fertility and a diversity of union and family types. The primary driver of these changes is a powerful, inevitable and irreversible shift in attitudes and norms in the direction of greater individual freedom and self-actualisation' (Zaidi & Morgan 2017).

citizenship, identity, familial relationships and women and children's rights'. According to Baker (2009:275), we now live in a time of heightened emphasis on individuated personhood and also suggestions of a vastly changed modern form of femininity). He (Baker 2009:276) is clear that within the context of families and partnerships, the prescribed gender roles are also weakened and structural frameworks that have underpinned families and parenting have loosened.

Globalisation, through information and communication technologies, is facilitating new viewpoints that are transmitted worldwide and set an instant, common worldwide standard of comparison (Mills 2013:251). This leads, according to Stark (2006:1566), to a tension between Western hegemony and traditional cultures. It exposes the global world to conflicting norms that, because of a lack of normative consensus, eventually leads to a change in these norms and values. One of the most influential results of the Second Demographic Transition is the increased ability of women to limit childbearing (Trask n.d.:4). This confirms the fact that the attitude towards children has changed significantly in the past few decades. In the traditional family, children were an economic benefit (Giddens 2002:59, 105), but not anymore. The dominant attitude towards having children became closely associated with dominant cultural value systems that people hold in relation to what is important in life and how to get it (Atekyereza et al. 2014:53). Increasingly since the early mid-1900s, children have occupied a less central place in couples' lives. Children emerged as an addition to a couple's relationship that had to be carefully planned because having a child might influence the partnership, lifestyle and economic well-being of the parents. The buzzwords confirming the whole change in views on sexuality that is happening in the world today are revealed in the words 'planned parenthood'.

‘Planned parenthood’, or rather … abortion

It is revealing to google the words ‘planned parenthood’ and to visit the website of the organisation that operates under the same name (Planned Parenthood n.d.). The main topics being discussed on the website are the following: sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, abortion and emergency contraception (the morning-after pill). The website then opens up to include more related topics like sex and relationships and sexual orientation and gender. The Planned Parenthood Federation of America claims to be a non-profit organisation that provides sexual health care in the United States of America and globally. Sometimes it is also called ‘reproductive health care’. It is, however, clear that the whole debate on abortion is part and parcel of the work this organisation is endeavouring to do. It can even be claimed that the main focus of its activities is centred around the whole debate on abortion. In recent times, this debate has become increasingly controversial as abortion is hailed in certain circles as a new holocaust (Petter 2019; Smith 2013).[4]

Abortion is one of the most profound results and consequences of the above-mentioned transformation that globalisation brought about in the life of families and children. Although it is difficult to confirm the exact number of abortions (legal or illegal) that is annually performed in the world, it seems to be on the rise. A study by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) in 1999 estimated that 46 million abortions are performed worldwide each year. Between 2010 and 2014, on average, 56 million induced (safe and unsafe) abortions occurred worldwide each year (WHO 2019). History recorded the human tragedy of millions of people who were slaughtered by dictators such as Stalin, Hitler and Sadam Hussein. However, these numbers fade when compared to the

4. Outrage after US pro-life campaigner compares abortion to holocaust: ‘I would absolutely like to see terminations abolished in America’ (Petter 2019).

rising numbers of babies who are aborted every day all over the world. The real shock, however, is the reasons why people abort their babies. Different studies confirm the study conducted by the Guttmacher Institute in 2005. They found that the top three reasons cited by women for not being able to continue their pregnancies and give birth are:

1. the negative impact it would have on the mother's life
2. the financial instability it would bring to a family
3. relationship problems or unwillingness to be a single mother.

It seems to be clear that the main reasons are socio-economic in nature. Research has indicated conclusively that 'the majority of women with unplanned pregnancies do not live with their partners or have committed relationships' (Lowen 2019:n.p.). Under the false pretence of calling it 'planned parenthood', humans are killing their babies because they want to. They are now also lobbying political and legislative powers to be legally entitled to be able to do so.

Summary

Amongst the changes going on in the world, none is more important than those happening in our personal lives – in sexuality, relationships, marriage and the family (Giddens 2002:51). Against the background of complete family disintegration, the most significant changes that globalisation introduces are affecting children all over the world. They are undoubtedly the most vulnerable group. It is also clear that the traditional family is not only under threat, but also is changing and will change much further (Giddens 2002:4). The sad reality is that Western civilisation at its very height is experiencing the beginning of its end. The number of children being born in the Western world is rapidly decreasing; the children that are born are sadly neglected and abandoned, and unborn children are being killed in their mother's womb. Children are being sacrificed because of the limitations they will put on the lifestyle of their parents (NCBI

2005, 2013, 2014). In five short years, the long-taboo subject of abortion, once mainly catalogued with family disgrace or tragedy, has become a matter of mass media and open discussion (Henry 1971:3). According to Henry (1971), abortion in USA has changed from an abhorrent to a welcome alternative.

Why is this happening?

Introduction

The facts speak for themselves. We are a generation in a 'progressive' and globalising civilisation who sacrifice our children. In answering the important question about why it is happening, it is important to reflect on what we can learn from history. The evidence is surprisingly shocking. It is not something new – it has happened before. History clearly shows that child sacrifice is as old as humanity itself. This is the reason why White (2017:35) is adamant that the parallels between ancient child sacrifice and modern-day abortion have been recognised for centuries. There is enough historical, archaeological and linguistic evidence to prove a direct link between the modern-day abortion and ancient (pagan) child sacrifice. In providing evidence for this claim, this chapter will also consider biblical data to compare with other historical and archaeological records of evidence. It should be acknowledged that although there is currently much controversy on this debate, Bible critics with their historical revisionist theories, at this moment in time (during the abortion debate), undoubtedly, are given more publicity than the facts would warrant. The historical evidence is, however, convincingly overwhelming.

Child sacrifice in history

The literature on child sacrifice is quite extensive (Van Seters 2003:454). Since antiquity, references in the Hebrew scriptures and remarks of ancient Greek and Roman authors have been cited to prove that various North-West Semitic peoples practised

child sacrifice. The ritualistic sacrifice of children by their parents was a feature of pagan morality (Tucker 1999:31). These peoples include the population whom the Hebrew Scriptures call Canaanites. Modern scholars, following the Greeks, call them Phoenicians. These Phoenicians settled in the western Mediterranean and are called Punic by modern scholars who follow the Romans (Bible Reading Archaeology 2016):

> [*A*]lthough Canaanite civilisation was largely driven out of the land of Israel, it emigrated and founded colonies along the Mediterranean coast of North Africa where it thrived for centuries. Most notable, [*sic*] among these was the colony of Carthage, in modern-day Tunisia. The city-state of Carthage became so powerful that it rivalled the Roman republic. The Carthaginians spoke the Canaanite language and also practiced Canaanite religion. They also seemed to have brought with them their cruel practice of child sacrifice. (n.p.)

It is well established that this rite of child sacrifice originated in Phoenicia, ancient Israel's northern neighbour, and was brought to Carthage by its Phoenician colonisers (White 2017:27). According to White (2017:30), ample archaeological evidence coming from Carthage suggests convincingly that the practice of child sacrifice flourished as never before at the height of its population, as well as civilisation. The fact is that at the sites of Punic settlements, burial grounds that contain the cremated remains of young children have been found:

- Archaeological evidence: At this very moment studies are continuing to unearth greater detail of what really happened (Timeline: World History Documentaries 2017). Archaeologists call the discovered burial grounds tophets, after the Hebrew term for the place where children were sacrificed (Rundin 2004:425).
- Linguistic evidence: It is clear from biblical and ancient Near Eastern sources that Moloch[5] was probably a title or epithet used for a prominent Canaanite deity to whom children were

5. The Bible describes the Canaanite cult of the god Moloch (meaning king) (Tucker 1999:31).

at least occasionally sacrificed (Bible Archaeology 2019a,b; Bible Reading Archaeology 2016; Collins Dictionary n.d.).
- Historical evidence: White (2017:29) also cites several Greek historians, Cleitarchus, Diodorus Siculus and Plutarch who also confirm these archaeological evidence of infant sacrifice. He also references the Church Father Tertullian who spent most of his life in Carthage as a credible witness to this historic reality.

Although the practice of child sacrifice in ancient Israel is at this moment in the abortion debate a subject marked by much controversy and strong difference of opinions (Van Seters 2003:453), there is clear biblical evidence that suggests that amongst the many accusations of sinful behaviour the prophets of the Hebrew Bible levelled against their contemporaries, child sacrifice certainly ranks the most egregious (Dewrell 2017). It was being practised in ancient Israel during the monarchy, as attested in several biblical texts (Van Seters 2003:454).

Why did they do it – then?

The ritual of child sacrifice in antiquity was mostly religious (Tucker 1999:32). At different times, especially at times of increased demographic pressure (Tucker 1999:32), or as responses to a major crisis, such as military or natural disasters (DiBenedetto 2012:31), and at specific places, the ritual was performed by professional priests who represented the community in leading the ritual. It was mainly focused on trying to avert potential dangers in a time of crisis, or to gain success through fulfilling religious vows. It seems as if the main reasons were because of socio-economic concerns. It may also have been a means of population control (White 2017:36), like it was also done in the history of China (Kane & Choi 1999).

An Old Testament scholar Moshe Weinfeld, as quoted by White (2017:33), also mentioned the possibility of cultic prostitution. He wanted to answer the question about what happened to all the children that were born at the pagan temples

where temple prostitutes were frequently visited by men. Child sacrifices made to Moloch may have offered a convenient way to dispose of the consequences of these sexual practices. It is also a possibility that the Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser Jr seriously considers. He (Kaiser 1983:124) labels these illicit sexual practices as 'sins against the family' and as a 'disruption of normal family relationships'. Most of the references made to child sacrifice in the context of the Old Testament people of Israel were associated with sexual sins. It is therefore important to take note that the practices in these pagan cultures happened because of problems flowing from the degeneration of the relationship of families, as well as from the growing sexual permissiveness within the community. This negative influence impacted the people of Israel when they had contact with these pagan nations.

Child sacrifice today

The family as a modern battlefield

There is no doubt that the intimate context of family life had become a modern battlefield. This is a profoundly contested site where the way in which globalisation plays itself out in the world can be observed (Stark 2006:1569). Families worldwide are confronted with alternative family behaviours from outside their own traditional, social and cultural settings (Mills 2013:255). Consequently, the family became a site for the struggles between tradition and modernity (Giddens 2002:53). The family is also both women's traditional domain and a major site for women's historical oppression. In their endeavour to demand equality for women, the feminist movements also set themselves in opposition to virtually every culture on earth (Stark 2006:1569). Feminism interrogates and challenges all cultural traditions in the way that they endeavour to free women from the constraints of long-established gendered restrictions (Baker 2009:276). This is the reason why amongst feminists the family is not only a site of ongoing ambivalence but also has become ground zero in the gender wars (Stark 2006:1569). It is part of a purposeful resistance

against a notion of an 'idealised' motherhood, as necessarily old-fashioned or lifestyle-inhibiting (Baker 2009:277).

A modern 'philosophy of life': A non-productive sexuality

Globalisation has introduced a new 'Europeanisation'[6] – a modern 'philosophy of life: the conscious exercise of calculated reason to maximise personal interest' (Paxson 2007:127). It is clearly visible in the development of a new liberal view on sexuality. In promoting a pleasure ethic of sex, this philosophy of life is clearly separating sex and procreation (Paxson 2007:124). It can also be called a 'non-productive' sexuality (Paxson 2007:125). This is what happens when sex is taken out of the context of family and marriage. It becomes something focused on itself. The developing sexual promiscuity and the growth of the sex industry as part of the processes of globalisation are a quite clear and haunting reality.[7] Two most important consequences materialise. Firstly, a distinctly clear conflict between sexual pleasure and social responsibility is initiated (Tucker 1999:46). Secondly, the promotion of 'safe sex' as part of the pleasure ethic of sex introduces a biomedical understanding of sex (Paxson 2007:124). This eventually leads to a changing ideology regarding reproductive health, reproductive choices and reproductive rights. It also initiated a new technology of reproduction.

New technology of reproduction

The changing ideology regarding reproduction and the biomedical understanding of sex leads to the development of new technologies

6. 'Europeanisation' was at the centre of ethnographic fieldwork that Paxson (2007:120) conducted to answer the question of how to live and love in today's society. This new 'philosophy of life' is rapidly spreading through the whole world. It can also be described as westernisation.

7. It is safer to predict that just as globalisation is sharpening a sense of economic inequality in the world, so too it is ensuring that rather different conceptions of the sexual life will become politically contested (Altman 2004:24).

of reproduction. These new technologies,[8] particularly the contraceptive revolution, effectively severed the link between sexuality and procreation (Mills 2013:258). It focuses on the effective prevention of pregnancy and in this way not only allows for the postponement or total abandonment of parenthood, but also facilitates the possibility of the termination of pregnancy. In this way, abortion became part and parcel of this new technology. It is no wonder then that the reasons for abortion increasingly indicate to be neither moral nor medical at all, but are rather only social rationalisation and private preference (Henry 1971:4). The globalising world is advocating abortion on demand because they want it and need it to serve their preferred modern lifestyle.

☐ What about religion and morality?

Throughout history, religious belief has wielded significant influence on society's attitude regarding historical child sacrifice and also modern-day abortion (Clark 1969:4). Abortion is after all not only supposed to be of physical and legal interest, but also equally a spiritual and moral concern (Henry 1971:4). The questions that need to be answered are the following: 'why would sophisticated people, living in a "progressive" society and experiencing an elevated stage of human civilisation, sacrifice their children?' and 'is there any religious motivation traceable?'

Globalisation facilitated a process wherein the secular 'progressive' world view infiltrated the Western Church.[9] Christianity was closely associated with the history of the formation and advancement of Western culture. Being part of this developing and globalising culture also compromised the Western Church in some ways. Theology became poisoned by secularism in the same way as the Israelites, in Old Testament times, were seduced and poisoned by Canaanite religion. This

8. Sperm donations, surrogate mothers, embryo transplants, genetic counselling, modern contraception and assisted reproductive techniques are the order of the day (Mills 2013:257).

9. This is specifically relevant to Western cultural Christianity, known as Christendom.

leads to the situation where recent studies have shown that attitudes towards abortion are polarising (Evans 2002:397). In some Christian circles churchmen approved abortion as something outside the scope of Christian ethics (Henry 1971:3). Some Western Christians seems to have lost biblical sensitivity to moral and spiritual considerations, and some Western Churches merely became an accommodating Sunday morning echo of the world's Saturday night (Henry 1971:3). The Western Church was so engulfed and smothered by the globalising Western culture that it was pushed to the periphery of modern society. According to Hiebert (1994:221), personal wealth, comfort and prosperity became the central goals of Western culture. Science was seen as the means to achieve these (Hiebert 1994:221). Regarding the religious centre within Western culture, he clearly states that the individual 'self' became god and self-fulfilment became their salvation (Hiebert 1994:222). The Western Church became part of the problem, and the sad reality is that Christendom is now dead.[10] Modern autonomous man is now worshipping himself and is willing to abort his own offspring to resolve crisis and achieve his own selfish goals (White 2017:37). The desire that operates in this modern culture of seduction is cannibalistic (Ward 1999:160). No civilisation that sacrifices its children can and will survive.

Conclusion

From the earliest times, women and children were both suffering in the world. History clearly shows that the world was (and still is) an anti-child and anti-women society (Rothman 1985:191). In our globalising world, it is still women and children who are poor and exploited and whose needs are not being met. It is clear that within our globalising world, women and children are still pitted against each other, competing for scarce resources (Rothman

10. The reality of the Christendom's dying within the Western world is a quite saddening fact. The Western world has now effectively become a post-Christendom society. This is the world wherein the debate on abortion is now being pushed to its very limit. Christendom is now being replaced by the resurgence of an old pagan cosmology (Jones 2015).

1985:192). In recent years, however, particularly through the feminist movement, women have stood up and are actively fighting for their rights. Something else is, however, also becoming clear. 'Social protection for children is far less developed than it is for other vulnerable groups' (Trask n.d.:8). Children are the ones who suffer the most in our globalising world. Families are changing and children are suffering. Demographically, the number of children is decreasing in the developed world. Fertility rates are falling and abortion rates are soaring. Although the number of children in the developing world is increasing, they are also 'sacrificed' in many deplorable ways. It must be concluded that at the apex of its 'progressive globalising endeavour', Western civilisation is facing the beginning of its end. The haunting similarity to what happened with the Phoenician Empire is frightening. No civilisation can survive the killing of its own children. It is therefore necessary to urgently find a message of hope – a corrective vision to turn this tide. According to Delaney (1998:250), it is found in the biblical story of Abraham. It is not only an ancient story but also a vividly contemporaneous one. He (Delaney 1998:n.p.) is of the opinion that this story of the sacrifice of Abraham's son, Isaac, formed a 'continuous substrate of moral consciousness for millennia'.

What should be happening?

The biblical *kairos* moment of a new beginning

What does the Bible teach on 'child sacrifice'? The biblical narrative of child sacrifice was not created in a vacuum (Boehm 2004:145). There can be little doubt about the fact that child sacrifice was practised not only amongst the peoples in the eastern Mediterranean during antiquity, particularly amongst the Phoenicians, but also amongst Israel's other neighbours (Van Seters 2003:454). Within the context of this ancient world of pagan tradition and religion, God called Abram (Gn 11:10–12:6) and ordered him to completely remove and distance himself and

his family from this pagan tradition he grew-up in, and the pagan religion that his family was part of. This calling of Abram initiated a new beginning in the history of humanity. God's call was particularistic (a specific person and family), but it had a universal purpose (it focused on and included all of humanity; Gn 12:3). What is remarkable is the fact that when God called Abram, God commanded him to sacrifice his son. In some way it was exactly what was expected within the pagan context where Abram and his family were coming from. In studying what really happened, it becomes clear that something completely new was about to happen. Abram's calling was one of the most important moments in the religious history of the world.

Rethinking child sacrifice in light of God's call to Abram to sacrifice Isaac

According to Boehm (2004:145–148), several scholars have sought to identify the similarities between the biblical narrative about child sacrifice and the similar traditions in the Near East, to inquire about the nature of these relations. The traditional approach, which was widely adopted in the literature, was that Abraham's stories – especially the Akedah[11] – were constructed as a polemic against the prevalent ritual of child sacrifice that was already present in that pagan context (Boehm 2004:146). In some way this is also suggested by Stoker (2014:8). He claims that Abram's sacrifice was a corrective on the pagan practice of the surrounding people. The following important perspectives about what happened need to be considered:

- God's call to Abram to sacrifice his son was not an act that would benefit him personally and temporarily only. It is clear that God had the whole of humanity in view and that this act of sacrifice had enormous present and future implications.

11. Akedah (Hebrew: 'Binding') refers to the binding of Isaac as related in Genesis 22. Abraham bound his son Isaac on an altar at Moriah, as he had been instructed by God (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* n.d.).

- In reality Abram had to sacrifice his past, before moving towards the sacrifice of his son that symbolised his future (Stoker 2014:5). This is clearly a complete new beginning on God's initiative.
- This sacrifice is not coming from Abram's own selfish desires to act upon his own temporal needs. It was a very direct command coming from God with an eternal purpose. The consequences of this act of sacrifice would continue long after Abraham's death.
- This sacrifice did not lead to the complete abortive death of Abram's son, and therefore the eventual disintegration of his family, but it introduced the very beginning of a new people – the chosen family of God for generations to come.

Abram's sacrifice of Isaac is not just a polemic against the myth of child sacrifice (Boehm 2004:147–148); it becomes the 'antithesis of the original' an 'opposite parallel'. It is therefore not a human act to appease a deity and receive favour. It is God's command to commit their whole life to future service and eternal dependence on the one true God. God clearly rejects the unethical and horrible pagan custom of child sacrifices (Stoker 2015:77). He replaces it with a sacrifice of dedication wherein he himself provides the offering. In this instance, it is not the death of the child that is sought, but the life of the Child and the future descendants flowing from him that is claimed. The family is not dissolved but became the heart of a new religious community that would eventually include people from the whole of humanity. In this way the focus is not on what Abram did, but on who God is in this story. He is the God of the covenant that claims a future covenant community for himself. He not only demands the sacrifice that initiates the covenant relationship but also provides it in the end.

A new covenant community: Particular in its formation and universalistic in its focus

It is quite clear from the Old Testament history that the sacrifice of Isaac did not lead to the extinction of Abram's family, but that it initiated the fulfilment of God's promise to Abram. God promised

to give him an offspring that would be as numerous as the grains of sea sand. Through some specific covenant practices, this community was dedicated to and built up by God. They were constantly reminded of their present and future dependence on God. They were also reminded of the sacrifice that God required and also provided to dedicate them to him. God initiated a covenant relationship wherein not only circumcision but also a variety of sacrifices reminded and taught them about what their relationship with God really entails. This 'sacrifice' of Isaac is thought to prefigure the crucifixion, which Christians believe is the most important event in world history (Delaney 1998:137). God sacrificed his Son in the fullness of time as the real and ultimate sacrifice; he not only died but also overcame death to become the Head of the Christian Church. The cross on Calvary symbolises God's act of eternal life commitment in dedicating a community to serve him eternally. This act of God has eternal and global implications for every person, people group, tribe and tongue.

Rethinking the church's mission: Psalm 127

The Bible is clear in Psalm 127 about humanity's continuous effort to seek and find what they regard as valuable and worth having in life. It speaks about the endless effort of building and trying to safeguard what they are building (Ps 127:1). The conclusion is striking. Everything is in vain – if God is not intricately the Author of what is being done. All the hard work and all the effort will be totally lost if it is not God's own work. Man will never be able to establish anything through his own effort, no matter how hard he works and how long he keeps on doing it (Ps 127:2). What man ultimately receives, is not gained by his own effort but comes from God. It is important to note that this Psalm includes children into the specific narrative. It clearly states that children are a gift of God (Ps 127:3). Why are children specifically mentioned here? God's work extends over generations and covers eternity. God is not only concerned about the 'here and now' of humanity's selfish

desires. Children represent future generations and are therefore important to God. Delaney (1998) states clearly that:

> [/]n order to stem the tide of sacrifice – of the hopes, trust, health and lives of children – we need more than economic solutions, we need a revolution in values. We need a new moral vision, a new myth to live by – one that will change the course of history as profoundly as did the Abraham story. (p. 251)

The Christian Church urgently needs to rethink its mission within the world's continuous globalising tsunamic reality. The following priorities should be thoroughly researched and implemented urgently:

- The Christian Church must urgently reflect on its 'cultural captivity' to Western culture and the full implications and extent of the compromises it made and is still making in this process:
    - It should specifically focus on the compromises it made regarding biblical teaching on marriage, family and children. Biblical reform is needed and a return to a biblical view on ministering to family and children within the context of marriage.
    - It should also specifically focus on the compromises it is making regarding sexuality and gender and return to a biblical view on this.
- The Church should also completely rid itself of the Christendom paradigm that it became stuck with. It should urgently reflect on how to engage with the post-Christendom context that it is living and ministering in at the moment.
- The Church should in a humble servant posture seek contact and engage with the new Christianity[12] that is now growing in the majority world.

12. It is called the Third Church, or the Southern Church.

Conclusion

Today's Western society has seen an alarming decline in moral direction and spiritual values (Orchard 2000). Globalisation is an unstoppable, uncontrollable (Trask n.d.:1) and irreversible force and has brought about a total disintegration of marriage and family. The painful result of this is that children all over the world are sacrificed in many deplorable ways. The growing 'abortion-on-demand' campaign is testimony to this. In our modern globalising world, the motherhood–abortion paradox parallels the marriage–divorce paradox (Rothman 1985:189). This chapter tried to show that Western civilisation is dying because it has cut its biblical and Christian moorings regarding marriage, family, children and sexuality.

The Christian Church urgently needs to rethink its mission in this globalising world. The following words of Wilson (2018) regarding the word 'sacrifice' used in this chapter perhaps describe the ambivalent reality the Church is faced with today:

> [*C*]hristians and secularists both have a blood-red sacrament at the center of their understanding of the world. We have the broken body of Christ, and the wine-red blood of Christ, the meaning of which is *my life for yours*. They have tens of millions of dismembered children, all of whose bodies have had very different words spoken over them – *your life for mine*. Because we are followers of Christ, one is a faith of self-sacrifice, even if it costs us our lives. The other is a religion of self-indulgence, even if it costs you yours. (n.p.)

Chapter 10

Community engagement addressing powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: A missional approach

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Abstract

The contemporary youth of South Africa face immense problems and challenges in their respective communities. Without any effort of assisting them, our youth are lost. Missional outreach through community engagement is therefore crucial to the well-being of the youth. These problems and challenges may be resolved in a missional approach by utilising training and equipping programmes. Missions form an integral part of the redemptive plan of God according to Scripture. Although the noun 'mission', in the modern sense of teaching people about Christianity, is not common in English versions of Scripture, the concept originates from God's sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth to die for those who are lost (Jn 20:21), including the youth. The mission of God is one of mercy and grace to people who have no hope and are without God in the world. This group includes a lost generation of young people. Mission is therefore the primary commission that God gives to his people, and every Christian should be devoted to this endeavour. It is imperative to know that community engagement is not a mere interventional approach, but a visible and evident result of Jesus Christ, who is enthroned as Lord and Messiah in one's life, according to the Book of Acts. God glorifies himself through people who worship him and who participate in his liberating mission. The good news of God's love should always be presented for the sake of the lost, including the youth.

Keywords: Community engagement; Missional; Training; Equipping; Youth ministry; Christian growth.

Rationale

In the context of this study, community engagement is seen as an approach to help society (the youth) with communal problems and challenges. Community engagement is the process of involving communities in decision-making, implementation and collaboration (Holland & Malone 2019:1). It is further an integral

part of planning and designing the development of communities through training and equipping (Polat & Yildiz 2019:71). Through community engagement, the youth and communities can be reached for intervention, training and equipping programmes and projects. Training and equipping can provide young people with life skills and the experience they need to emerge as future leaders, and help them make a valuable contribution to their own community. Training and equipping can enable them to collaborate with their community to identify challenges and develop strategies to address problematic issues (Peterson et al. 2014:37–40). If the youth within a community wish to function as a missional youth or church [*missio ecclesia*] and be part of the *missio Dei*, they have to grow in missional spirituality and live in the fear of God (cf. Ac 9:31). If the youth partake in the *missio Dei* with the purpose to honour and respect God as young people, they become part of God's blessing to the world.

Background and problem statement

At the beginning of the 21st century, societies globally and in South Africa have witnessed a decline in acceptable behaviour, character, values, standards, ethics and morals. This tendency is observed especially in the behaviour of young people and amongst the current youth (Freeks 2011:1–4, 2013:1–3; Georgiades, Boyle & Fife 2013:1473–1476; Logan-Greene, Nurius & Thompson 2012:373–374). South African news media report daily on aspects such as violence, substance abuse, crime, sexual immorality, rape and child trafficking (Carstens & Zwecker 2013:2; Lamprecht 2013:4; Nel 2013b:14). Most of these problem behaviours from the youth are identified by phrases such as 'get drunk', 'lie to parents or guardians' or 'skip school without an excuse' (Georgiades et al. 2013:1479). A study conducted by Taylor and Wood (2013:271–272) pointed out that low parental appraisal has a detrimental effect on the well-being of the youth. A comprehensive report by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC 2010:94–97) indicated the vulnerability of children who are drawn into various forms of human slavery in South Africa.

Introduction

This chapter deals with factors such as powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities that are based on problems and challenges faced by the South African youth. To make a significant contribution to the well-being of the youth, the author aims to address these factors through community engagement and suggest a missional outreach to the youth of South Africa. The essence of God's mission is to unite people with God through Christ, with the Holy Spirit transforming their hearts, minds and will to worship God in a restored creation that will comprise of every tribe, nation, kingdom and language. These people include the youth with their problems and challenges (De Beer 2012:50; Glenn 2007). Mission is concerned with ministry to the whole person through the transforming power of the gospel. Although mission affirms the functional uniqueness of evangelism and social responsibility, it views these aspects as inseparable from the ministry of the kingdom of God (Presler 2010:195–204). Therefore, mission is the intentional integration of building up the church and transforming society (Moreau, Netand &Van Engen 2000:448).

God is a God who sends out, or rather a missionary God, who gathers people from all over the world (Ursinus & Olevianus 1563:54). A prevalent point of view is that the mission of God takes place in a particular social, economic, political, religious and cultural context, even in rural regions (Lk 2:1–2). Although the present contexts are different from the time of the Bible (Messenger 2004:10), the reign and power of God are still working in specific contexts currently, even in a rural context where the youth have to deal with destructive problems and challenges.

In the following section, the author deals with the critical problems and challenges that the South African youth are facing.

Critical youth problems and challenges in South Africa

This section discusses and elaborates on the main causes of incidents that are manifestations of problems regarding the youth in South Africa and that relate to most of the challenges the youth are currently facing. The discussion is linked to the belief that family life is vital in the eyes of God. The author is of the opinion that the Word of God is still relevant to the lives of families today. This belief raises the following questions: 'have parents moved away from the Word of God?' and 'why have parents stopped consulting God about their children?' However, family life in a country like South Africa is not a simple matter to understand because of the serious problems and challenges faced by the youth. The author has identified HIV infection, orphans, child-headed households, moral decline and a lack of positive values among the youth in South Africa, irresponsible and risky sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancy, poverty and unemployment, poor academic performance, school violence amongst learners, substance abuse, religious affiliation, poor church attendance and the problem of father absenteeism in South Africa. These problems and challenges are outlined below.

Human immunodeficiency virus

It is evident that, globally, South Africa has one of the largest burdens of HIV. An estimated 2.1 million people have died because of AIDS; by 1976, 76% of the deaths had occurred in sub-Saharan Africa. Ninety per cent of children who are infected live in the sub-Saharan region, where AIDS continues to be the leading cause of mortality. One decade ago, one out of eight children in South Africa was infected by HIV (Eddy & Holborn 2011; UNAIDS & WHO 2007). Already in 2012, South Africa experienced a decline in morality and fertility that resulted in the reduction of

the young dependent population (NPC 2012). A major risk factor of HIV infection is having multiple sexual partners. In the national survey of 2014, the HSRC indicated that the number of people living with HIV had globally increased at an annual growth rate of 12.2% (Shisana et al. 2014:1, 35). Statistics from 2015 indicated that 55% of women and 37.8% of men were HIV-positive (Meintjies, Hall & Sambu 2015:34; Richter & Sherr 2008; Shisana et al. 2014:xxxvii).

The AIDS epidemic has grave consequences for the youth of South Africa. It has unsettled the care of children (Richter 2004:5). The effect of the pandemic on children and the youth, as well as families, is reflected in the increasing number of orphans and child-headed households. The majority of orphans have lost their parents because of AIDS (UNAIDS & WHO 2007). Although these statistics can be worrying and terrifying, the author argues that not all of these statistics are related or applicable to the youth and children of South Africa. It can be a general presentation of statistics in South Africa.

Orphans

According to the national statistics of 2012, there were approximately 3.37 to 4 million orphans in South Africa. About 380 000 more orphaned children were reported in 2013, a distinct increase of 13% (Meintjies et al. 2015:104; Ratele, Shefer & Clowes 2012:553). In 2014, the overall number of orphans increased by 16.9% (Shisana et al. 2014:xxxix). In 2015, the increase rose by 60% (Meintjies et al. 2015:104). Orphaned children have a higher risk of missing out on schooling, living in households with less food security, suffering from anxiety and depression and being exposed to HIV infection (Eddy & Holborn 2011; Meintjies et al. 2015:104). It is evident from the statistics that the number of orphans has increased significantly during 2012–2015. These statistics can be largely attributed to father absence and child neglect.

Child-headed households

A youth problem in South Africa is the rapidly increasing number of child-headed households because of various social factors (e.g. death of parents, absent fathers and single mothers). In 2008, approximately 98 000 (0.5% of the population) children were living in child-headed households. This caused their school attendance rates to be lower than those of children living with parents (Eddy & Holborn 2011). Furthermore, parental deaths because of AIDS also resulted in a high incidence of child-headed households in South Africa. This is the reason why children in such households are mostly teenagers (Makinwa 2012:51).

It was indicated that 61 000 of the total 85 000 households in South Africa were child-headed during 2002–2013. The number of such households escalated since 2015. It is therefore estimated that 46% of all children aged 15 years and older in South Africa are raised in child-headed households (Meintjies et al. 2015:105–106). This means that these children grow up without parents to support them and teach them life skills.

Children living without their biological fathers

The statistics as far back as 1998 indicated that 42% of children lived with their mothers only, whereas only 1% of children lived with their fathers. National statistics from 2013 indicated that 42.5% of children, aged below 5 years, lived with their biological mothers, whereas 2.0% lived with their biological fathers. The number of children living with their mothers only increased to 53.7 million in 2014, of whom 18.6 million were children under the age of 18 years. This negative trend is related to several factors, including historic population control, labour migration, poverty, housing and educational opportunities, low marriage rates and specific cultural practices (Meintjies et al. 2015:103). Evidently, this was and is still a serious concern because the contact of the

father and his support to children could improve the child's socio-economic circumstances considerably.

A more problematic fact concerning the context of this study is the large percentage of children (18.7%) not living with either of their biological parents (Richter 2004:5; StatsSA 2013:25). Considering the large representation of children in the South African population, it is disconcerting that so many children live separately from their biological parents.

Despite the above-mentioned disturbing percentages, children are considered as the future of the nation. What happens to them in their first period of life affects their development and the development of society, as well as that of the world around them (Bernard Van Leer Foundation 2004:1). Considering that the first four years of life is the period of the rapid physical, mental, emotional, social and moral growth and development of the child, the experiences in these years will have the greatest impact on the later development of their brains (StatsSA 2013). Children living without one or both of their parents, therefore, are in need of caring guidance to prepare them for life.

Moral decline and a lack of positive values amongst the youth in South Africa

According to the early statistics of 2004, the South African society showed increasing signs of moral decline. The HSRC issued an urgent alarm that annually more than 25 000 children in South Africa were sexually abused (Richter 2004:5).

Researchers who studied impoverished communities and youth problems in South Africa found that the youth in the relevant communities attested to having no hope. As a result, they acted irresponsibly and often made bad life choices. Consequently, South Africa experienced a value dilemma and a lack of values amongst the youth (Abdool 2005; Challens 2008; Freeks 2007, 2011:1–4, 2015:1–3; Freeks & Lotter 2011:578–581; Lepholletse 2008; Llale 2003; Rens 2005).

In 2013, most youth societies in Africa showed a decline in acceptable behaviour, character, values, standards, ethics and morals. This tendency was observed in the behaviour of the youth (Freeks 2011:1–4, 2013:1–3, 2015:1; Georgiades et al. 2013:1473–1476; Logan-Greene et al. 2012:373–374).

Irresponsible and risky sexual behaviour

The HSRC indicated that 10.7% of young children (aged 15–24 years) had their first sexual experience before the age of 15 years (Shisana et al. 2014:xxxi). To make matters worse and riskier, the HSRC reported that 12.6% of the youth (aged 15 years and older) had multiple sexual partners (Shisana et al. 2014:xxxii). This form of behaviour of the youth in South Africa could lead to destructive consequences, such as sexually transmitted infections and AIDS.

Teenage pregnancy

Disturbing statistics on pregnancy amongst teenagers in South Africa indicated a rate of 5.6% in the age group of 14–19 years, with 0.8% in the age group of 14 years and 11.9% in the age group of 19 years (StatsSA 2015b:30).

Poverty and unemployment

It is evident that the South African youth face high levels of unemployment. Most of them reside in households that have to deal with poverty, unemployment and severe disruption. As a result, 11.9 million (64%) of the children continue to live in poverty, mainly caused by unemployment. It is found that globally 75 000 children die before their fifth birthday because of poverty (UNICEF n.d.:21–22, 31). Considering the whole population, 60% of South Africans live in poverty, predominantly in the black population and rural areas. The level of poverty in South Africa is proved to be extremely high compared with other countries (Mensah & Benedict 2010:139).

Poverty has devastating consequences. Children and the youth, who are the most vulnerable, are affected the most. Therefore, it is important to care for children and the youth, especially those in impoverished communities and rural areas (Long 2011:418).

Poor academic performance

A further problem is the poor academic performance and poor school attendance amongst the youth of South Africa. This tendency is caused mainly by the lack of finances, which is one of the main reasons why learners are not really studying and may drop out (Black 2008:28–30). Illiteracy has declined from 27.3% to 15.8% between 2002 and 2014. However, these statistics imply a disparity, as individuals aged 20 years and older did not receive sufficient schooling to complete grade 7 (StatsSA 2015a:11, 25). An increased illiteracy amongst the youth can therefore be ascribed to poor academic performance and poor school attendance.

School violence amongst learners

Violence is currently a problematic issue amongst the youth of South Africa. A clear example is the #FeesMustFall campaign of 2016, which caused incidences of intimidation and violence amongst students and staff at various higher education institutions in South Africa (UNICEF n.d.:47). Violence amongst learners is a serious impediment to quality education. It is estimated that 27% of high school learners feel unsafe at school, and 16% of them attest to having been threatened with a weapon (UNICEF n.d.:47).

Substance abuse

The use and abuse of alcohol and drugs amongst school learners in South Africa is a destructive tendency. Research has found that one out of 10 high school learners has taken at least one

illegal drug, such as cannabis, heroin or cocaine (UNICEF n.d.:59). The response of young people when asked to describe their alcohol and drug abuse experience includes remarks such as 'get drunk', 'lie to parents or guardians' and 'skip school without an excuse' (Georgiades et al. 2013:1479).

Religious affiliation and poor church attendance

Religious affiliation is a youth problem in South Africa. In this regard, 85.7% of all South Africans are affiliated with the Christian faith, and 5.1% profess to follow ancestral, tribal, animist and other traditional religions. A further 2.2% of the population confess that they are Muslims, 1% say they are Hindus and 5.5% of the population do not follow any religion (StatsSA 2015a:12, 34).

In terms of church attendance, the youth are leaving the church because the church failed to convince young people to stay. The youth are no longer active in church activities, church attendance, praying or reading the Bible. The church even failed to preach the importance of youth ministry. The problem is that most church members are concerned with the health of the institution, the church, instead of the health of the youth and youth outreach (Root 2015:30; Yi 2013:i).

The author argues that the youth are part of the church and should function in the same missional way as the church does. This means that young people should also be sent out as part of the incarnating life of Jesus Christ in the world (Grant & Niemandt 2015:3). Being missional is based on believers' understanding of the Triune *missio Dei,* as well as the 'sending' posture of the church as it continues the work of Christ (Hendry 2012:10). The idea is not to make the church interesting to the youth, but rather to enhance its missional character.

Engaging the youth in mission, is challenging (Austnaberg 2014:83). However, the *missional renaissance*, which means taking Jesus to the youth in poor and disadvantaged communities (Pollock 2014), has activated South African believers to investigate

new ways of being church when focusing on youth challenges (Pillay 2015:1). It should be remembered that *missional* is (in the view of the author) not only a trendy *buzzword*, but it also describes the action that God intended for humankind in the first place. An essential point in this study is the fact that the children and youth ministry are definite areas of grave concern. The author believes that churches and parents should understand what the youth are experiencing in their daily lives besides the often life-changing challenges they are facing. The church should not only understand the youth going through these transition stages but also engage in positive conversations with them about their challenges (Hendry 2012:295–296; Nel 2013a).

The problem of father absenteeism in South Africa

Statistics make it evident that practitioners of youth ministry are called and sent by God with solutions to families that are disrupted and fathers who are more absent than ever before. Research has shown that dysfunctional family life is a major problem, with fatherlessness being at the centre (Carstens 2014:9–11; Freeks 2004:1–6, 2011:1–4, 2013:8–18, 2016:6–7; Freeks, Greeff & Lotter 2015:22–24; Freeks & Lotter 2009:520–524; cf. Richter et al. 2012). The following statistics reflect some of the disturbing factors in South Africa: 63% of suicides originate from fatherless homes, 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions are from fatherless homes, 80% of rapists motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes, 40% of all children in the country do not live with their biological fathers, 85% of children with behavioural problems come from homes where a father is absent, 90% of homeless children are from fatherless homes and 71% of children who do not finish their school education come from such homes (Carstens 2014; Goodsell & Meldrum 2010; StatsSA 2015b).

Statistically, it is evident that there is a tendency similar to 'fatherhood disease' in the world and a rapid increase in single parenting. In addition, from these statistics, it seems that most of

the major social pathologies have been linked to fatherlessness or absent fathers. Seemingly, this fatherless epidemic is defining a generation of children in South Africa. It is irrefutable that it is not the ideal situation for any child to live without parental care or without an adult resident. Men must understand that they play a vital role in the welfare of their family and society.

The above-mentioned problems and challenges have devastating consequences for the youth in South Africa. They cause large numbers of them to withdraw from church and blame God for the ills and misfortunes in their lives. Moreover, these youths indulge in destructive behaviour and make bad choices in their lives. The youth should be advised and even provided with God-given solutions through training and equipping. Some of these solutions can be addressed through community engagement.

Possible solutions for youth problems and challenges through community engagement

In this section, we provide some suggestions as possible solutions to youth problems and challenges in South Africa.

Missional outreach to the youth

Missional outreach should have a specific focus on the youth who are dealing with unique challenges in their environment. Service rendering to the youth through training and equipping is a way of mission. Training and equipping as an intervention approach works from the premise that mission entails more than merely 'saving souls', especially as poverty is the main destructive factor in numerous less-developed communities.

Missional outreach dealing with youth challenges should build bridges so that the voice of these youths can be heard. Those who are unable to speak for themselves, such as the orphans,

drug addicts, victims of molestation and abused children, just to name but a few, should be heard and be given attention. With regard to the youth, God can build a Christ-like spiritual character in them. The crucified and resurrected Christ is God's decisive and greater *Yes* to humankind (Keith, White & Wilmer 2014:12, 119).

Mission targeting the youth implies suffering with Christ and sharing in his resurrection (Keith et al. 2014:112). If the churches are not dealing with the youth through missional outreach, they may experience what Luther narrated '[t]here is again and again an absence of God, of health, of life and of goodness' (Keith et al. 2014:114).

The task of churches is to listen until they understand, like Christ did, which means to take the suffering of the youth on themselves. The youth seek assistance because they are victims of multiple forms of abuse and neglect, even in places where churches and Christian organisations have been active for long periods. The youth's suffering and cry for help is not theological fiction. Risks must be taken, and believers must be part of the process to reach out, so that they can see what missional outreach or Christian mission actually means. By engaging them, these youths can find God through faith by which he can restore their lives, give hope to the hopeless and forgive their mistakes (Keith et al. 2014:114–119).

Missional outreach to children and the youth is often referred to as *transformation* because it is a descriptor of outcomes that lead to development and progress (Prevette 2014:97). If this missional outreach is proclaimed as God's good news, especially in the context of this study (youth with challenges), it could transform every young person, wholly. In this regard, Woolnough (2010:4–5) stated that missional outreach (or integral mission) addresses the body, mind and spirit of a person and his or her community. Both Prevette and Woolnough indicated and confirmed that missional outreach can transform the whole person (body, mind and spirit). The present author concurs with both these authors; however, in the context of this study, relationships must be emphasised. The reason is that this is a

fundamental aspect and forms part of a person's constitution. Relationships are one of the main problematic aspects, especially amongst the youth facing challenges. From the discussion above, the focal point should be on Jesus Christ who can heal people's brokenness. Communities and churches should, therefore, be willing to welcome all children and youths in their midst.

Spiritual growth and sanctification

Focusing on spirituality and sanctification, Buys (2014) stated that spirituality has a vital impact on the zeal, motivation, perseverance and practical methods of doing missions:

> [*W*]hy then do several authors and researchers who are writing on missional spirituality indicate that spirituality is struggling to integrate the emotional and spiritual aspects of spirituality with real life issues? (p. 133)

The present author concurs with Buys that spirituality is a fundamental and crucial aspect in a person's life because it impacts the whole life of a person, not just a part of an individual's life (Buys 2014:134).

If this impact is vital, as indicated by Buys (2014), then it should also influence the youth who are struggling with challenges. Spirituality is an important facet in a training and equipping programme because it affects the whole life of a person. To the author, training and equipping is a community engagement intervention and missional tool that churches, schools, NGOs, organisations, institutions, local governments and correctional services can use. This will help communities to deal with the problems and challenges faced by the youth.

Biblical and theological training

An important principle of mission and particularly youth training and equipping according to this study is that Jesus Christ is Lord over everything and all creation. It is the mandate of the church to train, equip and demonstrate this vision in practice (Haw 2014:104).

In Mark 6:37 and 10:13–16, the disciples attempted to prevent the children who wanted to come to the Lord. However, Jesus rebuked his disciples and affirmed that children and the kingdom of God go together. In the author's opinion, any child or young person should be welcomed in the name of Jesus because being a child is the essence of greatness in the eyes of the Lord (Lk 9:46–48).

According to Matthew 4:19, Jesus asked the people to commit themselves to follow him. In the context of this study, the same question is relevant to the youth who have problems and challenges. Jesus Christ stands central in an integral mission, and his life and sacrifice form the pattern of Christian discipleship, especially as the Lord associated himself with the poor and destitute (Jansen 2015:109).

The approach would be for the youth to make a commitment, irrespective of the problems and challenges they are facing. God is able and powerful to step into these distressful situations through Jesus Christ to heal those who suffer (2 Chr 7:14). Borthwick (1987:13) indicates that God has a special role for the young people within the *missio Dei*, but they must be willing to become involved with the Lord and allow him to work in and through their lives.

The significance of youth ministry

Who are the youth? This is an important question. In the context of this study, the youth are adolescents, teenagers, students, high school learners and junior high students – any young person between puberty and mature adulthood. Furthermore, they are involved in youth-based ministry (Dean 2010:21). Accordingly, youth-based ministry, as the name suggests, focuses on young people (Schultz & Schultz 1987:16).

Then 'what does youth ministry imply?' Youth ministry prepares the youth for life, and to build them up as disciples of Jesus Christ (Robbins 2011:14). There are certain stages of youth ministry, such as laying the foundation, conducting research,

networking and collaboration, engaging in activities and counselling (Borgman 2013:296–298). In the opinion of the present author, Jesus Christ should be the focal point in youth ministry and youth evangelism (McGonigal 2001:130). This means that a youth and children's ministry can be a significant part of progression and change in young people's lives (Lovaglia 2016:23). In the life stages of children and young people, the youth ministry is fundamental because God's plan for all human beings is the one that should be followed (Jessen 2016:129).

Youth ministry is also important for the church because the biblical testimony focusses strongly on the youth's religious development (Dt 6:4–9; cf. McGonigal 2001:125). Without young people, there is no need for such a ministry. Therefore, biblical wisdom attests to a high calling of ministering to the youth, for example, in Ecclesiastes 12:

> [*R*]emember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years draw near when you will say, 'I have no pleasure in them'. (v. 1)

De Vries (2008:15) argued that a youth ministry should be modelled after Jesus Christ's ministry, but that churches often are impatient whilst building a sustainable youth ministry. De Vries pointed out how churches focus on hurried, 'quick-fix' solutions. Confirming De Vries' (2008) argument, Borgman (2013:289) found in his study that the most neglected mission of the church is the youth. The present author concurs with both De Vries (2008) and Borgman (2013). This is based on two considerations. Firstly, the churches that deviate from the core focus, which is Jesus Christ, tend to neglect the youth. Secondly, if the youth are not relevant and significant to the church any more, a future church becomes impossible, which would be detrimental to any community.

From the author's viewpoint, youth ministry matters. When such a ministry reflects Christ, it will have a lasting influence on young people's lives (Bronwyn 2013; cf. Dean 2010:6–7;

Peterson et al. 2014:37–40). The youth are in Christ because they are part of the body of Christ (Goheen 2011:168–169; cf. also Rm 12:5). Only Jesus can offer a *real calling* to the youth, which is a challenge for young people.

Furthermore, it is the author's opinion that youth ministry entails more than 'doing something' for the youth. The focus should rather be on nurturing and assisting them with delicate aspects such as decision-making processes, leadership tasks and responsibilities. Training and equipping through community engagement should be based on the belief that God has placed the church on the earth to make a difference in the lives of others, in this case the youth (Borgman 2013:287).

Youth outreach with biblical principles

There is no specific biblical reference or model for youth outreach, but there are biblical principles that could be vital to the local church, poor communities and the youth. Youth outreach need to follow the advice outlined in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, which is the model response to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:18–20 (Got Questions Ministries 2017). Reaching out to the youth is essential, but they should be trained, equipped, encouraged and inspired for discipleship and Christian leadership (Bronwyn 2013; cf. Lk 11:1).

These suggestions are valuable points for the advancement of the youth, and if the church, the community, institutions, stakeholders, et cetera, are concerned about the youth, they should take cognisance of these vital solutions.

Recommendations

South Africa is a youthful society, with approximately 54% young people below the age of 24 years as per data in 2012 (Hart 2012). Keeping this in mind, the present author recommends the following for the youth in South Africa:

- Youth participation in HIV-prevention programmes: Spaces should be created where young people can talk about HIV and should have the opportunity to discuss this pandemic openly.
- Unemployment: Given the high levels of poverty and unemployment, many young people want jobs but lack basic skills. They should be assisted.
- Participation in sports to promote health and education: Participation in sports can stimulate, sustain and develop a sporting culture amongst the youth. Teamwork and leadership skills are learnt through participation in sports. Sports metaphors are excellent tools for teaching life skills.
- Bridging levels of illiteracy amongst the youth: It is important to build libraries that could serve young people and improve their reading skills.
- Spirituality and positive life attitudes: Spiritual practices such as services to the poor are constructive for the youth, as they teach them the intrinsic values of living for others, gratitude and self-sacrifice.
- School safety and commitment to learning: Understanding school violence, the school context should be the central focus of a theory on school violence and safety, because this is the milieu where the social dynamics of learner criminalities and victimisation occur. Behavioural anchors have to be developed to categorise concepts of various types of youths, for example, being a bully or having an aggressive personality. Policies influence school safety, and children cannot learn when their school environment is unsafe. Institute programmes should be identified and applied because they prevent school violence and enhance school safety. Monitoring systems, such as surveillance systems should be installed, to monitor child victimisation, drug use and health-related behaviours.
- Young people should have a voice: The voices of young people should be heard in all stages of youth and their wishes and dreams should receive serious attention because their voices bring a basic value to a community.

- Youth and church attendance: Many young people feel marginalised in the church and the community. Although the church should be a safe haven for youths with problems and challenges, this is not always the case. The church has lost touch with the affliction of young people, and the youth (millennials) are seeking authenticity that will prove they are accepted and loved beyond worship or church services.
- Relationships with the youth are of utmost importance: Churches and communities should focus on building and strengthening such relationships.
- Engaging the youth in Bible study and teaching: Engage young people (millennial generation) in the study of the Bible and help them to transfer the Christian faith to the next generation. The impediment is that the Bible and its message are disconnected from young people's life experiences. The reason is mainly that the youth find the teachings of the Bible irrelevant to their daily lives. The biblical teaching should engage more in addressing issues of social justice, as these issues need closer attention.
- Praise and worship, and the impact of music: Music plays a vital role in the lives of young people, especially in their spiritual well-being. Worship is a way of connecting spiritually with God, and the social context provides a means for the Holy Spirit to work through his worshippers. Praise and worship activities are deep inner experiences that help the youth to cope with problems at home, such as stress. Music can revive their hearts, lift their spirits, lead to spiritual revival, remind them of God's love and help them to focus on God.
- Investing in the future of the youth: The youth (millennials) who do not attend institutions of higher education tend to be less religious. The youth need a supportive community and mentoring, as well as courses in life skills and career skills.
- Young people's faith in relation to their parents: Parents are the most influential and important figures in the lives of children and also the fundamental faith guides, mentors and teachers to whom they will have access. Parents play a decisive role in forming their child's faith.

The author's final remarks

It is the author's belief that God wants to use children and the youth in building his kingdom on the earth because the Lord delights in children being active in his new world. In this regard, the church should become more responsible by reaching out and engaging with children within their respective communities. The church should be aware of their calling as the instrument that God can use to restore and transform his image, and should also be aware that children show the image of God (Lk 2:52, NIV). Every child, regardless of colour, culture, race, religion, sex, class or even age, has value in society. Therefore, children should be respected, appreciated and served, not misused and exploited.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on God's calling of each individual – both children and the youth – to be part of the gospel and God's mission. This is in response to Jesus's Great Commission to make disciples of all people, rich or poor, those with disabilities, marginalised, senior citizens, those suffering from HIV, drug addicts, the fatherless or youth with problems in general. All who decide and turn to the way of Jesus Christ form part of the mission that God gave the Son. All humans are made in the image of God, which involve the entire human being as part of God's creation. Young people are valuable to God, and they can be inspired by God-given solutions (biblically based) to the challenges they are facing. These youths need a platform to partake in decision-making and discussions at home, church, society and community – an opportunity that training and equipping through community engagement aims to provide for the youth in South Africa.

Chapter 11

Globalisation, education and children in Indian context: Challenges for mission

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Abstract

This chapter does not pretend to be a detailed research on the vast subject of education in general, and education in India in particular, but it narrows down the study and tries to discover the effect of early (colonial times) and modern globalisation on education of children in elementary, secondary and high schools. From an Indian perspective, the process of globalisation seems to be closely connected to the political policies created by ruling governments during the various historical periods. Thus, the

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historical context is an important dimension in this study. For convenience, here we will focus on the way globalisation brought changes in education and educational institutions during five historical periods.

In the first section of the chapter, education of children, based on caste and religion in pre-British India, will be briefly discussed (before 1800). The second section will deal with not only the changes brought by the British government (1800–1947) to the Indian education system and its prospects but also the problems caused for children. The third section will review the efforts of the National Congress (from Jawaharlal Nehru, 1947–1964, to Mrs Indira Gandhi,1966–1977, 1978–1984) to promote education of children in the post-independence era. The fourth section will discuss liberalisation of education and the rise of privatisation of schools during the Rajiv Gandhi period, 1985–1989. The fifth section will deal with the plans and policies of the Bharatiya Janata Party government (2004–2009, 2014–present) based on its ideology of *Hindutva* and the serious consequences it has had on children, families and educational institutions. Finally, the last section will discuss some challenges that Christian missions in India face today.

Keywords: Globalisation; Education; Indian context; Church's mission; Education challenges.

Nature and characteristics of globalisation and education

Many people in South Asia experience the merits and demerits of globalisation without having much knowledge about the concept, nature and characteristics of this process. Because 'globalisation' is a technical term and a concept, it should not be confused with terms such as 'westernisation', 'modernisation' or 'Christianisation'. Some leaders of Hinduism, Islam and Communist ideologies use these terms along with the term 'globalisation'. To avoid any confusion, in this chapter we will briefly highlight three important

characteristics of globalisation and the consequences it has on families and children.

Various experts define globalisation from their own perspectives. One definition affirms that 'globalisation is a process by which the economies of the world become increasingly integrated, leading to a global economy and, increasingly, global economic policymaking' (Todaro & Smith 2004:510). Prof. M. A. Oommen (2000) says:

> [*B*]roadly speaking, globalisation may be considered a process of transnationalisation of capital, production and even consumer tastes and preferences on the logic of global exchange. There is, therefore, nothing amiss in characterising it as global capitalism. (p. 59)

The important characteristics of globalisation are free market, free flow of capital from one country to another and promoting the cultural feature of homogenisation.

In an article back in 2006, I discussed in more detail the characteristics and consequences of globalisation (Jeyaraj 2006:11–33), in which I made several points. Countries aiming to further develop their economy would open up their doors for companies from other countries to enter, set up businesses and sell products. They were allowed to transfer the profit back to their home countries. The banking system in these countries has also changed to help multinational entities to transfer finances to banks in other parts of the world. The old colonial system that practised this trend by using the colonies as their market, has come back to life to rule again, this time with the difference of not restricting their market to the colonies alone, but to any country that has opened the doors for them. Many poor countries agreed to accept foreign companies whilst offering every possibility for them to freely operate, mostly because the poor countries did not have sufficient funds and modern technology. They accepted the policy of the liberalisation and privatisation of industries. When India awakened, after getting its freedom from colonial rule, the government imposed some restrictions on foreign countries, so that they cannot take away raw material and use India as a free market for their products. India, however, has

also fallen into the trap of a free market economy and free flow of capital whilst later allowing multinational companies to enter and operate inside the country.

The second key characteristic is the free flow of capital from rich countries to poor countries where the former aim to establish businesses and take back the profit. In my view, this is possible in countries with a capitalist democracy, not in countries with socialist command economies. The rich capitalists in the West promoted this political system in countries in other parts of the world for their own advantage so that they can use those countries by establishing free markets and organising a free flow of capital from one end to another end.

The third characteristic is promoting one common culture throughout the world: in different countries Western businesses produce the same product and aim to establish the same culture – initially it is a business culture but later businesses introduce other cultural traits in the poorer countries. Examples include Coca Cola, Pepsi, Pop Music, Disco clubs, KFC chains, Pizza Huts, Levi Jeans, automobile brands, mass media advertisements and Hollywood movies and cartoons. These multinational companies and industries suggest to people in different countries what to wear, eat, sing and what brands of car to use. In many countries of the world today, we can see that the same or similar products are made available to people. This trend of homogenisation has gradually suggested diverse cultural expressions in dress, food and way of life to hundreds of indigenous peoples, which led to weakening local cultures and the vanishing of many of their centuries-old traditional expressions of life.

Some of the major consequences of mass production by multinational companies and import of goods from other countries were the destruction of many local businesses and suppression of indigenised skills in villages. Unemployment rates increased and many people fell prey to the trap of debts and losing their land and property. Families and children suffered

more. The multinational companies purchased vast areas of lands for their industries and used enormous water resources. This affected the environment. Developing agriculture was not a priority for these companies; rather they only improved the infrastructure to facilitate transportation of their products from one end to another. Company managers tried to prevent their labourers from membership in trade unions or discouraged them from going on strike to demand higher wages, bonus and benefits.

I am not going to describe what characterises education, as this is well known; however, its fundamental function to enlighten people and make them more aware of the world they live in, remains its most notable feature. Children and young people in different countries are educated in accordance with the political and economic conditions of the nation. We can see education that is only governmental responsibility, education that is partly private and partly governmental and education that is completely private.

In India, these types of education took place in one or another period of the country's history. However, it seems that globalisation brought changes – some positive and some negative. Today, the processes of privatisation in India have become a problem, mostly because it was not only businesses but also education and healthcare institutions that were privatised. Numerous foreign universities and medical insurance companies were established in many poor countries, which resulted in people being forced to pay higher charges for the education of children and youths and for medical treatment. India, too, experienced the influence of globalisation in various areas of politics, economy, education and culture. The central and state governments in India allowed large-scale privatisation and did very little to protect businesses, jobs and the social welfare of the people. Education was specifically affected in this process, and below I will try to briefly describe how the country came to today's conditions of life and the challenges that children, young people and families experience when it comes to education and jobs.

Education in the pre-British period (before 1800)

The effect of globalisation was not found in India before the British period. In connection with the main topic of this chapter, I would like firstly to highlight briefly the education system in India based on the ideology of religions during the pre-British period. This information is important because the policies of the current ruling Bharatiya Janata Party repeat some of the elements of the educational system of pre-British period even today by having introduced the National Educational Policy of 2019.

Three types of education system existed before 1800, and in a number of Indian states some of them continue even today. The first type is the Gurukul pattern of teaching Sanskrit, maths and Vedas of Hinduism only to Brahmin children. This was taking place in temples or in Hindu ashrams. The teachers came from a priestly background trained in Sanskrit and the teachings of the Vedas and rituals. They were regarded as gurus. Children of other castes were not allowed to study in this type of Vedic schools. This discrimination was justified on the basis of the caste system linked to the Hindu religion. Every Indian child was born in their own caste. So their caste cannot be changed. Accordingly, Brahmins come from the head of Brahma (God), and so they are superior; Ksatriyas come from the chest or shoulders of Brahma; Vaisyas come from Brahma's belly; and Sudras come from the feet of Brahma. Everyone else does not belong to the body of Brahma, and they are the outcast called untouchables, or Dalits.

The stratification of society based on the body of Brahma created two problems. The first problem is that people are not equal – some are superior and some are inferior by birth. This resulted in social inequality. The second problem is that people of each caste have a skin colour (*varna*) and a job to do. Their function in society is linked to their caste by birth. A Brahmin is to be the priest. A Sudra cannot become a priest or marry a person from a caste different from his own. Marriages should be arranged within their caste. Kshatriyas are warriors and Vaisyas

form the business community. Sudras were only meant to labour and do the hardest and lowest jobs for the above three caste people. Dalits are supposed to only clean streets and toilets and remove dead animals.

This caste stratification was imposed on India after the invasion of the Aryans, and it was turned into a religious ideology by the Brahmins to maintain the hegemony of the Brahmin community – it is this community that saw itself at the top of the social structure, whilst everyone else was supposed to be subservient to them. It is interesting to note that the body of Brahma promotes the hegemony of the Brahmin caste, thus upholding the inequality of people. In contrast, the Body of Christ, narrated in the Bible, promotes equality of all parts of the body and their importance. The Christian theology of Body of Christ, which will be discussed below, is a challenge to the caste system of the body of Brahma in Hinduism.

The second type of education system aimed to provide some education in elementary maths, commerce and business for the sons of the business community in different schools in villages and towns. These schools also instructed students in religion (Desai 2000):

> [*W*]omen, the lower caste and agriculturists, hardly received any education. Thus, education among the Hindus, in pre-British India, was extremely restricted and very poor in content for everyone, except the Brahmins. The Brahmin enjoyed the monopoly of all higher education. (p. 127)

The third type of education system was offered through Madrasa for children of the Islamic community. Because of the democratic character of Islam, any children belonging to Islam can study in this school. Religious instruction was an inseparable part of education in Madrasa. The medium of instruction was Arabic, an alien language in India which prevented many Muslim children from going to this school. Because the education was offered to Hindus in Sanskrit and to Muslims in Arabic, which were alien to the languages of Indian people, many children in pre-British India could not get any education.

In addition to the problem of language, the caste system also prevented many children from being admitted into schools. Desai (2000) noted:

> [*N*]either individuality nor a rationalist outlook could develop among the pupils in these schools in pre-British India. The education imparted was to make the pupils staunch Hindus or Muslims, uncritical subscribers to their respective religions and social structures sanctioned by those religions. (p. 128)

Thousands of children in villages and towns were deprived of literacy during the pre-British period. Because education happened in temples, ashrams and Madrasas scattered all over the country, there were no exact statistics available on schools or the number of students in these institutions and their caste or economic status during the pre-British period in India.

Today, many Hindu fundamentalists are willing to go back to the situation of pre-British period as they want to implement the teachings of Vedas on maintaining the caste system of inequality amongst children and to keep thousands of children belonging to Sudra and Dalit communities away from education whilst making them do the jobs assigned to their caste. Based on their Hindu religious teachings, they oppose secularism and humanism – the ideas of promoting human rights and developing the potential of every child.

Education in British India (1800–1947)

The breakthrough to change the education system in pre-British India came up because of the rule of the British. There are views that colonialism, which began in 16th century, represents the first phase of globalisation (Oommen 1994:16–22). One type of colonialism, as we can see in the case of the Mughal (or Mogul) Empire rule in India, is when the colonisers settle in the colonies and become part of the country. Another type of colonialism is when the colonisers bring the wealth of the colonies into these

countries, thus using the colonies as the market for products whilst increasing the wealth of their own nations. The British colonisers controlled the land of India but never settled to become part of the people of the nation. The British colonial rule spread over to many regions from 1800 to 1947 and brought about the greater political and administrative unification of India that could never have been achieved before: 'it established a uniform system which penetrated the country's remotest areas and created a single administrative entity' (Chandra, Mukherjee & Mukherjee 2002:17).

When the British came to India, they found numerous languages and dialects of local peoples. They found it difficult to communicate with the locals and to properly organise all their administration and the trade. One of the major reforms they had to do is in the field of education by introducing English to be taught and learnt by all peoples in India. I am not going to discuss it but will only mention that the British reform in education was carried out in different phases from 1800 to 1947; some researchers, for example, Aggarwal (2003:2–9), provided more information whilst pointing to 15 different phases of educational reform of the British between 1800 and 1947 and quoting all the committees and commissions that were involved and resolutions that were adopted (Aggarwal 2003:7–9). Lord Macaulay, the law member of the Governor-General's Executive Council of Britain, was the key person in bringing changes by issuing his famous Minute of 1835. He advocated for education of the upper classes to raise Indian staff members in the British administration. He believed in the theory of 'downward filtration' by which these educated Indians were supposed to teach English and Western culture to other people on the grassroots level. Lord Macaulay also believed that the promotion of an English education can 'bring about a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' (2003:2). The British government was also keen in establishing colleges of higher education; they, however, were meant only for the upper class Indians.

Although the British reform in the area of education brought some good results for the Indian people, it was mainly the upper class that benefited from it, not the children of other castes and classes. English as a foreign language was not very popular in villages and towns. Indian nationalists used the status quo, established by the British, and were trying to oppose English education and Western culture. As a counter-measure, they established schools to educate children in Sanskrit and in the teachings of Hinduism to uphold the Hindu culture (Desai 2000:131).[1] The schools of the nationalists catered for the children of upper castes, too. The colonial rule 'established a uniform system which penetrated the country's remotest areas and created a single administrative entity' (Chandra et al. 2002:17). Although the British reforms in the area of education, land tenure, transport and technology brought some good results for the people of India, the number of students receiving education in primary and secondary schools was only 4.9% of the entire population in 1934–1935 (Desai 2000:141–142).

In this period, it was Christian missionaries who were trying to offer education to all children irrespective of caste and religion. Missionaries, churches and Christian families established schools over a period of time and earned a good reputation for quality and discipline. Although the Hindus and the Muslims were imposing restrictions in education on all boys and girls to get basic education, Christian missionaries opened elementary and secondary schools in villages and towns and used local languages as the medium of instruction. Many of these schools taught Christian values. Bishop Caldwell believed that the whole community should benefit from education, particularly the first-generation children of converts. So he promoted schools in the Tamil Nadu region by pursuing two aims: firstly, to increase literacy and contribute to social upliftment

1. Desai mentions some individuals, such as Deshmukh, Tilak, Gokhale and Malaviya, and also organisations, such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and the Aligarh Movement, which established educational institutions criticising the secular nature of English education and the culture of the British.

and, secondly, to evangelise children to become Christian. His idea of education, however, was inclusive: he wanted to educate children belonging to any religion and caste. For example:'[i]n Tinnevelly District in 1856 there were 317 schools (mostly what we would call village schools) with 7802 scholars, of which 5116 were Christians and 2686 were Hindus' (Ingleby 2000:210). In addition to schools, Christian missionaries established orphanages and rehabilitation homes for abandoned women. The educational policy of the missionaries contributed to the education of thousands of children and increased literacy in many villages and towns in India.

Education during the Congress period in India (1947–1990s)

All nations that lived under colonial rule would usually go through social, political and economic upheavals after getting independence from the ruler. India has had a long history of invasions from outside and of control by different rulers. Most of the Mughal emperors ruled some regions of India. The British colonial rule, however, went on for more than 150 years on most Indian territories from north to south and east to west. Mahatma Gandhi and other freedom fighters were demanding that the British cease their rule in India and declare independence for Indian people. The vision of an independent India to be governed by the people was promoted by the ideology of 'Hind Swaraj' (meaning 'Indian home rule'), developed by M.K. Gandhi (Gandhi 1938:26–28). Democracy and secularism for the pluralistic context of India became the political ideology of the nation. Sarvodaya ['welfare for all'] is the economic ideology of independent India. Mahatma Gandhi, who was leading the freedom movement, spoke and wrote extensively about the mission of building India after independence (Gandhi 1941:1–29). The National Congress Party supported the ideology of the freedom movement and was working on the creation of the new Indian constitution that was supposed to ensure a fast development of the country and provide good education to all children.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi period

Long before India got independence in 1947, there were schools and colleges established by the British government, Hindus, Muslims and Christian missionaries. The number of educational institutions was recorded, and one of the records up to 1937 lists 15 universities with 9697 students, 13 056 secondary schools with 2 287 872 students, 192 244 primary schools with 10 224 288 students and 5647 special schools with 259 269 students (Desai 2000:140). Nevertheless, the above statistics does not show the classification of students by caste and religion. Most beneficiaries of education were children of the upper caste, except in Christian mission schools, up to the time when the Indian National Congress adopted policies on providing education for all children. The Congress Party aimed to organise reforms in the education system and to develop education for all children irrespective of caste and creed, thus contributing to turning India into a democratic and secular country. Article 45 of the Constitution of India, developed after the country got independence, the principle was stated: every child up to the age of 14 years shall receive free education which should be compulsory. Article 45 was further revised and supplemented with Article 21A where the state takes on the obligation to provide early childhood care and education for all children aged 6–14 years. The Congress government took steps to compel parents to send their children to school as their fundamental duty, as stated in Article 51A. In 1968, it created the National Policy on Education which is a significant achievement in promoting education in schools all over the country, with a unified structure of education by introducing the 10+2+3 system (students study 10 plus 2 years before moving to colleges for another 3 years of study) and making science and mathematics compulsory teaching subjects. The National Policy on Education of 1968 obliged the local governments to expand education to all villages and to encourage all girls and boys to study in schools nearby. The 1968 Policy was

revised in 1986 with the aim of improving the quality and equality of education for all children.

The central government of India tried to unify the education system in all Indian states. Firstly, each state government had to takes steps to open schools in different panchayats (an administrative body of several nearby villages), and town municipalities were to do the same in their regions. Some panchayats established elementary schools, and municipalities established secondary and high schools. Secondly, these schools were to be funded by the government, especially as this concerned teachers' salaries and the development of infrastructure. The first 5-year-plan of 1950–1955 allocated 56% of the total funds to elementary education, which was significant to make education an important component of the budget (Bajpai 2006:329–330). This funding was extended to schools established by Hindus, Muslims and Christians and other communities practising different religions. The government-aided schools were supervised by the Department of Education that regularly sent education inspectors to check the quality and quantity of education and the way the funds were used by each school.

Poverty is the main reason for illiteracy in India, as recognised by the government. To fight poverty and to ensure some food for the students, the Congress government of Tamil Nadu introduced the initiative 'Mid-day meals' by which all children were given lunches during the school day; many children came from poor families in villages where food was scant. Children did not pay for their education either, up to high school. Through this initiative parents were encouraged to send their children to school, rather than sending them to labour on agricultural farms and in building construction.

Indira Gandhi became India's prime minister in 1966, but some events in the early 1970s and the difficult economic years of this period made her convince the then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare a state of emergency under the Constitution, something many people did not like and at the 1977 elections the

Congress party was defeated and the Janata Party took power. Its rule was short, and yet the party did what it could to make the life of the poor easier; for example, Janata Party introduced the 'Food for work' programme which helped the poor villagers to get work in agriculture, and the infrastructure of schools in rural areas was improved as well (Chandra et al. 2002:263). The party, however, could not resolve India's numerous difficulties, and Indira Ghandi once again returned to the prime ministerial position in 1980. Even though she continued the policy of education that was promoted by the Congress party, much of her attention was on solving the problems of her party and the tensions in politics. The main achievement of the Congress period of Nehru and Indira Gandhi was making education the 'responsibility of the government, both central and states'.

Rajiv Gandhi period

Rajiv Gandhi's rule as the prime minister of India between 1985 and 1989 seems to have contributed to increase the globalisation process in the country, in my view. He made the economy much more liberal and allowed direct foreign investments whilst welcoming multinational companies that challenged the sluggish economic growth and contributed to increased development of the country. He also made education a state responsibility and was keen to see a rapid progress in education. Firstly, his developmental programme for India gave importance to 'Technology missions', relating to industry, agriculture, commerce and education (Chandra et al. 2002:275–277). Secondly, Rajiv Gandhi wanted to increase the literacy of all people by extending television facilities to rural areas and broadcasting literacy programmes for both adults and children. Thirdly, in 1986 he revised the 1968 National Policy on Education and promoted 'Operation blackboard' scheme of 1987 to provide basic amenities to schools and to organise distance education (Bajpai 2006:348–349). His 'Navodaya Vidyalayas Programme' aimed to improve the quality of education to children of poor families.

Fourthly, he took effort to link education to his computerisation programme that tried to provide computers to schools to help them in teaching and learning.

Rajiv Gandhi also introduced the policy of privatisation of education by allowing many rich families to start schools as a commercial endeavour. Most of them were meant to be self-financed institutions without receiving any funding from the government but they had to follow the curriculum of the government and conduct examinations prescribed by the government if they wanted to be recognised as educational institutions by the government. Using this opportunity, many caste organisations started schools for their own community with the name of their caste and provided scholarships to children of their caste. Rajiv's policy made education costly for the children of poor families to study in good schools owned by the rich, which ultimately prevented them from gaining quality education, especially in the area of hi-tech studies. This resulted in making schools class and caste oriented: children from rich families go to high-quality schools, middle-class children go to government or Christian schools, where they pay small fees, and poor children go to village panchayat schools that are not properly managed and often do not provide quality education, although they offer free education. It seemed to many at that time that there was every opportunity for children of all castes and economic status to come together in school and study and work with each other for peace and harmony, but then it became clear that such hopes had become less feasible.

Education during Bharatiya Janata Party period (after 1990s)

The split in the Janata Party led to the formation of Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980. Since then, this party has become the main opponent party to the National Congress, and it ruled India under different leaders, such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee and

Lal Krishna Advani, in alliance with political parties under the name of the National Democratic Alliance. Advani promoted the policy of liberalisation of economy and privatisation of education. In 2014, Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata party became the prime minister and formed the government. He is in favour of globalisation without compromising on his nationalist agenda based on Hindutva and backed by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation. Modi believes in privatisation, and he visited several countries where talks were held about foreign investments in India and ways in which trade can be promoted.

Back in 2014 and 2015, it seemed to many that Modi and his party did not have a clear economic policy to balance capitalism and socialism. Its leaders aimed to enforce the ideology of Hindutva ('One nation, one language, one religion') and were not keen to uphold the democratic and secular foundations, as enshrined in the Constitution of India, because they believe in the possibility of making India a Hindu nation. Much of their attention was to build the Ram temple in Ayodhya and change the school curriculum to include myths of Hinduism that were presented as events in history.

In 2019, the National Democratic Alliance government under the leadership of Narendra Modi introduced a draft of the National Education Policy. The document seems to be controversial as it was opposed by many politicians, educationalists, sociologists and social workers of NGOs. I am not going to discuss it in detail but will try to show how the education policy can affect education of children in India.

Firstly, the Modi government merged the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ['education for all'] that implements the *Right to Education Act of 2009* with Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan – a scheme of the Indian government for the development of secondary education in public schools throughout the country. This affected the funding of school education for children in school years 1–8, as all funds were shared between the elementary, secondary and high school and teacher training institutions. The spending of funds was lower than 4% of the total

budget in 2015–2016, and it was further reduced to 3.5% in 2018–2019 (Chowdhury 2019:4–5). Reducing funds for schools resulted in a smaller number of appointed teachers. Some researchers pointed that more than 1 050 000 government schools have been functioning with only one teacher (Singh 2018:4).

Secondly, the Modi government intervened in education of children by introducing government examinations in school year 3 (at 7–8 years of age), school year 5 (10–11 years of age) and school year 8 (14 years of age) with the aim of improving the quality of education. Criticism was raised as many education specialists pointed that the new rules would not improve education quality but create psychological fear in children and lead to children dropping out of schools. Other critics noted that children of lower caste, who attend village schools, would fail in the exams and will leave the school, thus not being able to climb the social ladder and be equal to children of the upper caste. Parents, as well as students themselves oppose the new system.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, based on the ideology of Hindutva and the compelling force from Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, some state governments ruled by Bharatiya Janata Party have already changed school curricula to incorporate Hindu stories and puranas as history and communal teachings (Singh 2018:1, 5).

Fourthly, the Modi government was increasingly promoting the privatisation of education initiated by Rajiv Gandhi but with a difference in Modi's rule: Gandhi encouraged rich people to establish new schools with high-quality education where new technology was to be used to prepare India to meet the challenges of the new millennium, whereas Modi, by privatising education, aimed to cut down funds for schools in public government schools that were given to private owners who managed them as a commercial enterprise.

Fifthly, the Modi government aimed to further cut down the education budget by closing down schools, run by local

governments, if the number of students becomes less than a certain figure. Accordingly, the Madhya Pradesh government planned to close down 15 000 schools, and the Maharastra government planned to close down 13 905 schools (Singh 2018:4). The National Democratic Alliance government closed down many hostels for children of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe where they stayed whilst attending school. It also cut down scholarships for deprived students. This makes many children, particularly those living in villages and mountains, to go to school in another distant town or to drop out of school altogether.

Sixthly, the lack of funds and the lack of a sufficient number of teachers at schools resulted in the deterioration in the standards of education. Critics noted that in some Indian states, students in their fifth year of education are not able to read and understand lessons that are meant for students in their second year (Aniyan 2019:1).

Education of children in schools is a service; it is not a profitable business with more children at a school bringing in more money and vice versa – less children at school would bring in less money and the education managers in such areas may want to close them as unprofitable. Many protests against the 2019 National Education Policy were organised in 2019 and early 2020, especially as people suspected that the National Democratic Alliance government may want to change some of the national curriculum content; many fear that the alliance is once again going to promote the ideology of Hindutva – this time indirectly – through a renewed education policy which would ultimately have grave consequences in the lives of millions of children, teachers, parents and educational institutions (Santhraguru 2019:117).

Challenges for mission

As mentioned in the previous section, in public meetings and seminars a number of Indian leaders expressed their opinion that the education system under the National Democratic Alliance government seems to be moving towards promoting commu-

nalism and is strengthening the caste system in Indian society. Instead of promoting equality amongst people and unity of the nation by upholding diverse culture, caste and languages, schools could now become less tolerant places for children and young people as they are taught according to the new curriculum. In my view, not only should the parents and school managers, or owners, challenge the current plans and policies of the central government, but also those of local governments of many Indian states. Churches and Christian social service agencies could do much to help children and young people in India live to their full and God-given potential in an environment of peace and mutual understanding and tolerance. Even in a globalised world, the church's mission in India could lead to changed lives and an improved situation of everyone, but especially the 'little ones'. In this respect, many recommendations could be made, and here I mention only five missionary principles that churches in India could apply if they want to remain the light and salt of the world.

Promoting the rights and equality of children

Socio-economic analyses often point to the fact that through liberalisation of the economy and the privatisation of industries, businesses and education, people may not only benefit and enjoy a better life, but the rich could become richer and the poor poorer; this is especially true in India. The *Act of Right to Education*, brought by the National Congress in compliance with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), particularly its articles 28, 29 and 30, demanded that every people and nation can enjoy a free and compulsory primary and elementary education irrespective of caste, colour and creed (Bajpai 2006:358). We can see in today's India that although the ruling National Democratic Alliance recognises the validity of these documents, they are, in fact, not given importance in their clauses, whilst the party is not seriously thinking of implementing them to achieve complete literacy amongst children. It is the missional task of all churches in India to put pressure on the

government to implement rules and regulations for the rights of all children to get free education up to 18 years of age and to increase its financial support to schools.

Another important step in connection with the rights and equality of children is for churches to challenge the Hindutva ideology with its firm belief in the caste system. As we have pointed out above, this caste system is believed to be based on the body of Brahma, but many social reformers, such as Dr B.R. Ambedkar, E.V. Ramasamy Periyaar, C.N. Annadurai and others, have spoken and written extensively about the myth of the caste system. They were critical of many teachings in Hinduism. The theological basis for Christians to oppose the caste system and inequality of people is the Body of Christ in which all parts of the body are equal and of equal importance (cf. 1 Cor 12:12–26). Based on this, Paul preached against discrimination whilst affirming that Jews, Greeks, masters, slaves, male and female are equal (Gl 3:28). The creation theology also makes it clear that both male and female were created in the image of God (Gn 1:26–27). We should proclaim this theology and practise it in our churches and institutions (Jeyaraj 2009:4–5).

Raising voices against privatisation of education

In a pluralistic country like India where Christians are in the minority, churches and Christian schools need to maintain a good relationship with the central and state governments. Christians, however, need to be bold and raise their voices against the privatisation of education in elementary, secondary and high school levels. Educating not only children but also adults is the responsibility of the government. Allowing private schools in the country and their management by private owners made education for children costly. Teachers have to work more hours than required if they want to produce results that may bring about more students admissions and a larger income from fees. Commercialisation of education has made teachers and staff in

schools dependent on the will of the owners with smaller wages, not on par with the pay scale established by the government. Christian mission schools managed by churches or mission boards should be careful not to allow privatisation of their schools by leaving them in the hands of private families.

Establishing new schools for children in unreached areas

The need to reach the unreached areas with the gospel and to provide social services for the people living there, is still valid. Although the government is closing down schools for children in villages, mountains and areas where teachers are not willing or able to go and teach, Christian missions should take it up as a challenge and establish schools for the children of Adivasis and Dalits in remote interior areas. This has been done by some national missionary organisations in the states of Bihar, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh where hundreds of children were empowered and taught to read and write, thus developing necessary skills for a job. A survey of the schools that have been closed down by the government should be organised, and this would help churches to establish Christian mission schools of elementary and secondary education in those areas. If this is not done, then the children in unreached areas will remain illiterate, to be taken advantage of by landlords and building contractors to obtain cheap labour and slaves.

Maintaining education quality and providing scholarship for poor children

For quite a time now there have been talks that Christian mission schools do not provide a high quality of education and that school facilities are not properly maintained. This could have been true in previous decades but not today: all schools that are managed by churches and Christian families are well maintained and students in these schools often get the highest scores in

education competitions and exams. This does not mean that churches should be satisfied with what has been achieved; in the competitive context of globalisation, churches and missions should try to allocate more funds to schools and provide scholarships for children of poor families whilst supporting them until they get their 12-year certificates and become competitive on the labour market.

Countering false teachings, communalism and propaganda of the media

Expanding the production and growth of markets is an important characteristic of globalisation, but these go along with the manipulation of the media; there are companies that use it to influence people and especially children and the youth. Programmes, such as 'Blue Whale', are promoted and one wonders why young people who watch it commit suicide. Other media promote pornography that is watched by children as young as 8 or 10 years old, and some of the young people get addicted and are not able to break its influence. Thousands of children and youths watch Indian films on their laptops or mobile phones, whilst movies persistently occupy their minds, preventing them from focusing on their studies.

In addition to media entertainment, there is a tremendous growth in the use of media by different religions that propagate their teachings and practices. Some religious programmes are worth watching as they teach true values and living an ethical life, but there are also those that promote superstition, astrology, *vasthu shastra* and rituals that, as they falsely claim, could bring miracles and blessings in the lives of the disciples. Some TV and Internet channels present religious myths as history, including those about the caste system. Some programmes refer to myths as science and confuse the children. Schools should help children to counter these wrong teachings and influences by teaching them discernment. The curriculum and various teaching methods should encourage students to develop a critical and analytical

mindset so that they are able to critically evaluate the influence of the media. Good schools should uphold the rights and equality of people and should oppose and remove false teachings from education and from the minds of students, for example, communalism as the wrong practice of construction of religious or ethnic identity as opposed to that of other communities, which results in frequent incidents of strife between them.

In its teaching mission, the church can pass along to children and young people the skills to control hi-tech gadgets and any new technology so that they are used for good purposes and in accordance with God's provision for people. The school curriculum for Christian education with its values was written long time ago, and today it needs revision so that it can better respond to the various challenges globalisation brings to people; some of its influences are good and useful, but others are negative and harmful, and the churches are the right bodies to make the difference and properly teach children and young people about globalisation and its impact on people's lives.

Conclusion

Without pretending to have thoroughly described what globalisation is, this chapter adopted the view of some researchers that the beginnings of colonialism in the 16th century represent the first steps towards creating international (i.e. 'between-nations') relations with the aim of an ever more intensive exchange of products, markets, businesses, finances, cultural traits, idealogical and religious views, et cetera. In the brief account of Indian history in this work, I noted that education in the country has adopted various forms and content, and that with the intensification of the globalisation processes in the world and, more specifically, in India, the possibilities for children and young people to get a proper education have changed considerably. In the past, education was a privilege for the rich, and after India got its independence in 1947, education was meant for everyone; today, however, in the 21st century, India again struggles to provide a

good education for everyone and, in my view, the challenges the country faces are because of some negative consequences of globalisation.

I tried to show that some processes of globalisation, by which not only businesses, markets and finances, but also cultures acquire the same characteristics in countries that are globally connected, including India, have affected education as well. When the rich become richer and the poor poorer, and when privatisation of education and health services has led to increased expenses, whereby the poor are struggling to get even basic support in schools and at medical institutions, then globalisation seems to have become an obstacle to a better quality education for all children and young people leading to prosperity in India. If we add some nationalistic policies to this, it would become clearer why the church and its mission agencies need to remember their calling and reorganise their work so that those in need get a better chance in life, especially children, young people and their struggling families.

Through the power of prayer and the strength of the Holy Spirit, many social changes were brought about by Christians all over the world, as this was recorded in the history of missions. Christian leaders and congregations need to have a proper theological foundation and be trained to have practical skills to guide children, families and institutions in the modern globalised world. We as Christians are called to fight the powers and principalities of this world (cf. Eph 6:12) by treasuring the vision of God and building up the people of the earth's nations, and the Indian nation more specifically.

Chapter 12

A practical theological narration of the spiritual narratives of adolescent orphaned boys in South Africa in the construction of a spiritual self

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Abstract

This chapter investigates and reflects on the religious and spiritual aspects inherent in the narratives of a sample of adolescent male orphans affected by HIV, poverty and fatherlessness, and more specifically, on aspects that reflect their understanding and experiences of the presence of God within their specific situations. This research is based on the epistemological foundations of a post-foundational notion of practical theology. As such this chapter elaborates specifically on the fifth movement of a post-foundational notion of practical theology – a reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation (Müller 2005:82). Furthermore, the chapter critically reflects on these narratives in light of globalisation and the relevant form of globalism that affect the occurrence and nature of spirituality, and the development of a spiritual identity and a spiritual self. It concludes with the significance of constructing a spiritual self, in referring to the psychosocial and spiritual benefits, as experienced in a contextualised South Africa, and how such an understanding of the youth's spiritual identity and self-development assists the church in the *missio Dei*.

Keywords: Orphan; Adolescent; Spiritual self; Spiritual identity; Pentecostalism.

Introduction

In this chapter, the spiritual narratives of a sample of adolescent male orphans affected by HIV, poverty and fatherlessness are discussed and brought into dialogue with the forms of globalism of Christianity, Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism. The chapter aims to discuss the specifics of the spiritual nuances inherent in the lived theologies of South African boys, who developed their narratives in the local and concrete contexts of personal trauma. This discussion shows how global discourses

influence individual lived experiences, on the one hand, and unique individual interpretations of these experiences, on the other hand, to develop specific lived theologies that inevitably contribute to the co-creation of 'religion' and 'spirituality', spiritual identity and spiritual self, in a specific, local and concrete context. It concludes with the significance of constructing a spiritual self, in referring to the psychosocial and spiritual benefits, as experienced in a contextualised, albeit globalised, South Africa. This understanding, in turn, informs the church and its mission of the concrete context of its members.

The objective of another more extensive study[1] was to journey with these boys in transforming their narratives into alternative narratives which empower them to live their lives in a preferred and satisfying manner and, therefore, not being controlled by previously problem-saturated stories. This objective is undergirded by the epistemological foundations of a post-foundational notion of practical theology and the premises of a narrative approach to research and therapy. The discussion around the spiritual nuances inherent in the narratives was elicited during the fifth movement of a post-foundational notion of practical theology: a reflection on the religious and spiritual aspects, especially on God's presence as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation (Müller 2005:82).

Epistemological foundations

This study employed a qualitative research design, with the case study as a point of departure. Non-probability sampling methods were used in selecting suitable 'co-researchers', according to a specific set sampling criteria. The three boys whose narratives are discussed in this chapter were between the ages of 16 and 18 years at the time of the research. They were double orphans, which meant in their cases that their mothers were deceased

1. See Loubser (2010).

because of possible HIV infection[2] and related AIDS symptoms. One of the boys' father was killed during a gun-fighting incident, whereas the other two boys' fathers abandoned them before the death of their mothers. All three boys were residents of the Safe House, *Precious Pearls*, in Pretoria, Gauteng province, and participated in the psychosocial activities of the faith-based and NGO, PEN, also in Pretoria, Gauteng.

The concept of 'co-researchers' is inherently a narrative approach to research and therapy concept. It refers to the role of the participants as equals, implying that the researcher takes a stance of a non-expert. The co-researchers agree to journey with the researcher along the roads of their lives in order to come to a better understanding of the meaning of their narratives.

During this journey, many possibilities exist for both the researcher and the co-researchers to make discoveries. This concept also refers to the acknowledgement that perspectives on life narratives are inherently subjective, and the subsequent awareness that no absolute truths regarding personal or social narratives exist. Reality is, therefore, socially constructed and layered with multiple meanings. When the researcher journeys with the co-researchers, a collaboration of perspectives takes place. During this collaborative process, multiple meanings are discovered, which are, in turn, used to obtain a vivid understanding of the phenomenon under study. The result is the enrichment of not only the investigation but also the co-researchers' understanding of their life narratives.

Post-foundationalism proposes the investigation of a phenomenon through the lenses of various disciplines, without

2. The term 'possible' is stated here because it is illegal for a hospital to state the cause of death as HIV infection or related AIDS symptoms. The cause of death is always because of a secondary infection. The only data that indicate that the mother was infected are those of the NGO, which became the guardians for these children. This NGO (PEN) takes care of HIV and AIDS orphans specifically. This implies that they are orphaned because of the fact that at least one parent was infected with HIV, and developed AIDS symptoms, and not that the child is HIV-positive.

one discipline claiming absolute expert knowledge regarding the subject matter under study. From this proposal, post-foundationalism accepts an attitude of inclusion, non-judgement and humbleness in acknowledging that dialogue with various disciplines can contribute to an in-depth, holistic understanding of reality and related rationalities (Van Huyssteen 1999:33). It asserts that all knowledge is embedded in specific local contexts, rooted in discourses of tradition, which unavoidably affect how knowledge is created, distributed and maintained. At the heart of knowledge creation, distribution and maintenance lies the fight for power. These power-plays affect not only the way a phenomenon is understood but also the actual behaviour and exhibition of the phenomenon itself.

The contribution of this chapter to the larger theme of the book is specifically looking at the spiritual nuances inherent in the distinct narratives of believers and people often placed on the margins of society. These narratives are deconstructed in the framework of globalisation, and by investigating discourses created and disseminated by relevant form of globalism and other sociocultural influences in coming to a better understanding of how these two discourses influence the development of spiritual identity and spiritual self. In coming to a better understanding of these developments, the church is equipped to assist youth through their spiritual development so that they can participate in the *missio Dei*.

The development of a narrative identity

Human beings tend to have a great desire to make their consciousness known, and therefore to narrate their experiences and thoughts through the telling of stories. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984:29ff.), a postmodern theorist, proposed that the narrative and scientific knowledge constitute two different categories of discourse, which both have legitimate functions. He noted, however, that the narrative as discourse uniquely affords

knowledge that cannot be communicated in any other way but through the telling of a narrative. In turn, this legitimises its scientific validity as a resource centre for knowledge freed from the boundaries (and power) of absolute universality (Van Huyssteen 1999:34). Postmodernism, therefore, proposes the narrative as a platform on which a multitude of realities and knowledge can collaborate in creating in-depth, holistic understandings in the construction of an alternative epistemology. The model of narrative enables a plethora of possibilities regarding the construction of a narrative, and in itself creates an opportunity for identity creation and transformation. As a result, every person creates a narrative identity, which serves as a resource centre utilised to understand both past and possible future events and experiences (Demasure & Müller 2006:412).

Cochran (2007:7) referred to the double role of the creator of a narrative, visible through the use of the concepts 'I' and 'me', in which case 'I' refers to the role of the narrator and 'me' refers to the role of an actor. In telling a story, a person becomes the narrator who interprets the present by taking from the past. To live in the present, however, asks for the role of an actor – an actor does something or has something done to him or her. Meaning is entailed in the process of narration, when narration can either enrich or impoverish the actions of the actor.

Narrative identity is not restricted to an individual and more than often reflects the identity of a social group to which the person belongs. It is, therefore, assumed that the construction of identity is not an individual process, even in the case of constructing an individual identity. Instead, the perspectives of several significant (and even insignificant) figures co-construct the narrative identity on a micro- and macro-level. In reflecting the operation of such a social process, Demasure and Müller (2006:412) proposed that a '… dialectic movement between texts with their symbols and metaphors and the active contribution of people' exists in the construction of both a self and a social narrative. The significance of this co-construction activity is that on a subliminal level the narrative of the self reflects something

about the grand narrative of the society which contains within itself the power to restrict (or expand) the possibilities available to the individual in the construction of future narratives. These possibilities inherent in the told and untold future narratives create a snowballing effect in which constructed determinism restricts the freedom of both the individual and the society or, conversely, liberates both the individual and society in determining the nature and degree of the future narratives.

Perceptions of reality are organised and maintained through constructed narratives and related metaphors. These narratives in themselves become guiding metaphors through which we understand ourselves and our role in this world (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 2008:365). In its very essence, metaphors contain the notion of a re-description of reality, which function on an emotive level and include stated values and aesthetics (Demasure & Müller 2006:412).

Globalisms as grand narratives

Similarly, the 'grand narrative' of globalisation – at least on a concealed level – influences the consciousness of the individual and inevitably informs the creation of a self-narrative. This chapter focuses on Christianity as an enduring globalism (Myers 2017:185), and its influence on the creation of narratives regarding the co-researchers' understanding and view of God, and in the development of their spiritual selves in the contemporary – and often challenging – world they live in.

As such, globalism is understood as an '[i]deology, culture, and religion, believed by a sufficiently large number of people and institutions, [which] can influence social change' (Myers 2017:185). It forms part of people's generally accepted assumptions about the manner in which the world operates, and in which it is ordered, or 'ought to be ordered' (Myers 2017:58). Globalisation as a process, rather than as an instance or event, is shaped by the ideologies entailed within these forms of globalism (Myers 2017:56).

Although Christianity is one of the world's most enduring forms of globalism – a radical monotheism, which requires a global perspective (Stackhouse 2007:xxv) – it is nevertheless an uncommon globalism. Unlike other forms of globalism (e.g. economic globalisation), it does not create or require cultural uniformity (Myers 2017:185–186). Myers (2017:189) stated that '… the Christian gospel has been able to translate itself across cultural and geographic boundaries without diluting the universality of its message'.

Nevertheless, spreading of the gospel to other cultures and traditions has caused an inevitable change in our understanding of ourselves, the understanding of the specific context we find ourselves in and the manner in which we interpret both the joys and sufferings we have to endure. It is, therefore, crucial to understand how Christianity as a form of globalism has effected change in people's understanding of themselves and God, even though it does not require conversion in culture and even though Christianity has never had a permanent cultural centre (Myers 2017:189). Crucial to this understanding is to take note of religious movements that have shown significant growth during the 20th century. Roy (2010) emphasised that most of these movements have a few things in common: they are mostly militant, and both morally and socially conservative (Myers 2017:190). Along with the growth in fundamentalist religious movements, over 60% of all Christians today live in Africa, Asia and Latin America, which underscores the fact that 'Christianity is now a non-Western religion'. Africa and Asia then become the 'fastest-growing regions in the Christian world', with Pentecostalism, Charismatism and Evangelism being the 'fastest-growing movements within global Christianity' (Myers 2017:191–192). A fascinating phenomenon during this time is the rapid growth and globalisation of Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism even though it did not set out to globalise through the mechanisms of mission and migration (Myers 2017):

> [*A*]ccounting for almost one-third of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement today, neo-Pentecostalism is a self-generating phenomenon

> that emerged as the grassroots in the Global South. It is deeply contextual and is generally nondenominational or postdenominational. (p. 193)

The fact that the theology inherent in Pentecostalism is highly contextual, is of value in understanding its globalisation power and influence on believers as globalism, and its immense power in influencing the spiritual narratives on an individual level.

Pentecostalism and neo-Pentecostalism as increasing globalism in Africa

After 1980, many people in most African countries experienced a sharp decline in their socio-economic standard of living. Subsequently, the levels of poverty increased drastically (ed. Freeman 2012a:5; Riddell 1992): '[i]n sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, per capita incomes dropped by 21 per cent in real terms between 1981 and 1989' (Manji & O'Coill 2002:567). As a result, the price of essential products rose steeply, personal incomes dropped, many people lost their jobs and struggled to get employment, and essential services plummeted in these countries (Ferguson 2006; ed. Freeman 2012:5; Walton & Raggin 1990). It was under these conditions that Pentecostal and Neo-charismatic churches and related NGOs provided some relief on both material and spiritual levels and the membership of these churches increased greatly (ed. Freeman 2012:6).

Gifford (ed. 1995; 1998) reiterated the fact that Christianity is not new to Africa, but through the rising of new Pentecostal and charismatic churches, it has offered a form of religion that is not foreign to African sensibilities, especially in the acknowledgement of the existence of evil forces (ed. Freeman 2012:12). Zalanga (2010:43) equated Pentecostal movements in Africa with modernity, excluding the West's emphasis on rationality, although Kalu (2008) stated that African Pentecostals are:

> [*L*]ess concerned with modernity and globalization and more focused on a renewed relationship with God, intimacy with the

> transcendental, empowerment by the Holy Spirit and protection in the blood of Jesus as the person struggles to eke out a viable life in a hostile environment. (p. 191)

These statements might indicate Africa's focus on empowerment, growth and transformation, evangelised through the movement of Pentecostalism, to re-integrate impoverished and struggling Africans into the global market. Clearly, the emphasis is placed on the contextual experiences of African people, and how religious globalism, such as Christianity in general and Pentecostalism in particular, might address the contemporary challenges experienced in Africa – perhaps even brought about by globalisation. The vehicles for change are a strict moral code required from believers, intending to affect their narrative identity, which in turn informs them of 'who they are and what they can do'. This narrative is similar to the one disseminated in Britain when they needed economic transformation (Myers 2017:193).

Although a branch of Western globalisation, this form of globalism operates in a very different context than that of the current West. A majority of Africans live in a context of poverty and persecution. Combined with a world view much closer to that of the Bible, a comfortability with the supernatural (Myers 2017:194) and the belief that a strict moral code based on fundamental biblical principles can influence the outcome of an event, create a fertile ground for movements such as that of neo-Pentecostalism. As such, neo-Pentecostalism places its focus on just these contextual experiences (Myers 2017; Miller & Yamamori 2007):

> [*T*]he social ministries of these churches have substantial reach. Mercy ministries provide food, clothing and shelter. Emergency services respond to floods, famines, and earthquakes. Educational services include daycare, schools and tuition assistance. Counselling services provide help with addiction, divorce and oppression. Economic development assistance includes microloans; supporting business start-ups, job training, and affordable housing. (pp. 42, 193)

The primary narrative disseminated by this movement is that of human agency. Through the theology of Pentecostalism, African Christians (ed. Freeman 2012):

> [*B*]egin to see themselves as part of God's people, a 'somebody' rather than a 'nobody', a victor, not a victim. Most important of all, they begin to move beyond a passive fatalism and come to realize that they have agency in their lives. (p. 13)

As a result, the grand narrative (globalism) that guides the interpretation of the co-researchers' narratives has changed in its assumptions. Instead of assuming that the spiritual self and view of God can be understood by a Christian framework from the West brought to Africa (specifically referring to Protestantism), the development of the spiritual self is understood to be born from a contextual African Pentecostal Christianity. This type of Christianity better addresses the lived experiences and lived theologies of people who face contemporary challenges in the face of globalisation. For these believers, 'suffering and endurance are the badges of authenticity' (Myers 2017:194) and this will guide the type of leader they choose to follow: how they understand God and God's actions with his children, and also the type of Christian, they should be in this world, to flourish. This globalism, therefore, informs their identity – both their narrative and spiritual identity.

The development of spiritual identity and the spiritual self: A psychosocial perspective (from the West)

The development of religiosity and spirituality is a complex phenomenon, which is predisposed by various psychosocial events and experiences as a child develops into adulthood. As such, the well-known psychosocial development theory of Erikson (1968) indicates that the development of religiosity and spirituality is influenced by several psychosocial factors and that a person's stance towards existential issues develops concurrently with the development of a stable and secure identity during adolescence. One's stance towards existential issues is dependent on one's exposure to, and attitude towards, various sociopolitical issues, prejudice dispositions, cultural conservatism,

cognitive–motivational variables, an intolerance of ambiguity and closed-mindedness (cf. Duriez & Soenens 2006:120).

The lack of research that pertains to spirituality, spiritual development or spiritual identity alike, is noteworthy in light of Erikson's (1968) special interest in spirituality and subsequent exploration of the lives of specific spiritual figures (Erikson 1958, 1969, 1996). Subsequently, Erikson (1962) has found that a healthy identity development pertains to the nurturing of spirituality (cf. Kiesling et al. 2006:1269). Kiesling et al. (2006:1269) defined identity development – and a sense of identity – as (Erikson 1980):

> [*T*]he interaction of individual characteristics and experiences with historically specific societal mores, expectations and opportunities, functioning to provide 'both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others'. (p. 109)

Accordingly, they (Kiesling et al. 2006:1269) defined spiritual identity as '… a persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose and meaning of life'. This notion results in specific behaviour that corresponds to a person's core values.

There are several definitions regarding the nature of spiritual identity, even though research on this topic is scant. Research conducted by Kiesling et al. (2006:1270) emphasise 'the individual construction of a relationship to the sacred and ultimate meaning'. They suggested that a person develops a spiritual identity as a result of the adoption of specific symbolic religious and spiritual content, narrated by the culture and adapted to their context. Therefore, they stated that the 'spiritual self' is made up of both content and structure, where the *content* of the 'spiritual self' is individuated and the *structure* of this 'self' is socially, locally and historically specific (cf. Berger & Luckman 1966; Kiesling et al. 2006:1270; Mead 1934).

Côté and Levine (2002) and Kiesling et al. (2006:1270) concurred that spiritual identity refers to the role-related trait of

the ego identity, which in turn refers to both *role salience* – the identity-specific significance of spirituality – and *role flexibility* – the considered potential for identity transformation. Both role salience and flexibility determine how the structure and content of spiritual identity are altered.

Accordingly, Kiesling et al. (2006:1275) conducted a role-related identity interview (Sorell, Montgomery & Busch-Rossnagel 1997b) with a small sample of respondents,[3] heterogeneous in gender, race and age, but homogenous in their life experiences and notions of spirituality. In their quest to explore the components of the identity that differentiate between structure and content in the development of a spiritual identity, they found that role salience and role structure inherent in spiritual identity, influence the construction of the ego identity. These findings are substantiated by both Erikson's (1980) findings that spirituality and religion are significant for the development of the ego and Josselson's (1996) discovery that in women specifically the ego identity is much dependent on religious ideology.

Another significant finding is that the development of a spiritual identity advanced well into adulthood, possibly because of painful experiences. It is also indicated that some people can find meaning through suffering, a specific characteristic of individuals who revise their spiritual identity to corroborate their personal experiences (Kiesling et al. 2006:1276; Wink & Dillon 2002).

Respondents furthermore reported that their relationships with their god, religious community and with themselves were profoundly affected by their spirituality. They also felt that significant people in their lives played an immense role in providing them with resources to their religious meaning-making resource centre.

3. Their sampling methods limit the generalisability of the findings but are, nevertheless, congruent with similar studies in identity development's sampling techniques.

Next, the respondents asserted that their spiritual identity was constructed and strengthened through the unremitting struggle to increase the existence of their valued self and valuable traits and to decrease the occurrence of their unpleasant traits. The strengthening of their spiritual identity, in turn, affected their motivation to be more involved with spiritual practices and communities.

Fourthly, the respondents reported that continuous nurturing of their spiritual identity was needed, especially in the face of the increasing demands of life (Kiesling et al. 2006:1276). In conclusion, Kiesling et al. (2006:1276) found that similar to the development of other identities, the spiritual identity of especially highly reflective individuals also echoes continuity and change. The continuity and change of their identity, in turn, indicate that people are indeed able to find meaning from experiences of pain and struggle by frequently tapping into their spiritual resources (Park 2005).

The unique contribution of this study is that it gives insight into the subjective experiences of people with their spiritual identity and that it emphasises the importance of spiritual development from birth to adulthood (Ray & McFadden 2001). The findings suggest that the continuous and conscious exploration of one's understanding and experiences of a spiritual self inevitably assists in the development of resilience, meaning-making and positive identity (Kiesling et al. 2006:1276), as can also be seen through the spiritual narratives of the co-researchers discussed in this chapter.

William James, the founder of functional psychology (or pragmatism) and sometimes called the father of American Psychology (Reed 1997:120), was one of the few to link the psychological identity, personality and the self with the spiritual or the soul. His notion of the spiritual self was intended to mean, '[t]he sense of personal agency and experience that lies at the core of human selfhood' (Leary 1990:122). Subsequently, his notion of identity development (1890, 1902, 1910/1968)

incorporates two aspects of the self, respectively, referred to as the 'I' and the 'me'.

Herein James proposes that a person's 'I' functions on the conscious level to objectively create a 'material me', a 'social me' and a 'spiritual me'. The 'I' is also responsible for connecting to these various 'me's', and to 'maintain a sense of continuity of the self across time' (Poll & Smith 2003:130). These various 'me's' are organised around the central 'spiritual self', which is defined as the core – the essence – of a person, or as James (1968:43) himself put it, the 'sanctuary of our life'. The spiritual self is then more advanced as the material and social self, as it is regarded as the 'highest level of self-organisation'. In turn, the 'material me' refers to one's possessions, one's physique and all it entails; as well as those commodities held dear to one. The social self reflects on how one is perceived by, and responded to, other people (Poll & Smith 2003:130).

Leary (1990:108) believed that the social and material dimension of the self, as proposed by James, is not opposed to the spiritual dimension but rather culminates in the spiritual self. Accordingly, Leary (1990:108) said, '... social relations begin and are sustained through material interactions with others, but soon come to involve such non-material factors as love, reputation, fame, and honour'. Of interest here is that James proposed a framework of the self that is 'neither autonomous nor simply a unity of eternal elements' (Leary 1990:109). For James, the self is constructed over a certain period and is highly dependent on its relationship with objects and people. Therefore, he proposed a self that is in essence spiritually advanced, capable of self-organisation, but who, nevertheless, needs interaction with the external world, for its spiritual growth – or its self-consciousness.

With this thesis an understanding of the identity is proposed that not only acknowledges the spiritual – soul – aspects entailed into one's being (whatever one's definition of 'spiritual' might be) but also suggests that all that one is, culminates into one's spiritual being – one's *soul*. James' proposition differs qualitatively

from other identity development models that propose that one's identity is a stable construct, even though it might change on some levels as experience is gained. James, to the contrary, proposed that the 'I' and the various 'me's' are constantly vulnerable to modifications, mutations and even multiplications as the context might ask for. James concluded that the unity of the self and consciousness is not fixed, nor predictable, but rather that 'thought is itself the thinker' (James 1968:379; Leary 1990:111).

Christian spirituality is missional spirituality

The premise of this chapter is built on the assumption that the development of spiritual identity and spiritual self in the Christian believer supports the church in its *missio Dei*. Thus far, it has been asserted that various forms of globalism, which interact with culture and community in a specific local context, assist a person's development of spiritual identity. This spiritual identity – or spiritual self – is fluid and open to modifications as the person interacts within a specific context and gains new experiences, whether positive or negative. In this section, it is argued that an understanding of the development of spiritual identity and spiritual self is of essence for the study of mission and the church because 'spirituality is at the centre of Christian faith and discipleship' (Niemandt 2019:85).

It is argued that to understand the mission of the church and the way it is shaped by its members, one should first and foremost understand the spiritual development and experiences of these individual members. Although Christianity is 'not an individualistic spirituality, but rather a communal spirituality … [I]ndividual disciples belong to churches, and churches represent and reflect the "corporate spirituality of their members"' (Niemandt 2019:87).

Churches are, therefore, only what their members are, what their members' beliefs are and how these members live. According to Niemandt (2019:87), they have spirituality with a missional

character because they have been called and sent by Jesus. They are followers of Jesus; they are disciples.

Similarly, mission 'takes effect in human life through openness to the work of the Spirit'. The drive to be missional starts within the believer because the Spirit speaks to the believer. The Spirit is contained within the believer and moves within the believer – within the believer's identity – or spiritual self. At the same time, the spirituality contained within mission is intentional, and collective, as it is not focused on only the individual believer. It aims to imitate the image of Jesus Christ for the good of God's Kingdom, for the good of God's children (Helland & Hjalmarson 2011:loc. 239 as cited in Niemandt 2019:87).

The spirituality of individual members is then crucial for the life of mission, and therefore the church. Niemandt (2019:87) stated that '[m]issional spirituality is an incarnational spirituality, a spirituality of the everyday'. This statement places emphasis on the fact that the spirituality of every day should be properly understood, as there is 'in a certain sense … no difference between missional spirituality and "normal" spirituality' (Niemandt 2019:87). To be filled with the Spirit is to be incarnated.

An incarnational spirituality and missiology aim to listen to people, to enter their worlds and their specific contexts and to be with them as they journey with the Spirit. An incarnational approach to missional spirituality, therefore, focuses on the presence and the proximity of God in their lives, and their presence and proximity to the world – God's people (cf. Niemandt 2019:34). The mission of the church is, therefore, determining and understanding God's involvement in a particular context (Niemandt 2010:2). The mission of the church is not only to go outwards as a community (an institution) to the world but also to move inwards – to the worlds of their members – in understanding how the Spirit equips individual members to be disciples of Jesus. A key part of the mission of the church is thus understanding how spiritual development takes place in a specific, local and concrete context to understand how theologies are lived (WCC 2013):

> [*P*]recisely because the gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political and religious realities, discernment brings an awareness of the cultural and symbolic lifeworlds of different realities. (p. 72)

Incarnating the realities of individual people will enable the church to more effectively empower members to be missional. Their mission will speak to the lifeworlds of their members and become their members' mission: 'The incarnation is thus a key paradigm for contextualising the church' (Niemandt 2014:41).

A missional-incarnational ecclesiology (Kok & Niemandt 2009) orientates the church to people on the margins and those seen as outsiders of the institution. Such an ecclesiology will inform the church of the pearls of wisdom shared between everyday people (Niemandt 2019:35) to understand how God's mission works in people. It is after all not the church's mission but the *missio Dei*. Niemandt (2012) emphasised that:

> [*M*]ission does not belong to the church, it is not something people do – it is a characteristic of the Triune God. The church is not so much the agent of the mission as the locus of the mission (Newbigin 1989:129 as cited by Niemandt 2019:39). (p. 3)

It is concluded that a missional spirituality is sensitive to 'power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities' (WCC 2013:59). Missional spirituality finds people in their local contexts and engages with people to understand their lived theologies and incarnated spirituality and to respect their symbolic worlds (cf. WCC 2013:72). As a result, the church can learn from them and about the way the Spirit moves and works. These people are God's mission, and they become the church. The church and its people are then invited to participate in the *missio Dei*.

In light of this argument, the next section will deconstruct the narratives of the co-researchers with a specific focus on spiritual nuances and influence from various forms of globalism and global discourses. These narratives, although limited to three co-researchers, provide a glimpse of the lifeworlds of ordinary people, and specifically of people on the margins and the way they participate on an individual level in the *missio Dei*.

Spiritual narratives of the co-researchers

Three narratives were chosen for discussion in this chapter. The co-researchers chose pseudo-names with specific metaphoric relevance to them to enrich the personal meaning inherent in these narratives. These narratives are discussed in light of the development of spiritual identity and a spiritual self, as it is influenced by the forms of globalism of Christianity in general and Pentecostalism in particular, and as a result, individual narratives will not be narrated separately.

Image of God

The narratives of the co-researchers referred most often to the following names or images that they have of God: Saviour, Shepherd, Father, Judge and King. The focus of this chapter is on the use of these images in the creation of a spiritual identity, or spiritual self, and not on the theological meaning behind these names and images of God[4]. McFague (1982:135–136), in writing about the Models of God in religious language, stated that the models, images and/or names attributed to God have a twofold function: firstly, it helps believers to re-describe God, thereby developing a better understanding of God and who God is, and secondly, it alters believers' understanding of these images. As a result, these images become a model of the ways believers relate to God and, subsequently, the way they live their lives.

From the narratives of the co-researchers, it is clear that the names they attribute to God profoundly affect the manner in which they relate to God: they feel loved and protected by the Father God, they are guided and comforted by God the Shepherd and they seek out this guidance in times of need; they have respect and fear for the judgement of God (the Ultimate Judge), and some reserve this judgement to the prerogative of God, as

4. For a full discussion concerning the co-researchers' use of various names and images for God, refer to my article: Meyer (2016).

King God is the Ruler of the world, who ultimately decides on the fate of believers.

Through naming God, the co-researchers also state their *relation* to God. Through this relationship, their spiritual identity is shaped. They become sons of the Father God, who share in the inheritance of the Kingdom to come, of their King God. As children of God the Judge, they understand that God is righteous and will discipline as God sees fit. As sheep of the Great Shepherd, they always have a herd to which they belong – if they get lost, God the Shepherd will come looking for them.

The development of this specific spiritual identity did not happen in isolation from global religious developments and the societies that they come from. Much of the language they use to refer to God is the result of both formal and informal religious pedagogical instruction (e.g. Christianity as globalism). Their religious education intersects with their traditional African beliefs and culture (cf. Meyer 2016:9) and their experiences of being an African Christian in this contemporary world with its challenges of poverty, of rejection by a father, of being in this world as a black young man and so forth. It is noteworthy that in the African culture and religion, God is seen as the Creator, who is not necessarily involved in the day-to-day actions of his people (cf. Meyer 2016:4). Therefore, the co-researchers' emphasis on relational qualities supports the effect of the globalism of Christianity and Pentecostalism in stressing the development and maintenance of a close relationship with God as a prerequisite in receiving blessings from God.

Christian morality

Many of the co-researchers indicated that a Christian life should reflect a good lifestyle so that followers must change their behaviour to adhere to the moral codes of the religion and resist the temptation to follow 'the path less travelled' constantly. Accordingly, Molimi (participant, male, 2010) stated that a good Christian is someone who resists temptations against extramarital

activities, alcohol and drug use and abuse and any activity wherein God is not placed first and trusted beyond all doubt. Molimi believes that faith is not only to believe in God but also to live a life in example and relationship with God. Here the principles of Pentecostal Christianity as a form of globalism are clear.

Pentecostal and charismatic theologies place much emphasis on a change in behaviour through a change in mindset, as do all forms of Christianity. Through their focus on changes in subjectivity, Pentecostal churches are extremely effective in motivating a total renovation of the person in thought and behaviour (Barbalet 2008:75; ed. Freeman 2012:14; Martin 1990:287; Maxwell 1998:352). Freeman (ed. 2012:14) emphasised that this entails in most cases a 'break with the past' – with old sinful behaviour and practices – thereby moving beyond 'a passive fatalism', taking control of their lives and specifically their futures (Maxwell 2005).

Here the spiritual self is transformed into the embodiment of Christian values and purity to empower a person to be transformed from a victim to a survivor, from a 'nobody' to a 'somebody'. Not only is identity found in the image of God, and the Salvation provided through Christ, but this identity also provides the believer with a form of self-efficacy that in itself contains the promise of sanctification.

This is exactly what sets Pentecostalism apart from Protestant theologies: their focus on moral purity and ethical behaviour (ed. Freeman 2012:15), which emphasises the route 'to achieve God's plan for you: to become rich and abundant right here on earth' (ed. Freeman 2012:23). In contrast, Protestantism focuses on hard work and wise expenditure as an austere manner of living. Accordingly, these foci assist in the resistance of temptations (ed. Freeman 2012:23) and place a new emphasis on the life hereafter.

In turn, this is a reflection of the globalism of capitalism, which in Africa is a means to overcome poverty and to live a life of abundance, as supported by Freeman's (ed. 2012) research:

> [*R*]estrictions on the consumption of alcohol and tobacco and injunctions against extramarital relationships and visits to prostitutes have a huge impact on spending patterns amongst Pentecostals compared with others. There is a marked limitation of 'wasteful consumption' and a reorientation towards investment and accumulation. (p. 23)

Temptations and guilt

A frequent theme from the narratives of the co-researchers is that of overcoming temptations and the subsequent guilt that follows when one fails to do so. As such, Molimi placed great emphasis on the fact that the secular community did not cultivate a morally right life, and more than often seduces men into a life of abusing alcohol, revelry and sexual pleasures. Accordingly, these temptations are responsible for men's reluctance to take on their responsibilities as fathers and husbands and stand in direct opposition to Christian life and calling.

At first glance, this seems typical of the pietistic theology of Protestant Christianity. However, upon a closer investigation it would seem that the subsequent guilt and anguish that is experienced might not be as a result of fear for the life hereafter, but rather of a failing of receiving God's blessings when one leads a life of purity. In support of this statement, Kgotoso (participant, male, 2010) stated that his failure to resist temptation did not necessarily affect his relationship with God (as God is forgiving and gracious), whilst Molimi reiterated his belief that good and bad behaviours are both returned to the actor: 'what goes around comes back around'. Rather, the focus is here on the 'outcome' of the behaviour (to resist or not resist) than on the effect it has one one's relationship with God. At no point do the co-researchers refer to 'sin' as a conscious activity by the sinner, but rather that sin is the consequence of temptation (*being* tempted).

It would seem that the co-researchers' reference to temptations might be in line with their belief that the devil is the creator of temptation (a popular belief by Pentecostal theology). Therefore,

a Christian man's responsibility is to fight and resist these obstacles (referred to as the practice of spiritual healing and deliverance). This theology coincides with the African religious paradigm in which spirits or sorcerers are the cause of bad fortune, and these should be fought with rituals, or, in the Christian African religious context, with the healing 'blood' of Jesus, thereby combining African traditional religion with Christian elements (ed. Freeman 2012:15). In this context, the believer is once again empowered through their faith in Christ to fight and overcome temptation. The spiritual self is then transformed into the idea of being a 'sinner' who is accountable for his sin and should therefore repent: to being a victor through Christ despite temptations. As a result, the Pentecostal paradigm which 'incorporates a holistic ontology' (ed. Freeman 2012:25) speaks directly about traditional African ontologies where the 'evil spirits are fought', and good behaviour is rewarded by the 'ancestors' with sustenance or a life of abundance.

The role of the Christian man in his family

Christianity has added to the spiritual identity of the co-researchers, a specific gender identity related to their sense of masculinity and the maintenance of this notion in their families. Several of the co-researchers often referred to their role as the spiritual leaders of their families, and their responsibility to protect their families when need be. Manqoba (the Conqueror) stated irrevocably that the husband and father should be the spiritual leader of his family. In the same manner that God cares, loves, guides, disciplines and protects his children, it is men's responsibility to be responsible fathers and do the same.

Similarly, Kgotoso (the PeaceKeeper) stated that *Godly men protect their families* because God is the Protector. This mandate is directed at Christian husbands and fathers, addressing the loyalty of men. According to these co-researchers, this responsibility is awarded to men alone. It is noteworthy that this belief had developed even though none of the co-researchers

were raised in the presence of a father figure, or another influential male person, and that their mothers (when still alive) were mostly responsible for their religious education.

Two influential forms of globalism are referred to here: the globalism of Christianity as a religion of patriarchy and the globalism of gender identity and gender-role responsibilities (e.g. gender orientation). Moolman (2013:95) defined masculinity as '… the multiple, shifting, fluid practices, and performances of gendered bodies and identities' (Mama 1995:n.p.). She suggested that men's sense of masculinity is often organised in opposition to their notions of femininity and might not always be attached to their male body (Amadiume 1987). African masculinity takes on some unique characteristics of their own. In the history of colonialism, African men's sense of masculinity was largely constructed around both the African form of femininity and Western masculinity. In this context, masculinity is hegemonic – legitimising certain men's status over and above those of women, and men who do not conform to the prescribed criteria (Morrell 1998:608).

A patriarchal Christianity brought from the West, entangled with the power of the man in African traditional societies, has resulted in a paradoxical sense of hegemonic masculinity. Pentecostal Christianity, as such, encourages the moral behaviour of men in keeping them away from engaging in immoral and destructive behaviour on the one hand (keeping men in their homes where they 'belong'), but encouraging the control of the submissive woman on the other hand (ed. Freeman 2012:15; Maxwell 1998; Van Dijk 2002). The result is a Christian African form of hegemonic masculinity that informs the spiritual identity and self of the co-researchers, and the subsequent manner in which they relate towards women in general. It would, therefore, seem that the co-researchers' reference to the man as the spiritual leader of the family is a direct result of the Christian pedagogy, which instructs women to be submissive to their husbands, thereby legitimising a man's power over a woman. Leadership is, therefore, the right of the Christian man – who is created in the

image of God – legitimised by God himself. God is seen in this context as a man and the head of the Church. It is a title awarded to a man based on his gender, and not a title earned.

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal emphasis on a domesticated man places the imperative of becoming a Godly man, which often results in changes in family structure, and therefore also in society.

Protection, responsibility and accountability are themes not mutually exclusive to the notion of a Christian man (Meyer 2017):

> [*P*]rotection, responsibility and accountability were themes commonly mentioned as part of the discourse on manhood and masculinity. Protection seems to be embodied through the conceptualisation of manhood; protection is both an entitlement and a bestowment, by virtue of being a man: bestowment – indicating that a man honours someone or something with his protection, but at the same time an entitlement – *because* he is a man he protects that which he owns – means that anything and anyone can be owned. For example, the participants in this study stated that *because* the man is the 'head' of the family, *because* he is physically endowed to be able to protect and *because* he respects that which is 'his', he is responsible for providing his protection. (p. 6)

Similarly, the idea of 'respect' is closely related to a man's motivation in providing protection and being responsible for his family – much in the same way that God's protection is awarded to a faithful and moral believer. One of the co-researchers stated that 'a man should be responsible for tending to the needs of his family *if* the members of this family show him respect' (Meyer 2017:6). In support of this research, Morrel (2006:16) stated that '[e]ven today, young men understand that being initiated into manhood means that certain rights are conferred upon them, which results in them being respected'. Hunter (2006:101) traced this narrative to the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, where 'fathers are remembered as authoritarian figures and named "baba", who – from their status as fathers and husbands – demanded respect' (Meyer 2017:6).

The narrative of a good man – even a good Christian man – seems to correlate positively with the narrative of male status and power and, therefore, inevitably with his economic status in a community. Wealth, in a postcolonial African context where poverty endangers the livelihood of most people, grants a man access to power, women and respect from peers (cf. Meyer 2017: 6). It is here again that the theologies of Neo-charismatic churches have such a significant influence on the spiritual identity of believers. African Pentecostals proclaim the narrative that (ed. Freeman 2012):

> [*W*]hat God wants for Africa … is a continent blessed with health, wealth and abundance, where people work hard, pray hard and live upright moral lives. What the devil wants for Africa, however, is underdevelopment, poverty and suffering. (p. 3)

The male spiritual identity is empowered with the notions that a moral, ethical and pure lifestyle (in the embodiment of a good husband and father) will be awarded abundance, creating a sense of agency within them that many have lost in the face of dire poverty, and in a context filled with a sense of hopelessness. Again the victim is transformed into a victor (ed. Freeman 2012).

Is Christianity a religion for women?

Some of the co-researchers have hinted at the theme of being Christian, without appearing too religious or emotional in the public arena – in other words, the danger of appearing too feminine in one's religious orientation. In support of this, Manqoba reiterates the experience of having non-religious friends, who regard the expression of one's faith as sentimental and unmanly.

This theme relates closely to the theme addressed above, in that a sense of masculinity is intensely interwoven with one's spiritual identity and spiritual self. Gender orientation cannot be removed from one's religious orientation, and one's religious being should also be expressed in a specific manner in the public arena, to sustain a specific (gender/power) status amongst one's

peers. Here reference is made to the intersectionality of identity – gender, religion and social status intersect in a specific manner in creating a holistic and relatively consistent sense of self.

European-American research supports the phenomenon that men are less participatory during religious activities and at gatherings, that they tend to be less devout to their beliefs and that they separate religious beliefs from their daily activities. Where men are intensely involved in religious institutions and activities (in the West), they tend to occupy a position of power (Meyer 2017:7; Thompson & Remmes 2002:521). It is unclear if the same phenomenon exists in Africa, but the statements of the co-researchers support the idea that religion can easily be seen as a 'feminine' phenomenon.

In an article (Meyer 2017:7), I argued that the expression of one's religious orientation is highly dependent on the public discourses regarding what constitutes an acceptable behaviour and expression in one's community, culture and specific peer group. Religious expression becomes a social construct legitimised on a social platform. In light of the Pentecostal wave over Africa (globalism), it seems that the social expression of religiosity is firstly undergirded by the legitimisation of the male person as a spiritual-leader-of-his-home narrative, and secondly motivated by the prosperity narrative. Both of these discourses aim at not only a change in behaviour but also a change in identity.

This spiritual identity is then being fed by the theologies of Pentecostalism, in opposition to 'worldly' or secular discourses concerning what they regard as feminine or masculine. The believer is constructed as the Victor, who should fight the temptations of the world. Temptations are regarded as false narratives generated by the 'devil'.

This notion is supported by Molimi, who states that he does not hesitate to express his beliefs even though they might be regarded as feminine. Molimi is perhaps empowered to do so

because he separates worldly values and temptations from what is expected of a follower of Christ. This dichotomy allows him to 'fight' a certain evil, as the 'evil' is not contained within him.

Christianity as a conditional relational religion and the issue of predeterminism

It has been seen through the narratives of the co-researchers that much emphasis is put on God's need to be in a relationship with God's children. In one way or the other, most of the co-researchers direct their behaviour of gratitude towards God in maintaining a good relationship with God. However, it would also seem that this relationship is not seen as unconditional – there are certain expectations from both sides in return for the maintenance of a good relationship. As such, Manqoba states that moral behaviour is directed at showing gratitude towards God, and in return for giving gratitude through good moral behaviour, God offers protection and guidance. The theme of 'faith-testing' is also applicable to the discussion of this narrative. Many of the co-researchers have referred to bad fortune as a means from God to test one's faith.

Two distinct but contemporarily, interwoven discourses are touched upon in this narrative. The first one is that of traditional African religion and the second one is the Pentecostal movement, as it speaks about the experiences of the traditional African.

It has been documented that African traditional religions tend to maintain a good relationship with the ancestors to (1) avoid punishment from the ancestors, and (2) receive blessings from the ancestors and spirits in return for their 'offerings' in whatever form these may be. Blessings are generally understood as good health, wealth and fertility. Here traditional African religion expresses the interwovenness of the spiritual and the material facets and the way these two world views collide in ensuring worldly success (ed. Freeman 2012:21).

As a consequence, Pentecostal and Neo-charismatic move ments – with their emphasis on prosperity – re-legitimise the specific experiences of the traditional African 'in a way that other Christian denominations could not' (ed. Freeman 2012:21). Whilst the Calvinists were fiercely transcendent (in their rationality), the Pentecostals were staggeringly immanent (with their emotionality). For Pentecostals, God is very much involved in one's destiny here on earth and has the power to either save one from tragedy or allow tragedy to come one's way (ed. Freeman 2012:22). In return for these favours, God should be appeased.

These are then the basic tenets of the prosperity gospel, fiercely proclaimed by Pentecostal and Neo-charismatic movements alike. This form of prosperity gospel, which was eagerly accepted in the 1980s in Africa, promises an 'economically advantageous redemption' (Bialecki 2008:1149) through the salvation of Jesus, who 'wants his people to enjoy abundance and prosperity (Akoko 2007; Marshall 1991; Maxwell 1998; Meyer 1998; Ukah 2005, Van Dijk 2005)' (ed. Freeman 2012:6). Salvation is not something that takes place in the hereafter, but can already be experienced in this world (ed. Freeman 2012):

> [*C*]hurches that preach the prosperity gospel encourage their members to pray to Jesus for wealth and abundance, and also to do their part in the bargain, by engaging in business and working hard. Sermons are often blatantly materialistic. (p. 16)

Similarly, Freeman (ed. 2012:16) postulated that through the belief of '[g]ive, and you shall receive' (cf. Lk 6:38), members are enthused to commit to regular tithing to their church. Similarly, 'tithing' through good, moral and ethical behaviour is a means to achieve God's divine plan for God's committed children, which is 'to become rich and abundant right here on earth' (ed. Freeman 2012:23). To enjoy material wealth and success is regarded as an indication that God is pleased with the life that one is leading and therefore blesses one accordingly. These blessings are not only limited to material wealth but also include good health, fertility and a lack of misfortune in any form. The fact is that blessings are

viewed as something to be enjoyed here on earth, as opposed to Calvinist thinking, where one is blessed with the life hereafter, irrespective of the sufferings one might endure on earth. Similarly, the experience of bad fortune as a 'test of faith' might also be interpreted as another means of receiving blessings from God, or as a justification for God to withhold blessings.

These beliefs stand in stark contrast to some reference of the co-researchers to the concept of *predeterminism*. Manqoba states in several different ways that God has a divine plan for his life and that everything happens for a reason and will work out for the best. Similar to Molimi, Manqoba believes that God took his mother away to test his faith. To 'pass' this test, Manqoba should remain trustful and faithful to God.

Predeterminism refers to the notion that past, present and future events are determined by God in advance. This idea *excludes* the notion of control by the believer, whereas the above statements and beliefs regarding the reception of blessings, based on conditions met by the believer, in essence, *include* a degree of control of the believer to influence the decisions and actions of God. Ideas of faith-testing are also included here because they are based on the premise that if the believer passes the test, he or she will receive a reward in this life or the life hereafter.

Two forms of Christian globalism are infused in the narratives of the co-researchers. These are the Protestant doctrine of predeterminism and the Pentecostal belief of predeterminism.

Protestants believe that (ed. Freeman 2012):

> [*G*]od had pre-chosen the elect who would go to heaven, and that it was impossible to know or influence His decision. Unable to deal with the anxiety that such a doctrine promoted, many Calvinist Protestants came to see success in this-worldly affairs as a sign of God's grace in their lives, and thus a hint that their future lay in heaven. (p. 18)

African Pentecostals – reformulating their understanding of predeterminism in the gospel of prosperity (ed. Freeman 2012; Pype 2009) – postulate that God wants Africa to be:

> [*A*] continent blessed with health, wealth and abundance, where people work hard, pray hard and live upright moral lives. What the devil wants for Africa, however, is underdevelopment, poverty and suffering. And thus, *along with hard work*, development requires a 'war against the demons'. (pp. 3–5; [*author's added emphasis*])

The first premise (Protestant) assumes that believers cannot influence God's actions (an emphasis on grace), but that there might be signs in this life that you are destined for eternal life. In contrast, the latter premise (Pentecostal) encourages believers to play an active role in ensuring success in this life (e.g. through the blessing of God) by fighting, together with God, against the 'devil'.

The primary effect on identity formation is a fusion of the spiritual with the material. Here one's spiritual identity and the related spiritual self are not split into the 'living in' two different worlds – often a consequence of secularism. The spiritual self incorporates all worldly experiences, desires and needs into the spiritual identity, which frames these experiences according to personal beliefs, values and moral codes – thereby creating meaning and purpose for living in this life. Ultimately, all spiritual experiences are embodied and create an embodied lived religion, which in turn motivates an altering of thoughts and subsequent behaviour for the good of the believer.

The seeming paradox between relation (and receiving blessings) as based on a condition and the predeterminism of God is successfully integrated into the spiritual identity of the co-researchers. On the one hand, the notion of good fortune based on certain conditions seems to empower believers to actively engage in the improvement of their spiritual selves, whilst also actively fighting against the evils of the world, thereby 'deserving' the blessings they received. This empowers them from victims to victors. At the same time, the seemingly contrasting notions of predeterminism liberate believers from being totally in control of their futures and reduce anxiety related to 'failing to fight and win the battle', leaving room for God's grace and paving the way for salvation, irrespective of our shortcomings.

Conclusion

The development of the spiritual self and its significance

This study has attempted to use some of the literature on various forms of globalism and their influence on the development of spiritual narratives, spiritual identities and the spiritual self, in the specific contexts of the co-researchers. The development of spiritual identity is dependent on many contextual factors and contributions. Some of these contributions are part of globalism, which reached the unconscious minds of Africans, whereas others have been adapted to fit the context and needs of African believers. Yet other contributions were born on the fertile grounds of Africa.

It is concluded that Christianity is one of the few forms of globalism 'that both demands and legitimises radical behaviour change, including the restructuring of families, communities and social relations' (ed. Freeman 2012:15). Christianity has aided in the construction and reconstruction of the spiritual self so as to adapt to the changes as experienced in contemporary Africa continuously. Adaptation, in turn, has assisted in addressing the need of the individuals to make sense of the world they live in, and God's actions in this world, and to participate more effectively in the *missio Dei* on an individual level.

This study, therefore, emphasises that the construction of spiritual identity and related spiritual self (as deduced from the various constructed spiritual narratives) contains many benefits for the individual believer and the community in which the believer operates.

As such, it has been found that the development and maintenance of a spiritual identity have some mental health benefits, specifically in protecting the psyche against trauma and repairing it in the case of psychological trauma. This strength is derived from the power of spiritual identity – much like a personal identity – in increasing a person's resilience and ability to

transform (Poll & Smith 2003:129; Richards & Bergin 1997). Scholars agree that these health-promoting and restoring benefits are visible through the lifespan of an individual. During adolescence, it might protect a person from melancholy, as it promotes optimism and better self-esteem. During late adulthood, the elderly is equipped through a resilient spiritual identity to cope with age-related physical and psychological changes, and to 'maintain a sense of continuity in their lives'. If Erikson's (1950) identity development model is considered, it seems that an individual will be able to cope more effectively with each life task, provided that he or she has developed a healthy and successful identity (Poll & Smith 2003:129). Deduced from Erikson's (1962) statement that a healthy identity development is dependent on the nurturing of one's spirituality, it can be stated that the development of a *spiritual self* might contribute to the successful coping with each life task (cf. Kiesling et al. 2006:1269). In effect, if an individual is empowered to cope more effectively with each life task, to gain more satisfaction from life and relationships, then the spiritual self is strengthened. An imperative to move from oneself to the world to extend God's love and grace and to participate in the mission of God is generated. This is missional spirituality in action.

It has also been found that the primary vehicle for the construction of a spiritual self, specifically in the South African context, is the fusion of dominant discourses inherent in the various forms of globalism of Protestantism, neo-Pentecostalism and some African traditional religious nuances. These frameworks interact with other dominant discourses around race, gender and culture, which may or may not be a product of the West in producing the spiritual identities of the co-researchers in particular, and believers in general. As practical theologians, it is clear that we cannot ignore global discourses around religion, race, gender and culture – as these influence specific and unique contextual experiences – in our attempts to accompany young people on their journey of self-discovery (or soul-discovery). A missional spirituality and incarnational missiology should take

seriously the imperatives of the church to assist young people on their spiritual journey. Only by meeting young people in their local contexts and by understanding the development of their spiritual identity and spiritual self can one help them to effectively become part of the mission of the church because they would want to participate in the *missio Dei*. The Spirit who moves in them will move them to the outskirts of the world.

Chapter 13

The necessity of intergenerational dialogue on social justice within the South African church

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Abstract

The recent (2015–2017) protests by university students in South Africa have ignited conversations about social justice that have perhaps been lying dormant for many years since the 1994 democratic elections. Local congregations have engaged in various activities, which created space for dialogue with these

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youths in an effort to figure out how the church in South Africa could respond in a theologically appropriate ways. One of the key issues emerging from such reflections has been the gap created by the older generations' voices in passing along their experiences of injustice during their fight against the apartheid regime. The role of churches during that period in history is integral to this succession. This chapter argues that it is imperative that the church in South Africa engages in intergenerational dialogue around faith and social justice if we claim to be an authentic and prophetic voice focused on passing on the faith to future generations.

Keywords: Intergenerational; Higher education; Social justice; South Africa; Faith formation; Apartheid; Student protests.

Introduction

A conceptual understanding of the youth culture not only focuses on the characteristics and identity of young people of a particular age but also sees the youth culture as a way of life, which is built through social processes such as family, the labour market, school and other cultural environments (Chifeche 2018:89). Understanding what young people think and do is fundamental to understand the relationship between structure and agency, social patterns and individual action because how they experience these is most often a mirror of the society and world in which they live. The youth are constantly making statements of one form or another and these statements take on different shapes under different historical conditions. This leads to a situation where the youth sometimes are perceived as an enigma at home, in the church and in the broader community. Youth culture across the world has placed emphasis on institutional questioning, public accountability and the need for direction and honest communication between people. A social crisis in which a great majority of the youth and their families now have difficulty in accessing good education, land and housing, food, security, medical care, drinking water and other social economic benefits

because the vested interests of a small class of global elite has pervaded the culture of our time (Mawuko-Yevugah & Ugor 2015:7). Sadly, the youth (students) claim that the broader academic community is still indifferent to their plight despite the stakes being higher for younger people in Africa than anywhere else in the world (Mawuko-Yevugah & Ugor 2015:10).

The recent #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements in South Africa during 2015–2017 have highlighted many inconsistencies within the South African justice system, with specific relevance to higher education. The #FeesMustFall movement was initiated in October 2015 after the #Rhodes MustFall (call for end to colonialism), #TransformWits (affordability of fees and accommodation for poor students), Open Stellenbosch (remove Afrikaans as the medium of tuition) and the #OutSourcingMustFall (stop outsourcing university workers) movements (Swartz 2016:xviii). These protests highlighted many economic issues that have not yet been transformed since the political freedom in 1994. They also highlighted the pain and wounds of many South Africans who are not students but whose lives were exemplified by the call leading to these students' protests. Thousands of university students took to the streets in protest, calling for equal and free access to tertiary education for all. By all, students highlighted the realities of many youths from poorer and rural communities in South Africa who cannot afford to study at university and who also struggle with many academic and social adjustments whilst studying. Reflecting on the African youth and global resistance to neoliberalism through exploring the dialectics between cosmopolitan and identity politics, Abembia Ayelazuno (cited in Jurgens 2018:38–40) confirmed that the agency of the South African youth is clearly visible in the struggles waged by the Shack Dwellers Movement, Abahlali base Mjondolo and many other protests by the poor. Unfortunately, they remind us that race still divides its citizens and that class consciousness still dominates race consciousness, making it problematic to forge solidarity between black and white youths. Quite a few

Christian students were key leaders in these movements. It seems that political engagement of Christian students is not new. This chapter reflects on the historical legacy of South African theologians, ministers and churches[1] who were involved in student protest movements since the early days of apartheid.

Seibel and Nel (2010:1) argued that the 'relevance of the church's mission and message must be rediscovered and re-appropriated in cultural forms that speak to the members of each new generation', and that the socialisation 'and experience offered to the members of each rising generation must connect with their cultural reality'. This chapter argues that faith communities 'should be willing to empower each growing generation with the freedom to make their distinctive mark upon the shape of the prevailing tradition' (Seibel & Nel 2010:n.p.) of their time. Reflecting on the role of prophetic liturgy towards the transformation of unjust socio-economic systems from a Latin American liberation theology perspective, Junker (2014) noted that one of the core challenges the postmodern church faces is that of having prophetic awareness of socio-economic injustice, whilst at the same time having to preserve that community's historical–cultural identity, its religious values and its spirituality. This is because, as a prophetic voice, the church is a counter-cultural voice that speaks God's Word to the weak, the oppressed, the marginalised and the helpless whilst also trying to mediate God's desire for goodness, life and beauty. He added that through prophetic liturgy, churches have unique opportunities for people to have the space to actively participate in the spiritual and concrete world. The variety of languages present in the liturgical experience, such as music, gesture, icons and words, can facilitate (construct) growth in Christian life, as well as influence the way people live in the world. For this to be missional, the prophetic faith community must take very seriously the

1. The terms 'church' and 'faith communities' will be used interchangeably throughout this chapter. I refer to them as the same entity and used the terms differently for emphasis at various points.

sources and character of its liturgical celebrations, recognising that liturgy embraces religious–political–cultural–social–economic realities. Junker argued that a prophetic Christian community should pursue eagerly the need to read reality, evaluate its effects and then act intentionally to be a transformative community: transforming and continually being transformed, as a visible sign of symbolic exchange.

Christian students on various South African university campuses viewed their churches to be these prophetic voices. Some availed their buildings as safe meeting spaces, others provided food and mediation at police stations and a few mentioned the plight of these students in worship services. As a means of grace and with a sense of missional purpose, faith communities better understand their socio-economic system and can position themselves to act critically and prophetically, seeking the transformation of these systems and proclaiming justice for all (Junker 2014). This enables a prophetic response to the circumstances of daily life in which liturgical acts gain meaning when they become signs of life and gestures of love. This immersion into a liturgical world drives worshippers to rediscover religion as a sign of a daily personal and communal encounter with God and with their neighbours. This chapter seeks to remind faith communities in South Africa about this prophetic voice and calls on them to pass this on to their youths, especially those at universities and colleges.[2] It is assumed that this legacy of passing on will empower Christian youth to better understand their context and also the roles they could play by being this prophetic voice on university campuses. In order for this to happen, intergenerational dialogue between young and old needs to be encouraged. It is also assumed that one of the core places in which this could take place is the church.

2. I am mindful of the fact that I make much reference to universities in this chapter. This is not at the exclusion of students at Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. From this point, I refer to university as inclusive of colleges.

I now continue this discussion by contextually positioning the need for such a dialogue by reflecting briefly on the role of the South African church during apartheid and, thereafter, reflecting on the rather volatile higher education in South Africa. I proceed with a biblical call for the intergenerational dialogue that will not only impact the faith formation and academic success of young Christian students but also recall the missional purpose of the church in contexts on injustice.

Contextual positioning of this chapter

South African church during the apartheid era

Writing on the importance of fulfilling the Great Commission, Corrigan and Dutton (cited in Jurgens 2018:79) reminded us that 'the apartheid government needed to tread carefully in dealing with church protests because it claimed to be a "Christian" government'. At the time, churches became important sites of political protests, and the Christian faith played an instrumental role in the transition to democracy. Christian institutions and leaders have long been involved in opposing governance pathologies, such as corruption and the abuse of office, resulting in many of the most significant leaders of the great movements for justice of the 20th century being people of great faith (Jurgens 2018:15). Jurgens (2018:16) argued that the present (student) struggle for justice should be rooted in the mystical and prophetic streams of Christianity. It should also be grounded on our biblical call (Mi 6:8; Dt 6:4; Zch 7:9–10) to not only live justly ourselves but also to act justly on behalf of others. South African faith leaders, such as Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, Allan Boesak and Beyers Naude, and many others, played a significant role in advocating for justice for the poor. This was true of many Christian movements too. Their efforts were shaped by their theology, which in turn was formed by their interpretation of the core

messages of Scripture. Although these pastors and teachers differed in many respects, their common insight was that the biblical interpretation has often been influenced by a social perspective and an economic location. These leaders set an example of integrating their calling as Christians with their passion and engagement in politics and activism. Youth today need living examples like these that they can follow. I will use the example of one of these leaders, Allan Boesak, but I am sure that there are many who might not even have been mentioned in the public domain but who were role models to the youth finding themselves having to discern their role as Christians in politics today.

Dibeela, Lenka-Bula and Vellum (eds. 2014:2) recorded that Allan Boesak believed that the apartheid regime in South Africa was a threat to the integrity of the gospel. He believed that his faith in Jesus Christ, as the Lord enabled him to study theology and engage in discourses around the social realities of the country. This faith reflected hope in an all-present God. Boesak's concern was how his theological convictions were being reflected in his daily life (Smith 2014:34). He started the United Democratic Movement in 1983 as confirmation of his theological justification as to why a nationalist-governed state was disobedient (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:34). It is interesting to note that land was already an issue of injustice in 1983 (Koopman 2014:40). Boesak is still alive (at the time of writing) and is a member of the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa; he has spent 30 years of activism in the church because he believes that the church should seek the restoration of people's human dignity (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:4). He is described as a confident and courageous preacher, which reflects his depth in biblical and theological knowledge (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:5). Boesak has a passion for developing and mentoring young students. His popular belief in a 'spirituality of politics' is positioned within his being a believer and a theologian (Smith 2014:23–24; 32–33). His book, entitled *Running with horses*, mentions the internal struggle he had between the pulpit and public sphere, highlighting that he does not believe in

the dichotomy of a private and spiritual life, rather that God is at work in all of one's life. It was this understanding that enabled him to commit himself to a life of discipleship, which includes engaging in unjust spaces. Christian students today need to understand this principle. Not only will it discourage any dualistic forms of living, but it would also give them confidence in pursuing who they are in Christ.

Boesak's approach to the tension of the Christian calling and social activism to fight against injustice was that he integrated his theology with black consciousness as introduced by Steve Biko. Biko was one of the founders of the Student Christian Organisation (SCO). Since 1896, the SCO has been a mouthpiece for Christ in schools and universities across South Africa. They seek to reach students with the gospel, making disciples, developing student leaders and impacting the academic institutions for the glory of God. This student movement is active on most university campuses today. It would be good if churches could partner in the ministry they are involved in. Biko was young, yet exceptionally mature in insight and wisdom, with a sharp analytical mind. He had a deep commitment to the course of black liberation. He had deep respect for all human beings irrespective of race. Unfortunately, he was killed in prison on 12 September 1977 (Bhiman 2014:49). Nel (2015:548) confirmed that it was the impact of the black consciousness movement in the early 1970s that deeply transformed childhood, educational and church experiences. At the time, the proponents of South African black theology, in particular, pleaded for a Christian presence in the struggle and defined their theological task in dialogue with these youth and student activists and movements. These movements impacted the youth ministry in South Africa as well. Nel (2015:550) added that the activism of younger people impacted not only specific political processes, but also their own moral (spiritual) formation through the remixing of the traditional church culture, and that this combination

strengthened their agency to meaningfully transform society, including theology. This church in partnership with such Christian movements could have a greater impact on the faith formation of university students today.

Allan Boesak's research (which we are privileged to have in documented form) reflects the prophetic stance he took against the 'empire'. This stance has had an impact on current Christian and ecumenical leaders around the world. He is known for his uncompromising stance against all kinds of oppression. As a theology student at university, he had a reputation among theological students subsequently as black theology personified (Maluleke, cited in ed. Hansen 2005:115). 'Boesak and his generation took hard prophetic decisions which also led to their suffering' (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:xv). He was imprisoned for refusing to be silenced and his relentless determination. Our parents and grandparents also most likely suffered at varying levels during the apartheid struggle. It is imperative that these stories are passed along, especially in the black, Indian and coloured communities today. The youth will not be able to qualify and position who they are without understanding their heritage. They also cannot appreciate sacrifices in the past without even being aware of these. American theologian and activist James Cone (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:7) noted that Boesak's work as a theologian went beyond the boundaries of traditional theology. Cone (2014:204) described the black church community as his place of resistance, the place where he took his stand to declare a theological war against white supremacy. He believed that white Christians were well armed with a weighty theological tradition and would fight back fiercely when challenged, but because we have not passed along our own theological traditions, young black Christians are unable to do the same. The above-mentioned research shows that this failure to not only pass along our faith but also to integrate this faith with contextual realities, has resulted in a loss to more than this present generation, making it even harder for parents.

Traditional church responses that led to a lost generation

Traditional church responses in which the Bible was taught and preached without taking the societal context seriously, have hindered the faith formation of many Christians. Seibel and Nel (2010:3–4) noted that because of the 'disconnection between the church's practices and the cultural realities' of young people, it has missed two generations before this present one. Generation X (those born between 1965 and 1980), who are passionate about issues of justices and who want to engage the church on such issues, do not feel as though the church is a place in which they have been afforded the sort of fairness and access that would enable them to make a meaningful contribution. They have faced limits regarding the extent to which they are able to bring their gifts, experiences and insights to bear on the way in which their faith tradition is expressed. This has now led to the present-day youth being parented by people disillusioned by the silence of the church.

Another sad reality of engaging in intergenerational dialogue around social justice is that of generational trauma. Parents may find engaging in discussions about the past traumatic experiences because they have not necessarily engaged with these issues in the same open way as this generation. Writing on the faith formation of black people, Wimberly and Parker (ed. 2002:47) noted that such dialogues cannot happen without black people's critical consciousness of and reflection on the realities of their lives, sources of these realities and the resources to address these realities. They argued that black children should be taught the truth about their history, and this includes churches developing an international curriculum that could help the youth become culturally literate and aware of those who have laboured for our freedom and justice. This becomes challenging when parents (generation X) have not been equipped or given the space to deal with their own pain of the past, let alone integrate it with their faith. Bloom (cited in Jurgens 2018:67–68) argued that our

parents' disillusionment could also be related to the feeling that the integration into the Africanness of local culture still has not happened. One could hear such comments from the older generation during the #FeesMustFall protests. Parents have resolved that injustice, as they know, may not change and have opted out of fighting or advocating any further. Some are so traumatised that any mention of engaging with such matters within church spaces is frowned upon. Cone (2014) argued that black preachers (and by implication preachers who have lived through the struggle) have the unique ability of making the gospel plain to ordinary people, and in this way people are liberated. These preachers took a white gospel designed to enslave them and transformed it into a black-liberating gospel of Jesus (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:205).

Researching the impact of intergenerational influences on the youth who call themselves 'nones', Bengtson et al. (2018:258–275) highlighted the dangers of parents not passing on their faith to their children. They noted an increase in the number of parents and grandparents who have been explicitly socialising their children to a non-religious world view by actively transmitting their own scepticism of the Christian faith. They are usually parents who have been hurt or disillusioned by the church. They also noted a general trend in the USA that the more the youth are educated, the less they find relevance in belonging to a faith community. I have seen a steady incline in the number of university students who are claiming to be atheist. I am currently in the Netherlands for research and have been shocked by the church culture in which it is generally accepted that the youth at the age of 14 years old stop attending church. This is assumed to be because parents do not want to force the faith on their children, allowing them space to make their own decisions. Parents engage in intergenerational dialogue around issues of social justice but do not encourage their children to grow in their faith through such dialogues. Thus far, this chapter has argued for an intergenerational dialogue on social justice that encourages a Christian faith formation process that enables Christian engagement at university. It is my

assumption that many of the above-mentioned parents do not feel equipped to have the relevant conversations about faith with their children, which then implies that the church has not prepared them for these.

With regard to the black, coloured and Indian students, Katie Cannon (cited in eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:6) reminds us that Boesak's works encourage people who suffer domination to get rid of internalised oppression. He would encourage us to identify our moral agency, especially in relation to the power structures that dominate daily life. His courageous criticism encourages us to offer courageous self-criticism and public criticism (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:41). After working through his personal internal struggles, Beyers Naude committed himself to not compromise these personal convictions that he had kept silent for so long (ed. Hansen 2005:16). Parents sharing even their disillusionment with their children would be a start, but this should be grounded in some form of support from the faith community. In reflecting the reality of generational trauma, Swartz (2016:68) warned against the fallacy of linking achievement and intelligence with being white when trying to address the inferiority complex that most mixed-race parents may wrestle with. Many coloured and black people take on the default position of blaming themselves for not working hard enough to change their situations. Boesak was extremely critical of the lack of historical awareness of what had really taken place during the struggle. In his book, *Running with horses* (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014), he heeds a warning against democratic despotism:

> [*W*]e have the vote, but are bereft of our voice, where our speech is not the speech of vibrant diversity but of controlled uniformity, where we are shown a manifesto but not given a vision… (p. 43)

One could argue that this lack of vision is true of church leaders who have inherited colonised ways of doing and being church. Missionaries gave us their gospel and lifestyle but did not empower local leaders to indigenise the work.

New student constituencies reflect a wide spectrum of cultural backgrounds, personal histories and theological commitments and represent diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, age and sexual orientation (ed. Naidoo 2015:71). This calls for an unpacking of the familial and theological tradition that for many students was never contested or even taught prior to engaging with the other at university level. Parents need to engage with their children and the young people in their context about their experiences of being Christian during apartheid. It is often in the real encounter with the other that one comes to question one's own position. This is not simply an exposure of the self to the other, but it also exposes the self to the self (ed. Naidoo 2015:21). Max du Preez (cited in Swartz 2016:xxiv) argued that we need to change the discourse of apartheid from excuse to apartheid as explanation for structurally embedded problems and inequalities, alongside the many unearned privileges that white South Africans still enjoy.

Reflecting briefly on the roles of Christian leaders and churches during apartheid and also on the impact of churches and parents not being living examples of faith to their children, we now turn our attention to some of the issues these students are protesting against and their experiences thereof.

Current issues in higher education impacting students

Universities are global institutions embedded in local contexts that are not homogeneous and unitary, yet they are impacted by disciplinary influences, ideological positions and regimes of teaching and learning (Trowler 2008). Higher education in South Africa has been and continues to be deeply affected by the impact of apartheid policies and the continuing social, educational and economic inequalities (Bozalek & Boughey 2012; Leibowitz et al. 2014). According to Leibowitz et al. (2014), a concern for

equity and social justice should remain a dominant element in discourses about higher education learning and teaching enhancement in South Africa. How we understand the quality of education is inextricably linked to perspectives of social justice. Questions of inclusion, relevance and democracy in education are increasingly contested, most especially in the Global South (eds. Tikly & Barrett 2013). Fraser (2008) defined social justice through the lens of inclusion (giving students access to learning outcomes), relevance (substance of learning outcomes) and participation (processes of monitoring and evaluating these outcomes) within education. Barrett (cited in eds. Tikly & Barrett 2013:3) added that inclusion and relevance cannot be considered without taking into account all relevant stakeholders' participation. In this regard, the role of students is crucial. Fraser (2008:16) argued that overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on par with others as full partners in social interaction. These institutional obstacles include not giving students access to the resources they need to succeed once admitted to university. Fraser (2008) added that recognition through identifying and acknowledging the claims of the historically disadvantaged students is crucial to the above-mentioned processes. Participatory justice includes the rights of individuals and groups to have their voices heard in debates about social justice and injustice and to actively participate in decision-making (Fraser 2008:16). This will in turn allow the redistribution of resources and power within unjust institutional systems. The above is reflective of what students have been protesting for. Even in cases where many have been given access to university, they have not been adequately prepared for what is expected from them intellectually, psychosocially, emotionally and materially. It is argued that the present higher education system is still organised for the elite and does not seriously consider the diverse backgrounds of students and societies from which they come. I will elaborate on specific experiences when discussing the faith formation of these students below.

Call for intergenerational dialogue on social justice in South Africa

> Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
> I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that *we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us*.
> We will not hide them from their children; we will *tell to the coming generation* the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.
> He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which *he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children*; that the *next generation might know them*, the children yet unborn, and rise up and tell them to their children. (Ps 78, ESV; [*author's added emphasis*])

The above-mentioned psalm is one of the many biblical imperatives given to Israel and later to the church. I have italicised those aspects which specify how we do intergenerational ministry and also the benefits thereof. I have the privilege of journeying alongside many churches towards enhancing their youth ministries. One of the core challenges ministers note is that of embracing an intergenerational approach to ministry. Most of the times, this challenge is noted within the context of the youth not coming to church or parents not disciplining their children. This section reminds us that it is our biblical imperative that equips families on how to pass on their faith and also life experiences to their children. This realisation of the decrease in intergenerational relationships and experiences in the faith community results in young people growing up in the church but still feeling isolated from the larger faith community. Parents have relied heavily on the expertise of youth workers to encourage the faith formation of their children and do not share rich stories of their faith with their children. The above-mentioned psalm says that one of the benefits of sharing our faith with different generations is that the next generation might know this faith and why we believe in it. The following section elaborates the impact of this intergenerational dialogue on the faith formation of university students, their success at university and the missional call of faith communities in the context of injustice.

Impact on the faith formation of students

Smith (2017) noted:

> [*T*]hat the church is a liturgical, catechetical and missional community and that faith formation, in Christian community, will happen through the interplay of the generations in worship, teaching/learning and service. (p. 182)

This means that congregations that are committed to the faith formation of its youth need to intentionally cultivate an intergenerational ministry culture. One of the core identifications of being a Christian faith community is its call towards prophetic liturgies. Prophetic liturgy as transforming and engaging Christian praxis, requires the understanding that living liturgical celebration is a communal act in which one both receives and gives. In this instance, ecclesial sacraments provide the ideal means for a person to experience the grace of God for the sake of God's mission in the world (Junker 2014). It is also important for traditions to be reformed and re-interpreted in such a way that each new generation can find answers to the questions of their time and place. This ongoing transmission and reconstruction of values and beliefs will keep traditions alive if they are explained and made relevant to the lives of the present generation. However, the impression is that faith communities have some difficulties in persuading the youth to participate. Maybe this is because they have difficulty in showing young people how tradition can have significant meaning in their daily lives (Chifeche 2018:101).

Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar (cited in Salvatierra 2014:21) referred to holistic mission as the faith formation that integrates spirituality, evangelism and social justice. I have mentioned the dangers of a dualistic approach to the faith formation of the postmodern youth earlier in this chapter. Students on university campuses are bombarded with so many world views, lifestyles and even perceptions of faith. Holistic mission equips them not only to be the salt and light they are called to be, but also to live amongst others knowing who they are and what they believe. Faith communities view themselves as living in relationship with

God and, by extension, in relation to their past and future communities. Van der Merwe (2012:341,343) stated that we (as the present generation) derive our ethics of responsibility for the other (living presently and as future generations) from Christ who took responsibility for us and transcends time to be the one who is always coming and keeps acting on our behalf. Therefore, we do not take responsibility for future generations because of how they can reciprocate, but because Christ took responsibility for us; even so, future generations (like present generations) are not exempt from acting responsibly themselves. A church that prioritises the faith formation of its youth invests in teaching its congregants the importance of intergenerational dialogue according to Smith (2017):

> [*O*]ne generation passes on the wisdom of God to the next in such a way that the next generation, in turn, is able to pass on the wisdom of God to their children. (pp. 184–185)

This cannot happen (Smith 2017):

> [*I*]f those who are older are not equipped and encouraged with a vision for and the opportunity to speak the faith and pass on the faith and share their faith with the next generation. (pp. 184–185)

One of the outcomes of the 2015–2016 student protests was that many faith communities started conversations around the injustices of the apartheid era that are still evident today. Dialogues, debates, conferences and seminars were created for older people to engage in and share their apartheid struggles and faith journey with the youth. Smith (2017:185) cautioned that it is crucial that congregations have people from varying generations present to engage with each other because without these we cannot call for an intergenerational dialogue. This is already a challenge as many mainline churches are older in generation and miss the youth, whereas newer churches seem to be quite young with younger families missing the older generation.

The youth at universities are faced with many changes and choices during this life stage, which requires the voice and

relationship with older generations. Scholars (Harkness 1998; Roberto 2012; Seibel & Nel 2010; Smith 2017) have listed three things that characterise a church that is intentional about being intergenerational:

- The older generation knows how to develop social capital by being present without an agenda. Congregations that increase the ratio of adults to kids, increase the likelihood that university-aged young adults will stay engaged in their church (Powell & Clark 2011:100). Young people bring their friends to worship because they are valued and the worship services engage them. Young people feel at home in these safe and nurturing communities where their participation, energy, concerns, questions and faith life are valued. They turn to adults in the congregation for guidance and care. Young people come to know a living and active God through relationships in the community. They get to know Jesus Christ through the witness of believers and ongoing relationships with persons and communities who know Jesus (Roberto 2012:109). This could include the church's willingness to adjust its organisational structures to being inclusive of collaboration rather than being exclusive (Seibel & Nel 2010:6).
- Intergenerational relationships are built through intentional efforts and programmes but mainly through the usual activities of daily life. This was also encouraged in Deuteronomy 6 when parents were admonished to teach their children about their faith as they sit, walk, talk and do life together. Sharing the strengths (the wisdom, experience and knowledge) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation is crucial to passing on the faith. This could also include adopting a culture of dialogue that encourages members of all generations to try to see things from one another's viewpoint (Seibel & Nel 2010). This is particularly important in the current South African context in which the older people feel that this generation has become too violent and do not understand where they are coming from.

- Older generations need to resist temptations to manage young people. The paradox of the 'presence of the church to its young people is to be fully present but then to also let God do God's work in God's time. The work of the Spirit cannot be reduced to certain practices that will deliver predictable outcomes' (Smith 2017:191). The impact of this interaction can be especially striking as adults allow themselves to learn from children. The traditional school model of Christian education and nurture, which continues to maintain the roles of adult-as-teacher and child-as-learner, needs to be re-examined and a greater co-dependence needs to be encouraged, which allows for mutual teaching and learning (Harkness 1998:439). This is especially true in families where parents have not gone to study at a university (first-generation students) and do not experience the realities of unequal education like their children do. This does not imply that parents do not have experiences of injustices to which they cannot relate with their children. 'A willingness to listen to young adults and a commitment to empower and equip them to contribute actively to leadership and decision making processes' (Seibel & Nel 2010:n.p.) are crucial. It calls for 'granting generation Xers and those who come after them the freedom to influence the shape of the congregation's tradition and even to nurture their own spiritual traditions' (Seibel & Nel 2010).

According to Roberto (2012):

> Age-specific and intergenerational faith formation are not either or choices; they are complementary. Lifelong faith formation balances age-specific and intergenerational programs, activities, and strategies. Throughout the lifecycle, there is a need for age-specific groups (and interest-centred groups) to gather because of age-related differences in development and age-related learning needs. (p. 110)

This in turn means that 'each congregation needs to determine the balance that is appropriate' (Roberto 2012:110). One example of this is the amount of space given to discussions on social justice, although all other ecclesial obligations also call for

attention. Younger people feel that not much space is given to them, whereas the older ones may feel that the church has become too politicised. Faith formation cannot be separated from the identity and moral formation processes the youth are undergoing.

Impact on student success

A study conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in 2013 reflected that (Swartz 2016):

> [*T*]wo-thirds of South Africans across all race groups agreed with the statement, 'Forget Apartheid and move on' – a view held almost equally by Black (63%) and White (69%) South Africans. (p. 21)

Sadly, (Swartz 2016):

> [*T*]he insidious ways in which the past remains present in the lives of Black and Coloured South Africans, who have to all external appearances made it … are reminded of the impact of the past on (their) parents opportunities when (their) white friends talk about their 'family holiday homes' and 'inheritances' which (they do) not have: 'You're just reminded that actually your parents didn't have the opportunities that others have had … We're not equal. Even though it looks equal, we're not'. (p. 80)

A number of black South Africans in Swartz's study told stories about how they had felt demeaned in the past, or had witnessed a parent being dehumanised, and how this continued to be part of their current everyday experience (Swartz 2016:55). Welile and Sizwe, two young university-educated black men, spoke about how they had come to cope with the brutal inheritances of South Africa's apartheid past. They spoke about their anger as they had come to see how the odds have been stacked against them and highlighted the erosion of trust within black communities as competition for scarce resources grows and frequently turns ugly. Both of these men's stories bring into stark relief the relationship between education, class and confidence when faced with racism and the constant struggle to be equally valued, equally human. Their stories illustrate Ramphele's (2009:16)

concept of the persistent wound of racism – that we as South Africans are a wounded people in denial about our wounds and that there has been a 'scarring of the black psyche', the effects of which are 'a socially induced inferiority complex, self-hatred, low self-esteem, jealousy of those seen to be progressing (both Black and White), suppressed aggression and anxiety'. I alluded to this when speaking about why parents find it difficult to engage with their children. In this instance, these are the psychosocial, intellectual, emotional and material effects on a student trying to adapt to this new culture of university.

However, the opposite effect is also true. Mawuko-Yevugah and Ugor (2015:12–14) argued that although neoliberalism imposes untold constraints on young people, it also empowers because it has revealed the imaginativeness and agency of these youths. Through oppression, the youth are creative, rewriting their biographies in a moment of total institutional failure and indifference to their lives. They are 'reconfiguring webs of power and reinventing personhood and agency through their resilience'. These scholars highlight that the dispossessed and marginalised youth all across the African continent are constantly negotiating treacherous terrains in their everyday lives through 'balancing acts'. In his recent book entitled *Born from lament: The theology and politics of hope in Africa*, Katongole (2019) opined that '[i]f you think about hope in terms of optimism – a sunny "Everything's going to be all right" kind of uncontaminated exuberance, you're not going to find it'. Katongole argued that hope lies instead in the patterns of Christ's death and resurrection. Lament, which leads to hope, is not a light and easy transformation of suffering. Lament is work. Lament is that deeper engagement with God when things are not going right. These people (in Africa) never lose their hope in God. They argue and fight and wrestle with God about what is going on, about the need to do something.

The youth engaged in the recent student protests have reminded their elders of the resilience they have gained through the many struggles for justice in this country. Mawuko-Yevugah

and Ugor (2015:16–18) continued by saying that these youths are culture creators defining their own future through the development of new sociabilities as a result of the action of the collective. They remind us of the intellectual power at our disposal today through using new media technologies for social exchange, articulating new discourses that unsettle and censure constituted authority. Between an unfinished childhood and unattained adulthood, these young people draw on hybridisation in crafting new postcolonial texts that not only evade normative categorisations but also elude the stifling authority of the postcolonial state and other conservative forces. This being said, we need to consider our definitions of student success. From the above research, I concur that against most of the odds, many traumatised students succeed by having to daily negotiate which battle they would fight. Some have excelled amazingly academically, others at supporting fellow students, and others still, by coping with these institutionalised spaces. Of course, we hope they all succeed academically but for the moment I ask the church to consider how we may help them get there.

Impact on church as missional community

In his article, 'What hope is there for South Africa? A public theological reflection on the role of the church as a bearer of hope for the future', Forster (2015:4) asked the following question: 'what kind of theology dominates the pulpits, Synods and the conversation of South African church members at present?' He reflected on a presentation by Prof. Nico Koopman at the Faculty of Theology, who remarked that to be Christian is to be involved in protest (Koopman 2014, cited in Forster 2015:5). Forster (2015) surmised that:

> [*W*]e are called to protest, to bear witness, wherever we see God's hope, but also where we see it is absent. This is part of the present work of the church. It involves our worship, our liturgy, our service in society and our presence in the public sphere. (p. 5)

Transforming a faith community requires more than neighbourhood development; it demands courageous organising and persistent

strategic advocacy. Advocacy is the process of calling on Christian leaders (young and old) to make public commitments to use their power in ways that respond accurately and effectively to the needs of those affected by their decisions (Salvatierra 2014:8). As a means of transformation, Christian liturgy, then, must be rooted simultaneously in the self-offering gesture of love of the Triune God and in our commitment to love our neighbour. Such honouring requires that there should be no division by race, gender, age and social, cultural, economic, political or religious differences. *Koinonia* happens through *leitourgia* [the work of the people], where the community embodies the prophetic potential to transform oppressive realities into genuinely inclusive relationships that welcome everyone. The faith community then embodies our Christian response to the injustices students face. This lived faith enables young people to engage with older generations on issues that they too may have faced in their youth.

As a sign of God's presence and action in the world, the church finds its meaning and vocation on the basis of an effective consciousness of the world and a concrete commitment to it. The church does not belong to the world but is renewed and transformed by the challenges of the world. Salvatierra (2014:9) called this form of mission 'faith-rooted organising'. This is based on the belief that many aspects of spirituality, faith traditions, faith practices and faith communities can contribute in unique and powerful ways to the creation of just communities and societies (Salvatierra 2014):

> [*F*]aith-rooted organising comprehensively and carefully examines all that faith brings to the table of change – from visions and dreams to values to scriptures and sacred texts, to symbols and rituals. Faith-rooted organising recognises all of the particular gifts and resources not only of individuals with faith but of the holistic spiritual communities where faith is nurtured and expressed. (p. 10)

This is crucial for enhancing the faith formation of young Christian students as they learn from their faith communities how they can best respond to their educational context and peers through using the spiritual resources and gifts they have. As mentioned earlier, faith communities cannot stand alone in the struggle

for justice. We are most effective when we work collaboratively, partnering with different sectors and groups that share our fundamental aims and collaborating with trusted secular partners and organisations that themselves are often filled with people of faith who look to us for solidarity and, at times, spiritual guidance (Salvatierra 2014:90). There are many Christian faith-based organisations involved in the fight against injustice that the church can benefit from.

Nell (2014) mentioned:

> [*F*]ormation of character is a lifelong process from cradle to grave. The distinguishing characteristic of formative pedagogies is that they strive to contribute to the formation of [...] knowledge, attitudes, skills and customs that are related to the development of a professional identity and with the accompanying practices, commitment and integrity contributing to character and confidence. [...] Students must be guided to understand that they are part of an on-going dialogue with the source documents, traditions and contemporary practices of faith communities. (p. 9)

Parents and religious leaders should (Nell 2014):

> [*M*]ake students aware of the processes of social and systemic transformation of contexts in which these dialogues take place. Students become aware of their own and other cultural prejudices, and the importance of approaching social analyses from different perspectives. (n.p.)

In equipping students, the aim is therefore firstly to foster an awareness of their own familial stories and context. This highlights the importance of understanding their heritage and its relevance for living out a public faith (Nell 2014):

> [*A*] second principle focuses on developing in students the ability to participate constructively in their different contexts. Whether it is the context of the home, the meeting with a mentor or participation in activities in faith communities, it is all about developing the ability to interpret various contexts. (n.p.)

Holistic and missional faith formation should orientate students 'towards the world, further the telos of life, learning from engaged praxis and to be intentionally interdisciplinary' by

'helping students to understand the world in all its complexities, as they need to understand all the other subjects in the curriculum' (Nell 2014:10–13). If this is indeed the aim of faith formation for university students, how have we prepared the students to participate in and act on behalf of the oppressed? Even though the church is committed to humility, however, we are also clear about the call to prophetic boldness. Clergy and congregational leaders have unique roles to play and contributions to make because we have access to specialised strategies that utilise our particular gifts and resources to advance the common cause. We lose our unique power when we do the same activities in the same way, using the same talking points as other sector faith leaders, for we must approach our task, embracing the paradoxical integration of prophetic boldness and authentic humility. As missional communities, this is at the core of the dance of solidarity (Salvatierra 2014:92).

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the importance of intergenerational dialogue on social justice within churches in South Africa. This focus was discussed by reflecting on the current context of higher education in which many Christian students have been affected by the overwhelming call to protest for free and equal education. It has also reflected on a brief history of how the church has engaged in such contexts during the apartheid era. The chapter further explored how the faith of young Christians and their success at university are impacted when the church remains silent or disengaged with regard to the issues they are facing. As a missional community, older generations have a biblical obligation to pass on their faith and experiences of how they dealt with injustices of the past to present generations. The dichotomy between spirituality and politics in the present-day South Africa reflects a failure of the promises of political liberation without the transformational voice of faith in public life (eds. Dibeela et al. 2014:3). It was Boesak's faith in Jesus

Christ that enabled them to study theology and engage in politics (Forster 2015):

> [*F*]aith in the Gospel of Christ has a concrete expectation for the way in which Christians live in the world, how they relate to other persons, how they form their laws, and how they work towards justice and human flourishing. In short, the Christian faith has significant social and political consequences that reach beyond the walls of the worshipping congregation. (p. 4)

Institutional culture plays a powerful role in how students are shaped by that culture (ed. Naidoo 2015:79). The various expectations and teachings of different ecclesial denominations add complexity to the identity, faith and moral formation of the students. It is for this reason that the church in South Africa cannot afford to lose another generation. It has a biblical and missional mandate to equip and build relational dialogue amongst all generations it serves.

Chapter 14

‘Who am I?’: Finding identity in a globalised world

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Abstract

In an increasingly culturally fluid and socially connected world, children and young people frequently have overlapping and multiple identities. This is true for both the children of missioners and those they seek to serve in the name of Christ. Using cultural, historical, colonial and sociological insights, this chapter seeks to clarify some of the key issues and critical choices that arise if and when a young person chooses to follow Jesus as the Saviour and Lord, and to be a member of his worldwide church. Who is that person then in Christ?

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Introduction

The issue of identity is core to the nature of what it is to be a human being and distinguishes us from the rest of creation (Erikson 1950, 1968).[1] 'Who am I?' remains with us as a question throughout our lives, and the corollary 'who do you say I am?' is embedded in how we answer it. An individual is not an island and exists in, and because he or she is part of, a group of other human beings, family, community and society. A developing sense of who a person is, revolves therefore around a constant and complex negotiation, conscious and unconscious, between the feelings and beliefs of the person about himself or herself and who he or she is or would like to be, on the one hand, and the responses and views of those significant others in his or her social world, on the other hand.[2]

Loder (1931–2001), Professor of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, developed Erikson's insights and analysis in his book, *The logic of the Spirit*,[3] arguing that this search for an identity ('a consistent sense of oneself'), in which one's 'inner sameness and continuity … is matched by one's meaning for others' (Loder 1998:207), revolves around five axes. These are (Loder 1998):

1. In the work of Erik Erikson, identity (as distinct from confusion) represents the fifth stage in his scheme of human development. He places it as the primary issue between the ages of 12 and 18 years.

2. See, for example, Berger and Berger (1976). It was also the primary concern of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of education represented in his seminal work, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, published in 1762.

3. Loder's book was a key text in my chapter in the 2016 IAMS publication (eds. Kozhuharov & Knoetze 2017:151–163). There the focus was on the role of the Holy (Creator) Spirit in transformation; here, it is on Loder's analysis of psychological and theological perspectives on identity in young people.

1. The body (with changing hormones and a changing anatomy) as its owner seeks to find a balance between 'rigidity' and 'diffusion' in the process of negotiating both space and time.
2. Ideology in which there is a personal search for 'total' meaning or understanding of the world and cosmos and the person's place within it, and a concomitant commitment to political, social and religious causes.
3. Authority where the young person explores becoming one of the big people (adults) whilst navigating between the Scylla of an authoritarian personality and the Charybdis of a protean approach, which involves continuous change and disaffection.
4. Love where the thrill of sex, affection and the potential for procreation are experienced within the context of loneliness and isolation represented most completely by death and mortality.
5. Work where the ethic of achievement is counterbalanced by radical withdrawal and non-motivation. (pp. 203–230).

All five axes involve some form of negotiation or interaction with the wider social world of family, community, peers, school, the guardians of the status quo and global marketing, media and corporations. There are a variety of drastic courses of action or behaviour that resist this interaction and engagement (such as drugs, bulimia and anorexia, withdrawal, and, taken to its terrible conclusion, suicide). However, a sense of self and identity that provides a base for long-term belonging to and relationships within the rest of society has to find some resolution between the intra-personal world of longings, hopes, fears and feelings and the extra-personal 'real' world as represented by the people, groups, institutions, traditions and ideologies that exist independent of the young person.

Evidence that human life and development involve the interplay between the individual and the groups, which makes up his or her social world, is accepted worldwide can be found, for example, in the Bantu word *ubuntu*. It is a reminder that there was an awareness of this truth long before the Western sociology and psychology

began to grapple with it. Taking the definition 'a person is a person through other people', Eze (2010) put it like this:

> [*This concept*] strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an 'other' in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is a demand for a creative inter-subjective formation in which the 'other' becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this otherness creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am. The 'I am' is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this otherness creation of relation and distance. (pp. 190–191)

Should a person believe that he or she is someone or something that is significantly at variance with how others know, understand and see him or her to be, then his or her 'identity' is severely at risk. This might be because he or she wishes to be a Christian in a Muslim family; because he or she wishes to pursue activities or a career proscribed by his or her family or society; because he or she will not accept his or her 'script'; because he or she does not believe that his or her capabilities are as assessed by his or her school and so on. Taken to its extreme, two of the consequences that can sometimes follow, are incarceration on the grounds of mental illness or imprisonment on the grounds of a threat to the relevant state or status quo.

This much has always been true in various shapes and forms across the world, and throughout human history. Of all the species inhabiting the planet Earth, we alone have the ability to imagine who we believe ourselves and others to be, with all the blessings and also pitfalls. It does not appear to be an issue, of anything like the same significance, in the rest of the animal kingdom as far as our present state of knowledge is concerned.

In humankind, although the negotiation between self and others continues throughout life, it is in young people, as Erikson (1968) has argued, that the challenge of finding or establishing

one's identity is one of the primary challenges as they consider their roles in families, communities, schools, peer groups and the wider society. They have been assigned a personal name and usually a given or family name and scripts with varying forms of flexibility and freedom. A major, if not primary, task of human development is to read and understand these scripts and then to decide what personal role to play. As identical twins often demonstrate, within the same families and groups, individuals may choose very different trajectories.

This process, observable, with variations related to climate, region, gender, status, culture and religion, throughout human history, has been considerably complicated by globalisation. This is both an observable and a hotly contested concept.[4] This chapter acknowledges the continuing debate, and the theoretical contestations, whilst seeking to draw from some of the realities and trends that we can identify from our daily experience wherever we are located in the world, and whatever our status and roles are. Therefore, we can take it that the Internet and the flow of electronic or digital information and finance, coupled with the global media and worldwide travel of increasing numbers of ordinary people, mean that a young person is likely to be connected to the rest of the world in ways that were not possible before one or two generations ago.

Local, global and religious cultures

As discussed earlier, Loder (1998) believed that the quest for personal identity takes place around five axes, which exist within a complex web of interlocking forces, trends and influences. For the purposes of this chapter, only three of them are discussed. I choose to call them cultures, another contested concept, but the best available as far as I can see. Broadly speaking, sociologists

4. It is not the purpose of this chapter to describe and analyse the concept of 'globalisation', although as it happens, the author has taught the subject for many years. Indicative texts that might serve as introductions to newcomers would be Bauman (1998) and Castells (1997).

and anthropologists see 'culture' consisting of the values, beliefs, systems of language, communication and practices that people share in common and that can be used to define them as a collective, as well as the material objects that are common to and/or valued by that group or society.

With that in mind, it can be said that a child grows up (i.e. develops, amongst many other things, a sense of identity) within (1) a local culture, (2) a global culture or cultures, and (3) if that child or young person is born part of it, or chooses to embrace it, then a Christian culture.

Before moving on, we need to acknowledge the fact that the life, or script, of children varies predictably between males and females (i.e. boy children and girl children), between rich and poor, between the educated and non-educated and between those living in times and places of comparative peace and those living in times and places overshadowed by war. There may be a number of additional interlocking 'cultures' related to urban or rural environments, geographical locations, politics, history and so on, but within the context of this chapter the discussion is restricted to these three.

Therefore, in the *local culture* we include a young person's nuclear and extended family, their neighbours and school, their local environment, their peer group, their ethnicity and language(s), the prevailing religious or secular traditions, political realities and ideologies, economics, the histories and stories of the locality and the different groups within it, access to resources and so on. Much of the understanding and the study of child development are focused on this local culture (White 2011).

However, in a globalising world (the attempt at an agreed and exact definition can be parked) this local culture connects with and is influenced by wider, *global cultures* with their associated values, missions, institutions, corporations and power relations. To some extent, this has been true at different periods of history; however, in the 21st century electronic media, brands and advertising, marketing, celebrities, fashion, worldwide campaigns

and declarations (e.g. the United Nations CRC of 1989), as well as ideologies invade the local cultures without reference to their specificities or norms. I recall being in Pune, western India, for example, when the first McDonald's was opened. The streets around MK Road were festooned with banners proclaiming *Coca Cola welcomes McDonald's*! Was it really for an US-based company to speak on behalf of the people in India, I wondered? And how did the children and young people feel about this? Perhaps they were far more adjusted to, and accepting of, global marketing than me. If so, it illustrates an important point.

Globally, children and young people are increasingly connected to the Internet (including social networks) and are, therefore, part of this globalising world and its culture(s) whether they choose to be or not, and whether their parents and teachers are aware of, or agree to it, or not. And, of course, local cultures including people of all ages and generations are influenced by global cultures, whether consciously or not. This is in no way to make a judgement on global cultures, but an attempt to state their growing influence and significance.

There is also what might be termed the *Christian culture* in which some children are born, and in which others choose to grow up. This may be particularly associated with a local church or church fellowship, Christian groups, denominations, global networks and broadcasters, and family commitments and traditions. Each gathering of Christian believers will be somewhere on a spectrum, from those using a local language, indigenous instruments (if they are used) and music and culturally-specific liturgies through to those who use 'globish' and are familiar with the latest music, songs and video clips sweeping the world effortlessly and relentlessly.

It is important to make clear at this point that in describing Christian culture I am not seeking to describe or analyse variations in Christian theology, denomination or tradition. Rather the purpose is to confine my observations to how far the culture of churches embraces or rejects local and global cultures,

respectively. This is not, of course, to downplay let alone marginalise the significance of Christian theology, but rather to direct our gaze for the purposes of this chapter elsewhere.

A challenge for each child or young person is that these cultural features and influences do not come neatly labelled or packaged, and that the divisions between and permutations of them are fast-changing and permeable. For example, the child's home may be traditional, and his or her church may be modern, or vice versa; the local community may be mono- or multi-cultural and so on with potentially endless variations.

With this complexity in mind, an image that might help conceptualise this is to imagine a young person swimming or floating in the sea. As he or she does so, he or she is at the intersection of a virtually infinitely complicated set of forces, including the local environment, the beach, rocks, weather, wind, moon and the global forces of tide, climate change, gulf streams and so on. Without attempting to be allegorical, we could in passing think that in some cases the tide may represent global cultures, and local cultures merely ripples, whereas in other cases there are powerful local social and religious factors which mean that global culture functions more like ripples on the surface.

So the question 'who am I?' (where am I heading to, and why?) is not only pertinent to growing children and young people who, along with their peers, are inevitably seeking to understand their identity, but also often likely to be a *cri de cœur*. It is much more like an existential question of the heart than an academic query about ethical and social categories. They live at a time in world history, the 21st century, that is possibly uniquely bewildering and destabilising for them and their peers.

Amongst other challenges is the fact that previous generations (parents, grandparents, teachers and ministers) have not experienced the same confluence of cultures because the global factors are quantitatively and qualitatively new. This means that elders, despite their best intentions, will often be unable to

assist the younger generation navigate them. This has been demonstrably so in the cases of young people who are 'radicalised' in Europe, leading some of them to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a militant outfit. They are wrestling with aspects of identity, culture and religion, usually connecting with like-minded others through the Internet, and almost always refusing to discuss life-changing decisions with significant others in their family or mosque.

For these older generations, and traditional institutions, to seek to pronounce who the child or young person is, or should be, in today's fast-changing world will only add to the pressure associated with finding an identity or a combination of identities. A young person is probably so aware of how others see or hope him or her to be that there is little need or incentive to ask, 'who do you say I am?'

To complicate things still further, there is the issue of multiple, changing and fluid identities. Status not only changes on social networks such as Facebook, but it is also expected to change, and in some global cultures previously fixed points of reference, such as biology or gender, are now challenged: fluidity, fusion, change and transgender are advocated and encouraged. Older generations tend to think in terms of some fixed elements of identity and personhood,[5] but there are global ideologies and trends that deliberately seek to undermine or deconstruct these in the cause of liberalisation and personal freedom.

This is one way of describing the contemporary background to the question that Christian children and young people inevitably face: who am I in Christ? They can easily find themselves adrift, as it were, with local cultures including households and communities seeking to help shape their identities, whilst at the same time being challenged and shaped by global forces and

5. It is not so long ago that family names or surnames (such as Baker, Cartwright and Smith) were indicative of a person's job or work.

processes, and usually not at the same rate. And churches must choose how much to absorb of either the local or global cultures.

This multi-directional and continuous pressure has, according to some, had the effect of influencing the children to establish their own networks and subcultures amongst peers. Some describe this as 'youth culture', yet another contested term. Few would doubt that young people worldwide are facing uniquely new challenges in their search for identity; however, this chapter does not seek to contribute directly to the debate about youth cultures.

How might parents and churches support young people in their search for identity in Christ?

With this context in mind, and being aware that there is so much more that could be said and taken into account, how should responsible Christian adults in households and churches react with sensitivity and integrity?

Few would disagree with the assertion that any response should be undergirded by humility. This is not just because this is one of the hallmarks of followers of Jesus Christ, 'the servant king', and advocated by the Apostle Paul in 2 Philippians, but because we (I am one of the older generation, in case that has not become obvious by now) are learners in a fast-changing world. Communications, fashions and trends are developing faster than our attempts to keep up with or understand them. We genuinely do not know what is going on, and we delude ourselves if we imagine that we do.

For some years at Spurgeon's College in London, I taught a course on globalisation, quickly realising that it was not only unwise but also impossible to set out a course of lecture subjects for the term or semester ahead, because events changed so fast and unpredictably. If it was going to be topical, then it had to

have a provisional course outline that allowed responses to major global events such as the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the Financial Crisis following the collapse of the Lehman Brothers, the Arab Spring and so on. The point is that the world is changing in ways that cannot be anticipated.

Therefore, a starting point is that we are there for the children and young people as those seeking to understand, needing their help in the process, listening to them, empathising and learning, as they adjust to a fast-changing global world. We are catechumen not only in the traditional Christian sense, but also as we seek to relate our Christian heritage, faith and traditions to a globalising context.

And as catechumen, that is, learners in the faith, we do well to examine ourselves by committing ourselves to develop, through thick and thin, an in-depth understanding of who we are in Christ. If we are in a relationship, covenant, with Christ, then it will be deepening over time. The search for identity is not restricted to the teenage years, but is a lifelong adventure. How far are we modelling in our lives, roles and relationships, in church and household, something of what it means to belong to Jesus, and to serve him faithfully?

This challenging question is also set within the context of how we relate to our local culture(s), and how our congregation or fellowship reflects this. Sociologists are aware that globalisation changes power dynamics, and, as Giddens (1999) argued, that there is a 'push–pull effect'. So, along with a growing sense of global connectivity through electronic communications and networks, with the consolidation of global corporations such as Microsoft or Google, McDonald's or Coca Cola, there is a reaction in the form of people defending their local cultures, languages and traditions (Giddens 1999). One of the words bandied about that has something to do with this is 'populism'. Are we good examples of a way of indigenously rooted and sensitive living that attracts the next generation, or are we turning them off the

ways of our local communities? (Given that there are countless local communities around the world, there will be many permutations.)

And to come at this from another direction: 'are we aware enough, and appropriately critical of our local cultures, so that we do not swallow camels whilst straining out gnats?' and 'who we seek to discern that which is to be valued, even treasured, along with that which is not consistent with our discipleship of Jesus Christ?' A pertinent example would be racism. Many local communities are suspicious of 'others' labelled in many ways, but particularly that of ethnicity. Do we accept this stereotyping, or are we seeking to be reconcilers and peacemakers between human beings with different roots? This is of profound importance to our children.

Then the following questions come into play: 'how does our church or fellowship relate to our local cultures?'; 'what language is used for worship, teaching, songs and hymns?' and 'what dress is expected?' This is complicated by the fact that many churches exist as groups of emigres living in a country different from the place of their members' roots and origins. What respect is shown to local traditions and conventions?

Next, how do we as parents, teachers and church leaders relate to globalising trends and influences? Put crisply, is our Christian culture local, global or a fusion? My experience of worshipping in churches of different denominations on all five continents indicates that some seem to treat modern material, trends and technology as something to be accepted routinely, whereas others resist the modernising forces wholesale. So there are services that use the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, the King James Version of the Bible and traditional hymns, whereas there are gatherings where the feel and ethos have much more in common with getting together with friends at Starbucks (indeed, there are of course churches that meet in places such as pubs and Starbucks). In such modern gatherings, the songs will be

electronically backed and led by video clips, the connections are global and many very recent songs are being sung within days of their creation across the world.

One of the salutary observations I have made time and again is that in many of the modern-worship (global) settings children and young people seem to be as disconnected as they are assumed to be in more traditional places of worship. And conversely, I have been surprised to discover congregations, or predominantly young people in cathedrals and places (local), where worship (including Russian and Eastern Orthodox) is highly and uncompromisingly traditional. It is questionable to assume that all young people are attracted to the modern global brands and techniques when they are concerned with matters of identity, relationships, belonging and the future.

This leads to the question of how Christ and authentic discipleship might relate to these different cultures.[6] Here there may be a paradox at the heart of the matter: is it not true that Christ can be imagined to be equally at home in all local, global and Christian cultures; and yet also an outsider? He is never wholly in tune with, or uncritical of, any human tradition or situation. He is in the world, but not of the world, and this is vital to bear in mind when considering what it is to be in Christ in the cultures that combine to make up our part of the contemporary world as we know it.

No followers of Jesus will be wholly at home in their local culture(s) or in global cultures, and neither will their church or denomination be a place where they are perfectly at home, for the church on earth is provisional and an imperfect model of that which is still to come. Our true identity will only be found when we, together with peoples and nations from around the world, see the wounded Lamb face to face, and know even as we are known.

6. Students of the course on *Childhoods in cultural contexts* have found that the classic by Niebuhr provides helpful categories of analysis (cf. Niebuhr 1951).

Who am I in Christ?

In one sense the answer to this question, as mentioned in the heading above, for all followers of Christ is substantially the same. Without repeating the well-known Christian doctrines and/or creeds, we can say that we are children of God, in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is by grace of Christ, the love of God and the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit. We are conscious of our falling short, and that we do not deserve adoption into the family of the righteous God. But we have discovered, by the revelation of God, that Christ has died for us. Through faith in what he has done, we are a new creation: we are loved, washed in his blood and commissioned to serve him as royal priests (Rv 1:5–6) (I am happy to leave readers to amplify this as they will and/or feel that they must, asking their forgiveness for anything that seems partisan or blinkered).

Where does this leave young people at this point in history? Is there anything that can be said that is unique or at least particularly relevant to their situations as they find themselves in a sea of bewildering forces and influences, and with many offers of desirable destinations, methods of travel and guides on the voyage?

It has been my privilege to live alongside children and young people all my life in a Christian community called Mill Grove and, in seeking to respond to this question, I draw on what I have learnt from them both by way of cries of anguish and testimonies of thankfulness.

They seem to me to have a global consciousness way beyond what I can recall in myself at their age. It follows that they are genuinely concerned about the planet and the whole natural world, including its wildlife and oceans. And in Christ they discover to their amazement and joy that they are creatures loved by the Creator, who have been given a unique responsibility in caring for creation. Gone are the days when John 3:16 was taken to mean (implicitly if not explicitly) 'God so loved human beings

that He sent His only begotten son…'. They read the text in its literal fullness, acknowledging that they are part, an inter-connected part of this world.

And in Jesus Christ they find that he is the One through whom, by whom and for whom all things were made. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. That, like them, the creation is groaning until the time when God's Kingdom comes, and his will is done on earth as in heaven. In Christ, they are inheritors of and heirs to a divine legacy beyond comprehension. Global awareness, if not global culture, has opened the eyes of their hearts and minds to some of the profound depths of the love and purposes of God in Christ.

Also, those who find themselves in Christ recognise the cost of discipleship: of following him. To acknowledge Christ as Lord can mean challenges in family, amongst globally connected peers and in the church. Few find themselves 'at home' in local churches as I understand it when I listen to them.

This goes with a sense of longing for a community of those who walk the talk in Christ. There is a growing willingness to explore new monasticism, to consider living in community, to think of alternatives. And, once again, this represents a challenge to families, churches and peers. They are seeking a new way of living with integrity in today's world, in Christ.

And as they grapple with the rugged demands of Scripture, they bring new concerns and lenses to them. They are concerned for the Other, not just for the chosen ones, and the home side or local tribe. And they are familiar with terms such as 'genocide' when they read the Book of Joshua. In Christ, as like him, they seek to inhabit the world of the Bible, including the Jewish Scriptures; they struggle with the blindness of their elders. How are they to read the Scriptures? What hermeneutic allows them to do so with complete integrity?

How should they relate in Christ to those of other faiths and none? To be a faithful follower of Christ, must one leave all

vestiges of other faiths? It is a question memorably raised by Pi in the novel and film, *The life of Pi* (Martel 2001). He had sought to live as a faithful Christian, Muslim and Hindu at the same time. At the very least it can be said that young people today and in the future are likely to have a greater awareness of other faiths than they did in previous generations.

Whether they know of the Christian historian, Herbert Butterfield, I doubt, but there is a sense in which his conclusion to his book *Christianity and history* might have been devised for them afloat on a sea of complex tides, waves and ripples (Butterfield 1950):

> [*W*]e can do worse than remember a principle which both gives us a firm Rock and leaves us the maximum elasticity for our minds: the principle: *Hold to Christ, and for the rest be totally uncommitted*. (p. 222)

Loder (1998) finds the search for identity in Christ as resolved when by the work of the Holy Spirit engaging with our own spirits we receive a divine calling (like Kierkegaard and Luther). In both cases, this led them into unknown and uncharted waters. Perhaps our young people are being prepared at this time in human history more than most others to seek the calling of Christ so that they can be in him, and he in them equipping them to serve the Kingdom of God.

However, there is also a real possibility that they represent some of the choices that Christians today and in previous generations have always faced. There have always been local cultures, and by means of empires and colonisation much of the human race in history has lived in the shadow, if not in the shackles of foreign rule and rulers. Is it not a challenge that lies within the very nature of our relationship with Christ that we must face up to our particular identity and calling? We are a part of social groups, but the call of Christ to follow him is known and felt fully, only in the individual heart and soul. If that is so, then the search of each young person today for an identity is an adventure known in some shape or form to every follower of Jesus. And this means

that today's young people may in unexpected ways be our representatives and teachers.

Conclusion

It is my hope that an increased awareness of the three cultures, described in this chapter, may prove helpful in understanding the Christian mission with and for young people. From the time that it dawned on me that every child and young person lived, as it were, on a sea with ripples, waves and tides affecting their immediate context, and presenting challenges to their survival and navigation in search of a genuine identity, I have found myself on an exponentially steeply rising learning curve. It includes my understanding of my own identity in Christ, of my local culture, of my local church and of manifestations of globalisation daily in home, school, work and church. And I have found that my children and grandchildren are, whether they know it or not, my teachers and guides in the process.

Therefore, the offering is a very modest one as befits a catechumen rather than an elder in the church or seminary. And I have deliberately avoided overlapping with the contribution made to the understanding of how theology, mission and child relate as expressed in the ground-breaking volume *Theology, mission and child* (eds. Prevette et al. 2014). I can do no better than refer readers to it, assuming, of course, that they do not already have a copy.

The crucial truth to grasp is that as adults we must do our best to help our children and young people by creating the space and offering them the resources to discover their own identities in Christ, whilst recognising that although we give them our love, we cannot give them their scripts or thoughts. For they live in a new and emerging world where the best that we can do, is to provide humble models of life, home and church for them, informed by the best resources available, biblical, theological and musical, and to pray for them as Christ prayed for his disciples in John's Gospel.

And it may be that it is our households (the word is deliberately chosen to resonate with the biblical *oikos*) that are the key places where our shared identity, different but attuned, trusting, respectful and loving, enables the formation of an identity for each of us and together in Christ. It is perhaps in each Christian *oikos* where local, global and Christian cultures interact most challengingly and fully.

Chapter 15

Conclusion

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The International Association for Mission Studies and this book

Globalisation was and continues to be a hotly discussed theme on all levels of human existence – from scientific to governmental to judicial to religious and other points of view. It could not be otherwise as globalising processes influence all societies in the world today, irrespective of the speed and scope of their development and progress. Globalisation has been a hot topic for the IAMS for quite some time now, but the Association never found the appropriate venue to discuss it in more detail. Since its inaugural assembly in 1972, the IAMS has chosen different themes for its quadrennial conferences, and most of them dealt with the church and its mission as viewed from different perspectives.

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'Conversions and transformations: Missiological approaches to religious change' was the general theme of the 2016 conference in Seoul, and the IAMS' eight study groups – the Association's main research tracks – discussed it in great detail and scrutiny. At the conference, one of the study groups, Children, youth and mission (CYM), listened to a dozen of papers that tried to elaborate on the general theme from the perspective of church's work and mission to, along and with children and young people. As an outcome of the work of this research track, a publication came out in 2017 – *Conversion and transformation: Children and youth in mission contexts*.

The next IAMS' quadrennial conference was scheduled to take place in Sydney in July 2020, and many study groups' conveners were preparing their membership for a successful participation in the scholarly event. So did the conveners of the CYM track – we initiated a research process whereby we asked scholars working in the field of children and mission to prepare and write articles for a new publication by trying to keep in focus the IAMS' general theme for the event in Sydney – 'Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: Mission in a wounded world'. We were happy to receive a generous response from more than a dozen of researchers. The theme prompted us to offer the authors of the CYM research group a similar topic for discussion to be developed in a new publication, which the study group's conveners viewed as a preparation for the IAMS conference. This is how this publication got the title *Powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities: Impact of globalisation on children, youth and families and on the mission of the church*. The events during the end of 2019 and the first half of 2020, when the world was 'locked' because of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, and when everyone on the planet could well feel what a globalised world means and how vulnerable humanity is, made the publication of this book even more urgent and necessary. Especially as its extensive focal point is children, the youth and families, those who are in these life stages will need to increasingly deal with a globalised and vulnerable world.

The two main 'impacts' – globalisation and mission – prompted the division of the book into two parts: 'Perspectives on globalisation and its impact on children, youth and families' (Part 1) and 'Perspectives on mission and its impact on children, youth and families' (Part 2). That is, the issues of globalisation and the mission of the church became the main focus and research field for the contributors of this book. The two perspectives were looked upon from different angles and views where each author shared his or her experience – both scholarly and Christian – in the field, thus offering the readers a first-hand research and shared practice.

Globalisation

Most authors admit that there cannot be one unified understanding and one definition of what globalisation is. The term 'globalisation' is so diverse and often unclear in meaning (as it continues to develop) that scientists, scholars, politicians, economists, sociologists, cultural and religious leaders, sports and artistic figures, philosophers, and others would offer different definitions of it. It seems that globalisation is most often seen through different lenses, hence the various formulations.

This is evident in this publication too. Globalisation can be defined in broader terms, and Brunsdon (2020; Ch. 8) offers one such definition:

> [*G*]lobalisation can be defined as the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of peoples and countries. It is generally understood to include two inter-related elements: the opening of international borders to increasingly fast flows of goods, services, finance, people and ideas; and the changes in institutions and policies at national and international levels that facilitate or promote such flows. (p. 143)

It is also seen as an 'unstoppable and irreversible process that is engulfing the whole world', as a 'process that opens nation-states and societies to many influences that originate beyond their borders' and as an 'uncontrollable and irreversible force' (Ferreira 2020:160; Ch. 9).

A somewhat narrower understanding of globalisation can be found in other contributors' chapters also. Jeyaraj (2020:270; Ch. 11) focuses mostly on its economic side whilst adopting the view that 'globalisation is a process by which the economies of the world become increasingly integrated, leading to a global economy and, increasingly, global economic policymaking', and that it could even be viewed as global capitalism (Oommen 2000):

> [*G*]lobalisation may be considered a process of transnationalisation of capital, production and even consumer tastes and preferences on the logic of global exchange. There is, therefore, nothing amiss in characterising it as global capitalism. (p. 59)

Still for others, it is viewed mostly as a political process and decision-making by Western powers – '[g]lobalisation is fundamentally a political phenomenon that did not arise naturally but rather was the product of policy decisions taken after the Second World War among the Western allies' (Kozhuharov 2020:78; Ch. 5). Another author (Cloete 2020; Ch. 3) has accepted that society is the target of globalisation with its goal 'to expand, intensify and accelerate social relations', whilst discussing also the notion that:

> [*G*]lobalisation is embedded within and especially shaped by the context of family and different generations, and vice versa. This process is described as social reproduction … a combination of familial, economic, state and local community structures. (p. 40)

Going even further down the 'road of definitions', we can find that globalisation is closely connected with the phenomenon called 'fear of missing out' (Knoetze 2020:55–71; Ch. 1), with the plight of street children in every country of the world, both rich and poor (Burch 2020:17–36; Ch. 2), with trauma (psychological and spiritual, most of all) as a recent phenomenon in the lives of many people in the world but especially children and young people, as 'traumatised children and young people are found throughout the world: it is a global problem' (Baxter-Brown:161; Ch. 7), and with another global problem – pornography and the ways children and young people are exposed to its damaging influence (Miles & Crawford 2020:97–118; Ch. 6).

Globalisation today is also very much about identity; in times of confusion and unrealistic hopes and desires, and in the conditions of global interconnectedness through the Internet, children and young people may have difficulties in clarifying for themselves and responding to other people's question of 'who I am' (especially the question of 'who I am in Christ'); the 'little ones' are in fact 'part of this globalising world and its culture(s) whether they choose to be or not, and whether their parents and teachers are aware of, or agree to it, or not' (White 2020:295; Ch. 14).

This book offers another specific understanding of globalisation as a sum total of various forms of globalism; they are broadly defined as (Meyer 2020; Ch. 12):

> [*A*]n ideology, culture and religion, believed by a sufficiently large number of people and institutions, [*which*] can influence social change. They form part of people's generally accepted assumptions about the manner in which the world operates, and in which it is ordered. (p. 235)

The author considers such forms of globalism as economic globalisation, the globalism of capitalism, Christianity as one of the world's most enduring forms of globalism and Pentecostalism as one of the Christian forms of globalism and so on. 'Globalisation', as understood in this way, seems to have been used in the meaning of 'becoming global'.

What is important when considering globalisation is the fact that all authors reflect on both globalisation's positive and negative effects on people and countries. The good sides of this process have been widely discussed in different social settings – amongst economists, politicians, philosophers, sociologists, academics, religious scholars, and others, and most authors in this book only mention them to point to the many progressive steps humanity has undertaken exactly because of globalisation. The negative sides of globalisation, as discussed in this book, however, are what mostly interests the contributors – not that the negative effects are more numerous than the good ones but because Christians and churches are constantly facing new

challenges that need extended solutions: solutions discussed and offered, not only by one community or one nation or one country, but by many and by various interested parties. Some processes of globalisation are blamed for the poor economic conditions in many countries in the world, and others are pointed as the reason for the poor education standards and even impossibility of education (Jeyaraj), for increased difficulties in resolving the issues of street children (Burch), pornography (Miles and Crawford), trauma (Baxter-Brown), confused or not clearly recognised identity (Cloete and White), powers and vulnerability within our communities (Knoetze), changed moral principles and values (Kozhuharov), migration and the notion of 'home' (Brunsdon), destructive Western samples of culture and wrongly understood values that influence many young people in less developed countries (Freeks), brokenness in intergenerational dialogue, especially in matters of social justice (Weber) and of child sacrifice, meant both literally and indirectly (Ferreira).

The authors affirm that these challenges need to be properly addressed when we discuss the mission of the church.

Mission

In all chapters, one can find an abundance of examples and evidence of what Christians and churches do to lead children and young people to Christ and to induce them to stay in the church as true, faithful followers of Christ. Without repeating what has been mentioned about the numerous challenges modern times 'offer' many peoples and countries in the world (especially because of some processes of globalisation), here I could refer to only some problems and some solutions, which the church in its mission could offer to everyone who is ready to listen and to act accordingly.

The authors affirm that the church today finds it difficult to 'do mission' in the new circumstances of life where atheism, rationality, false ideologies and teachings, political and cultural samples of

affluence and 'happiness here and now', et cetera, are so widely spread that sometimes churches cannot make the difference between what is Christian and what is not Christian. White speaks about three cultures – local, global and Christian – and clearly defines the mission of the church that will ultimately 'instil' the only correct answer to the question of 'who I am' – your true 'you' (true 'I') is your self only in Jesus Christ; and the church is called to constantly remind people about who they truly are.

In a number of Christian communities, the church is viewed mostly through the acts of prayer, Bible reading, the organisation of different activities for its members to keep them 'connected' in Jesus and through 'doing mission' (whatever this might mean), but not many are the churches that 'present variety of languages in the liturgical experience, such as music, gesture, icons and words' where these (Weber 2020):

> [*C*]an facilitate (construct) growth in Christian life as well as influence the way people live in the world. For this to be missional, the prophetic faith community must take very seriously the sources and character of its liturgical celebrations, recognising that the liturgy embraces religious–political–cultural–social–economic realities. (p. 266)

A proper and true intergenerational dialogue occurs only when the church as 'a liturgical, catechetical and missional community' engages everyone, but especially young people, in acts of faith, worship, teaching and learning and service.

The church's mission is certainly in reaching out, in confirming the believers in the faith through prayer, worship and teaching; furthermore, the church's mission is also in the pastoral work of the church leaders and ultimately of everyone who has embraced Jesus and who firmly follows him (Brunsdon 2020):

> [*T*]o be missionary is at the same time to act pastorally – or, that the pastoral involvement of churches should be driven by the passion to reach out to the stranger. (p. 141)

Meyer (2020) affirms that:

> [*T*]he mission of the church is not only to go outwards as a community (an institution) to the world but also to move inwards – to the worlds

> of their members – in understanding how the Spirit equips individual members to be disciples of Jesus. (p. 245)

And (Meyer 2020):

> [*T*]o understand the mission of the church and the way it is shaped by its members, one should first and foremost understand the spiritual development and experiences of these individual members. (p. 244)

Another author asserts that 'missional spirituality' is not only a vain phrase or empty notion – but it is (or should be) also 'sensitive to power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities', and it 'finds people in their local contexts, engages with people to understand their lived theologies and incarnated spirituality and to respect their symbolic worlds' (Meyer 2020:246).

Some churches are becoming increasingly frustrated by the changes in the teaching and practice that were introduced by different political and social powers and also by some Christian communities, for example, the revision of the meaning of marriage and the introduction of gender and homosexual notions into the Bible teaching and into the worshipping activity of some churches. Ferreira reminds us that 'the Christian church urgently needs to rethink its mission within the world's continuous globalising tsunamic reality', and by this tsunamic reality he understands 'the compromises it (the church) made regarding biblical teaching on marriage, family and children', and 'the compromises it is making regarding sexuality and gender' and in order to return to a biblical view on this, the church should reassess the old Christendom paradigm and engage with the post-Christendom realities today (Ferreira 2020:180). The teaching ministry of the church has obtained a new role today in its catechetical work and in the missionary activities of those who work and live in secular societies that extensively promote teachings and practices, incompatible with the teaching of the Bible and the 'traditional' churches and that are trying to force peoples and countries not only to accept the new 'norms' of what marriage, sexuality, gender, equality, non-discrimination, et cetera, are but also to include the new

understanding of these into their legislation and oblige everyone to obey such laws (Kozhuharov 2020:73–95).

In almost all contributions in this book, the authors clearly derive the church's mission from that of the mission of God – *missio Dei* – by the humble and faithful participation of the believers in both God's mission and the mission of the Christian community. It is in this way that our identity finds expression in this world (Knoetze 2020):

> [*C*]hristians find their true identity when they obediently participate in the *missio Dei*, making disciples, communicating and living a new way of life, looking anew at reality, and, because of Christ's connectedness, stay connected in a new way to others and creation. (p. 68)

Challenges

The term 'challenge' is used too frequently today: all the time people feel challenged, and they struggle to overcome challenges, difficulties and problems, or at least they try to resolve some of their consequences. This book could be seen as a challenge as well; the authors encourage the readers to engage with the meanings of the text and try to implement its admonitions in their life as Christians and as citizens of their own society. The text has become truly challenging, without even seeking this, after some notions of globalisation and mission seem to have been reassessed because of the world's situation in the last half an year since the end of 2019 in the aftermath of the COVID-19 attack on humanity; the globalising connections that characterised the world seem to have been broken (although communication and the exchange of information remained, as it were, or became even more intensive) when most of the countries in the world shut their borders and ordered their citizens to stay at home, and all missionary and even most activities of worship in the church were abandoned. People hope that after the pandemic has gone, everything will return to its place and that the globalising processes may become even more intensified and the church

would return to its missionary calling with renewed energy and devotion. What if the pandemic continues for another year, or for years to come? What if another global challenge dramatically changes the way people used to live, as the coronavirus did recently?

In our view, one thing seems certain amongst the many uncertainties people experience today; globalisation and other 'connecting' influences may pass (or may not pass) but the Word will never pass away: '[h]eaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away (Mt 24:35 NIV)'.

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The aim of this collected work is to focus on family and youth ministry in the field of ecclesial missiology. Its scholarly contribution is to address the sometimes unintended and unnoticed influence of globalisation on the mission of the church against the background of the International Association for Mission Studies study group for children, youth and families. This interdisciplinary scholarly book employs insights from the social sciences, anthropology, psychology and theology. From a primarily auto-ethnographical and empirical perspective, the book describes the powers, inequalities and vulnerabilities of children, youth and families in a globalised world from diverse contexts.

There can be no argument that we are living in a globalising world that is transforming cultures in an unprecedented way. This book asks how cultural changes, brought about by globalisation, affect the youth, families and the mission of the church. What I like about the book is the diversity of responses given to the questions asked. Answers are given from different continents and cultures, and as such from historically different contexts and different social-economic settings. The contextual diversity helps to prevent quick-fix and dogmatic answers to the intense challenges that church and society face. As you read the book you are captivated by the implications of global changes on the lives of young people. You are intrigued by the humble and honest search for ways to reach out and help them as they are struggling to survive in this modern jungle.

The book is in touch with the realities that children and the youth are experiencing, and as such it is an eye-opener to begin to understand a generation that is crying out that we are robbing them of their future. It unzips the harsh reality that the majority of youth in the South are exposed to, and it forcefully introduces the problems they face.

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