



Reformed theology today: Practical-theological, missiological and ethical perspectives

Edited by

Sarel P. van der Walt & Nico Vorster

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■ Research Justification

This book is unique and of great importance for theologians from diverse traditions but who all share the relevance of the academic Reformed discourse. The book focuses on, and forms part of celebrating 500 years since the start of the Reformation during the 16th century. Its purpose is to commemorate the quinqucentenary anniversary of the Reformation in Europe and to indicate the way in which the rich legacy of this important period in the history of the church and society still globally influences the theological landscape in the fields of Practical Theology, Missiology and Ethics. Specific attention is given to the manner in which the core principles of the Reformation can be utilised for these disciplines and applied in a contemporary context. The Reformation changed the ecclesiastical landscape of the day and still provides the benchmark for theological principles and praxis in many Protestant denominations. This book illustrates and underscores the practical-theological legacy and importance of the Reformation for church and society. The collected works by various theologians reflect on the impact of Reformed Theology on their respective fields of expertise. The original research is based on literature studies and has not been published previously in any form. Its aim is to stimulate discourse in Theology and related disciplines. Although the chapters represent different perspectives, the collective aim is to propose the vast impact of the Reformational views as they relate to the current context. The target audience is Reformed theologians. This book focuses on ways in which the legacy of the Reformation addresses practical and relevant issues for 21st-century believers, scholars and churches. It explores inter alia important homiletical and liturgical aspects of the Reformation and contemplates the importance of continual reformation in this regard. Furthermore, it discusses a Reformed approach to apologetics, evaluates the driving forces behind the Reformation of the 16th century and its relevance to missions today as well as examines the *sola Scriptura* principle of the Reformation and provides a critical perspective on Prosperity Theology. Several pastoral themes take centre stage before various aspects of xenophobia and civil prejudice are being investigated – both being very relevant topics throughout the world today. The book also focuses on hermeneutics and ethics in a quest for a biblical ethical approach as well as congregational hymns in the Reformed churches of South Africa today. The research outcomes are relevant not only for the South African context, but also globally.

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Abbreviations appearing in the Text and Notes

ASV	American Standard Version
EM	Emergent Movement
ESV	English Standard Version
GKSA	Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika
KJV	King James Version
NAR	New Apostolic Reformation
NIV	New International Version
PT	Prosperity Gospel Theology
PThU	Protestant Theological University
RCSA	Reformed Churches in South Africa
WA	<i>Weimarer Ausgabe</i>

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Foreword

It is an undeniable privilege to be able to commemorate 500 years since the start of the Reformation during the 16th century. This book is a celebration of the privilege and wants to emphasise the way in which the rich legacy of this important period in the history of the church still influences the theological landscape in the fields of Practical Theology, Missiology and Ethics. Specific attention is given to the manner in which the core principles of the Reformation can be utilised within these disciplines and applied within a contemporary context. This book provides a specific application of the legacy of the Reformation in that it focuses on ways in which the legacy of the Reformation addresses practical and relevant issues for 21st-century believers, scholars and churches. Hence, Chapters 1 and 2 explore important homiletic and liturgic aspects of the Reformation, contemplating the importance of continual reformation in this regard. Chapter 3 focuses on the power of the Word in reformed Apologetics. Chapters 4 and 5 have to do with the important question of the driving forces behind the Reformation in the 16th century and its relevance to missions today. Chapter 6 provides the reader with a very practical and well-founded look into the dangers of laying one's trust not in *sola scriptura* when exploring the world of the prosperity gospel theology. Chapter 7 focuses on pastoral aspects, Chapter 8 explores various aspects of xenophobia and civil prejudice, both being very relevant topics throughout the world today. In Chapter 9 the focus is on hermeneutics and ethics in a quest for a biblical-ethical approach while the book concludes with recent developments in congregational singing in the Reformed churches of South Africa today.

In Chapter 1, Hans Kommers sets out to bring home to us Luther's 'speaking about God' under the title 'Speaking about God: Luther as guide in the field of homiletics'. In this chapter, it is pointed out that Luther's Reformation brought a new spirit into preaching. It was as if God at last broke his long silence. Is there now, in the year 2017, a willingness to listen to Luther? Important is that Luther's sermons cannot be categorised as learned orations, like many sermons in the Lutheran orthodoxy in the 17th century with all the classic rhetorical details, but the sermon as Luther received it from the Holy Spirit. The relevance for today is that this appears to be a relevant guide for the praxis of preaching and effective communication of the gospel.

In Chapter 2, 'Evaluation of the concept of continuous Reformation (*semper reformanda*) in liturgy during and after the Reformation of the 16th century', Ferdi Kruger and Ben de

Klerk investigate and evaluate liturgy as a driving force for the Reformation of the 16th century. Reformation is also necessary with regard to reformed liturgy and liturgical acts (including the homiletical part). The relevance of this research is to position the church within movements deviating from the customary tradition. The authors analysed the tension between theory and praxis from a practical theological vantage point. It is evident in this bipolar relationship between theory and praxis that reciprocity is an important principle. The relationship between theory and praxis within the 16th century Reformation is also investigated to shed light on the 21st century emergent movement with regard to liturgy.

The third chapter, 'Convinced by Scripture and plain reason: Reasonable reformational apologetics', is an apologetic against the logical inconsistency of world views other than that of Christianity, such as atheism, polytheism and cults. Henk Stoker indicates in this chapter that during the Reformation of the 16th century, there was an increase in apologetic material. The great reformers used reasoning in a consistent and logical way to defend scriptural truth.

In Chapter 4, Gert Breed asks the question in the title: 'Was the church made only for mission?' On the basis of an exegetical investigation of Ephesians, it is clear that the church, with the different metaphors used for it, has the purpose to exist as such to the glorification of God and his grace. The mission of the church includes her own edification and growth with a view to be a display window for the grace of God to the world, including bringing the good news of salvation to others. The purpose of missions is to lead people to the radical new way of life that follows rebirth through the work of the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 5, 'Missiology and Reformation in a post-Christian Western world', Naas Ferreira indicates that in Reformed Theology, scholars in light of God's Word, should not only take into account the 'what' of events, but also 'why' they occur. When studying the disconcerting fact of the Christendom's demise, the understanding dawns that God in *missio Dei* can pass his church by, then it is missiology that points out the only hope-filled way (back) to God's future.

In Chapter 6, 'Paying unpaid debts: Reformational antidotes for some of the global challenges posed by prosperity gospel theology', Flip Buys states that prosperity gospel theology has become one of the fastest growing religious movements on a global scale. The chapter is an exposé of some aspects of prosperity theology and the challenges it presents to the church in greater depth. The chapter concludes with proposing some reformational antidotes to address the underlying questions that give rise to the growth of the prosperity theology phenomenon.

Chapter 7, 'Towards the pastoral care of Africa: Some practical theological considerations for a contextual approach', is located within the discourse on the contextualisation of pastoral care and counselling within the African context from a reformed perspective. Alfred Brunson indicates in this chapter that Western approaches

to pastoral care cannot uncritically be applied within African contexts and seeks the practical theological questions preceding pastoral care aimed at Africa. It attempts to clarify basic concepts such as pastoral care, the African context and some of the approaches previously applied in the appropriation of pastoral theology in African contexts, like indigenisation, Africanisation, contextualisation and such. It becomes clear that the quest for a pastoral care for Africa can indeed benefit from further practical theological investigation.

In Chapter 8, 'Xenophobia and social prejudice through the lens of Calvin: From "iron philosophy" to *homo sympatheticus* in a practical theology of home within the global dilemma of displaced refugees' Daniel Louw highlights the displacement crisis of refugees all over the globe. This brought about a crisis of home and place. The chapter delves into the tension between abstract thinking (dogmatism) and compassionate thinking (passionate 'being with'), highlighting the question regarding human dignity within local, civil societal structures. It is argued that Calvin's notion of passion and indiscriminating neighbourly love, as well as his emphasis on civil diakonic actions within the Geneva refugee dilemma, could help ecclesiological thinking to move from dogmatism (iron thinking) to compassionate 'being with' (passion thinking). With reference to the refugee crisis, a hospitable ecclesiology of *xenodochia* is proposed.

In Chapter 9, 'Hermeneutics and ethics: The quest for a "biblical ethic"', Koos Vorster argues the case for a relevant biblical ethic against the background of 'biblical ethic' which has become a highly contentious issue in current theological discourse as a result of the vast array of modern theories of interpretation that have influenced the interpretation of Scripture. This above-mentioned criticism of the concept is due to the hermeneutics of suspicion. The chapter departs from the premise that the idea of 'biblical ethic' is still valid and this ethic can provide valuable norms that can be applied effectively in the moral development of modern society. In order to pursue this argument, the idea of God's revelation in the 'book of nature' and the 'written Word' is revisited. The chapter concludes that the ongoing revelation of the reign of God and the many issues included in this topic are the foundation of a relevant and applicable 'biblical ethic'.

The book concludes with Chapter 10, 'From psalter to hymnal. Recent developments in the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) in the light of the principles and practices of the Reformation', in which Jacoba van Rooy evaluates the developments of the official decisions of synods of the RCSA in the light of the views of the three reformers, Zwingli, Luther and Calvin in this regard. In the last two decades, different synods of the RCSA have made important decisions with regard to singing in the church. In 2012, the Synod decided to allow not only psalms and Bible songs, but also hymns of which the contents are in agreement with the Bible, being in line with the viewpoint of Luther. However, in the versification of the psalms, the method of Luther in which interpretation from the New Testament and personal experiences and circumstances influenced the

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versification, has not been accepted. Different synods have accepted very specific principles for the evaluation of versifications of passages from Scripture, including the Psalms, as well as for other hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture. The application of these principles should prevent hymns that are not doctrinally sound from being included in the hymn book of the RCSA.

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Speaking about God: Luther as guide in the field of homiletics

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Introduction

The sermon as a medium for the effectiveness of salvation has fallen into discredit. Already for several decades, churchgoers have not held a high opinion of preaching and preachers. Preachers are now expected to be well educated and cultured if they want to find listeners in the pews. Criticism of preaching affects the heart of Protestant worship. This is intensified in our present culture in which the emotional aspect has come to stay in the rhetoric field; the hearer wants to *experience* something and to be 'mentioned' in the story himself.¹ Bohren (1963:18) however, indicates what is lacking in our preaching is that, in our sermons God is no longer heard.

1. Schneider-Flume 1995:98, *Also nicht mehr "Sola Scriptura", sondern allenfalls, "Schrift und Erfahrung"*.

Luther's Reformation brought a new spirit into preaching. It was as if God at last broke his long silence. Is there now, in the year 2017, a willingness to listen to Luther? The preacher Luther sees the hearers in their daily existence for the living God, in a clarity we have lost today. And is the issue of his concern – the hearers justified by God – still getting through to people who have the antenna of their life pointing in a totally different direction?

Luther's heritage, after 500 years, is still the subject of critical investigation in many studies. We no longer find ourselves in the spring of the Reformation and so we can profit from 500 years of Luther research. Our sermons are preached in organised churches where awareness of the Reformation is being kept alive in one way or another. However, what has become clear in our age is that preachers find it difficult to bring the gold of the Reformation in real money to the hearer. Can Luther still be a guide for expounders of the Bible, for pastoral and teaching ministry within the Christian church? Matthias's 2015 oration at the Protestant Theological University (PThU) shows that preachers have to formulate the Bible texts in a rhetoric way, to make their words subservient to the hearers, so that the listeners will be attracted by the Word of God. The intention of this study is to bring home to us Luther's 'speaking about God'. Luther's sermons cannot be categorised as learned *orations*, like many sermons in the Lutheran orthodoxy in the 17th century, with all the classic rhetorical details, but the sermon as Luther received it from the Holy Spirit. He who was schooled in scholasticism, listened anew to the text and he knew of the freedom of the hearer. For today he appears to be a relevant guide for the praxis of preaching and effective communication of the gospel.

■ The high Word in the depth

Luther spent all of his reformed existence as a preacher. In addition to three church services on most Sundays, he preached once on almost every weekday, at least while he was in Wittenberg. His sermons represent the body of his theology in which he presented something which was new to churchgoers: the exegesis of Scripture. He never claimed the title of 'Reformer' for himself, but nobody would take from him his conviction that he had rediscovered the gospel. He considered himself as the 'Evangelist' and Asendorf (1988) notices that he introduced a complete new preaching style:

Es ergibt sich so ein Netzwerk aus biblischen und dogmatischen Elementen, so das nicht nur das Ganze der Schrift, sondern auch die Tradition der Kirche ständig präsent ist. Dieses ist das Geheimnis des Predigers Luther, der damit alle herkömmlichen Maßstäbe hinter sich lässt und so einen neuen theologischen Stil findet, mit dessen Hilfe das expliziert wird, was von Kreuz und Auferstehung her den Sinn der Rechtfertigung ausmacht. (p. 418)

Luther had a high regard for the Word of God and therefore he took his preaching ministry very serious (Aland 1960):

Christus predigen ist eine schwere und sehr gefährliche Sache. Wenn ich das früher gewusst hätte, so hätte ich niemals gepredigt, sondern mit Mose gesagt (2. Mose 4:13): 'Sende, welchen du senden willst'. (p. 144)

His great concern was, how to preach about the free grace to people of whom he knew due to his spiritual care for them, that they were not ready to confess their sins but rather deny or repress them and therefore block God's absolution by their disobedience. While preaching, Luther experienced for himself the presence of God. As preacher, he was in the presence of God and therefore, preaching was only possible for him in fear and trembling. *'Der Weg zur Predigt, die Zeitsansage des Heute, ist und bleibt ein gefährlicher Weg'* (Möller 1999:506). However, preaching was paramount in his busy life and in the words of Gert Otto, '[e]in gewaltiger Prediger muss er auch gewesen sein, die Menschen mitreissend' (Otto 1983:137).

The approximately 30 volumes of sermons in the *Weimarer Ausgabe* (WA) contain one third of the total works of the reformer. Rolf (2008:300) and Aland (1965:7) estimate the number of sermons in the WA, in German and in Latin, at about 2000. In 1523, he preached 137 sermons from a few Bible books and parts of the Catechism, besides his daily labours of lecturing, writing, correspondence, Bible translating, et cetera (Bornkamm 1963:50).

Nevertheless, we rarely find in his sermons a formulated hermeneutic method even though he brought about great changes through his homiletic works. In his exegesis of Scripture he did not limit himself to a fixed scheme. What Luther had to say comes from the Scriptures and was addressed to the common people. Contrary to the then widespread medieval preaching tradition in which sermons were overrun with allegories and many inessentials, he preached from the text as it lay before him (De Knijff 1980:39). Occasionally he made use of allegory in his sermons, although he used it rather more in his academic lectures. This reduction of allegory in his sermons and highlighting the one name, Jesus Christ, who he made present in his sermons, was new in the way in which Luther preached (cf. Ebeling [1942] 1962:270ff.). The homily became the basic form of his sermons but Luther allowed himself the liberty to consider what he found important as the *scopus* of the text – which was again and again the '*Sinnmitte*'. The homily teaches the hearer to trace and to repeat the words of the text. In *Luthers Psalmen Auslegung*, we see a short, enlightening retelling of the texts. In a paraphrasing way the text is made clear for the congregation. The congregation is encouraged to read the Bible themselves. To Luther, Christ is the *scopus generalis* of all the Scripture (Kooiman n.d.:153; Winkler 1983:70). This concentration on Christ imparts great power to his sermons.

■ Hermeneutic principle

Luther's sermons originate from his radical confidence in the power of the divine Word which appeals to the people's hearts to lead them to Christ. Christ is found in and through the Word, for '*ausserhalb dieses Buches findet man Christus nicht*' (Aland 1983a:345).

Preaching is a communication of the Word of God but it is more than that: It seeks to persuade men to faith, and that is the higher aim. The special characteristic of Luther is that he takes the sermon as an assistance to belief (*'Glaubenshilfe'*) (Winkler 1983:69). Luther makes it clear to his hearers that the Word meets us human beings through and in Christ. The clarity of all the Scriptures (*claritas externa*) is found in the events of the Christ history, and is made *claritas interna* by the Holy Spirit. Luther's intention is to address the hearer's own heart and to make it possible for the preached events of the salvation history, to be applied to the hearer's own life. It brings about the simultaneity of man and Christ. Later on, it was especially Kierkegaard, who saw man's simultaneity with Christ as the *proprium* of faith in Christ (cf. Geismar 1929:315, 412). Aland (1961) states:

Denn was kann in der Schrift noch Erhabenes verborgen sein, [...] jenes höchste Geheimnis verkündigt worden ist, dass Christus, der Sohn Gottes, Mensch geworden ist, dass Gott dreifältig und doch einer sei, dass Christus für uns gelitten hat und ewiglich regieren werde? Nimm Christus fort aus der Schrift, was wirst Du weiter finden? (p. 161)

In the proclamation of the Word the events of the Christ history are presented to the ears of the hearer. The hearer is involved in the history of Christ. He allows Christ to bestow himself upon him and in this way, he rightly 'makes use of' the work of Christ. Faith is here a confident 'letting go' of one's fixation on self and a looking to Jesus (Rolf 2008):

Der rechte Gebrauch der göttlichen und menschlichen Natur Christi besteht für Luther offenkundig in der Applikation des Heilsgeschehens auf die eigene Person, wenn im Glauben Christus und Mensch vereint werden und Christus dem Sünder seine 'Gerechtigkeit' so mitteilt, dass dieser daran partizipiert. (p. 347)

If we correctly understand Luther, his sermons are about the *affective* aspect: About a man who is so affected that he connects his own life history to the history of Jesus Christ. In distinction to the medieval exegesis tradition of the fourfold sense of Scripture, the *sensus literalis, allegoricus, tropologicus, and analogicus*, Luther concentrates in his exegesis and sermons on the Christ crucified. In the Old Testament Luther sees Christ already present in God communing with his people: *'Dieses Einsetzen bei Jesus Christus als dem einen Grundsinn und Grundwort der Heiligen Schrift wird für Luther zum hermeneutischen Grundsatz'* (Ebeling [1942] 1962:113).

From the start, this has been the setting in which Luther managed to break up the scholastic lines of thought. In his sermons, but also in his academic work, Luther focused on the events of the history of Christ, as he himself says in just one sentence, *'Nihil nisi Christus praedicandus'* (Rolf 2008:344). He remoulds it in his own pastoral way into the consolation and consolidation of believers; we see a striking example in his explanation of Psalm 39. While most preachers interpret this Psalm as referring to the fragility of human life, Luther starts by saying that this is a Psalm of comfort, and man should have rest in Christ; Luther's focus on Christ in all his sermons determined his theology to the end.

It was crucial for him to be confined to the text. He did not want to run away with his own insights, nor with a preconceived dogmatic presupposition. God who speaks had for him the actual government in the exegesis of Scripture. New in the preaching of Luther is his use of the indicative and the imperative, the imperative resting upon the indicative. To him this order is irreversible. This is a paradox, for example in Philippians 2:12 and 13, '[w]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (King James Version [KJV]). The Christ of the Scriptures is always visible in the mirror of Luther's Bible exegesis. What Luther preaches is many-sided on the one hand, but simple on the other hand, for the fact that Christ is sent by God governs the entire gospel. Because God works and has worked, therefore man must and can work.

The central question for Luther in his preaching work centred on the relationship between the *sensus literalis* and the *sensus spiritualis*. In his opinion the preacher should remain within the framework of the testimony which comes to us from the true *sensus literalis* and which kindles faith. Luther regards the *sensus literalis* as the proper, and for him also the only, sense of the Holy Scriptures (Ebeling [1942] 1962:49). In Luther's own words, '[d]en *sensus literalis*, der tuts, da ist Leben, Trost, Kraft, Lehre und Kunst innen; das andere ist Narrenwerk, obwohl es hoch gleisst' (Aland 1960:156).

According to this view we see that for Luther's theological concept the concentration on the crucified Christ – *was Christum treibet*² – was very important. Luther saw that men need a God who speaks and that they must say 'yes' to the Cross and the resurrection of Christ; that they let themselves be taken along in conformity with the crucified One, to be buried with him and to rise with him (cf. Jn 12:24). We may mention as an example that Luther in his Easter sermons strongly emphasises the personal connection with Christ. The life of a Christian is connected to the life history of Christ which is to his salvation. A historic faith (*fides historica*) does not count when it is not connected with the 'now', the personal knowledge of Christ.

In the medieval preaching praxis, piety consisted of meditating on the sufferings and death of Christ, the accent being laid on man's compassion for the suffering Christ. Luther proclaims the sufferings, the death and the resurrection of Christ with a view to what is going to happen to a man by that proclamation. In hearing the judgement of God on sin executed upon his beloved Son, the hearer himself dies, and by Christ's resurrection, he is now able to live his new life. Everything is connected to the existence of the hearer himself. We see this in one of Luther's Easter sermons from Mark 16:1–8 (Aland 1965):

2. The German word '*treiben*' means 'to bring forward'. What is important to Luther is to discover again and again one's interest in the Christ of the Scriptures in their multicoloured diversity. According to him, the Scriptures become a unity when Christ is the reference point.

Und das ist die Kraft und Frucht des Leidens und der Auferstehung Christi. Nach der Historie müssen wir wissen und glauben, dass Christus eine hohe, treffliche Person sei, wahrhaftiger Gott und Mensch, und dass sein Leiden und Sterben gross und hoch und seine Auferstehung von den Toten herrlich und sieghaft sei. Aber nach der Kraft und Frucht müssen wir wissen und glauben, dass sein Sieg und Triumph allen ausgeteilt und geschenkt sei, die an ihn glauben. So glauben wir nicht allein, dass Christus in seiner Person gestorben und von den Toten auferstanden sei, sondern auch, dass wir uns desselben Leidens und Auferstehung als unseres, uns gegeben und geschenkten Schatzes annehmen und rechten Trost davon haben, wie wir im Osterliede singen: Des sollen wir alle froh sein, Christ will unser Trost sein. Es gilt uns, Christus will uns mit seiner Auferstehung trösten. (p. 186)

In a Pentecost sermon from 1532, Luther says that *'was Christus treibet'* is the *scopus generalis* for him. Some people see the Holy Spirit as a cither player who is laughed at when he plays on just one string, *'[s]o geht's auch dem Heiligen Geist, Jesus Christus, weiter weiss er nichts'* (Heimbucher 1983:27). Kooiman uses Luther's own example when he represents Christ as the centre of a circle. He who has Christ has everything, for the truth of the Scriptures is *'a perfectly rounded golden ring without joint; it contains only one doctrine, Christ'* (Kooiman n.d.:176). God meets people for salvation in the way that he has *'framed'* so that he lets himself be found only in a certain place.

This place is Christ. Where do we find Christ? *'Niemand wird ihn finden anderswo denn im Wort Gottes'* (Althaus 1975:42). Characteristic of Luther's view of the Word is that, according to him, the preached Word performs what it says because Christ himself is present in the word and in it he gives himself. Christ, together with the salvation purchased by him, apportions to every text the same theme for Luther. In the Pentecost sermon we read: *'Man kann sonst nichts (=nichts anderes) predigen denn von Jesus Christus und vom Glauben. Das ist scopus generalis aller Predigt. [...] Hierher auf den Jesum Christum'* (Heimbucher 1983:27).

In his exegesis of the Old Testament he devotes his attention to the literal historic meaning of the text. He extricates himself from the allegorical interpretation but, at the same time, he occasionally makes use of it in his sermons. The preachers of the Middle Ages who tended to allegorise a great deal he calls *'salt-free and worthless dreamers'* (Kooiman n.d.:40). The difference for Luther is that allegory has no evidential value. However, because Christ is the content, he focuses in his exegesis on Christ alone. The text needs to be explained in its relation to him. The very thing on which all gospel character hinges, is Christ. This requires a thorough exegetical study of the Scriptures, for otherwise the thoughts of preachers are only random brain waves. In a letter to Spalatinus of 07 November 1519, Luther writes about the (Bohren 2007):

[U]ngewachsenen Geschwätz der Kanzelhelden, die Christus zu Tode predigen. [...] Die Ehre und die Höhe eines Christenmenschen wird nicht mehr bedacht; man breitet Probleme aus wie Leichentücher und sucht mit seinem ungewachsenen Geschwätz den Menschen zu gefallen. (p. 59)

What the text says, and what the author meant by the text, are important questions to Luther. The first issue is: What does this say? and then it is personally aimed at the hearer. The preacher, who first lets the Word come to him, reaches for the invisible and makes it visible in his words. For this reason, Luther in his sermons, likes to use the figure of speech called *personificatio*. The narrative element of his sermons indicates that in his preaching he wants to show something to the congregation. In the words with which the Bible text supplies him, he sees kerygmatic matter which he unfolds for the congregation. Thus, apostolic *paraclesis*, consolation, exhortation, edification and assistance is taking place through these sermons (cf. Ellwein 1960:37).

■ God's hiding and revealing of himself

In his sermon structure, Luther did not keep to any fixed scheme because every schematic plan kills the living narrative. '*Es soll ja auch allein gepredigt werden. O wollt gott, da bey den Christen doch das lautter Euangeli bekant were*' (Nembach 1972:42). However, there is a close relationship between Christology and soteriology. These two take hold of each other like two gearwheels. Thus, Luther's speaking about Christ and his work is strongly centred upon salvation. To him, the incarnation has a soteriological focus. Thurneysen (in Bohren [1980] 1986:447), in Luther's tradition, says: '*Der Mensch wartet ja im tiefsten auf nichts anderes als darauf, dass ihm Gott wieder als Gott verkündigt werde. Denn er wartet auf seine Erlösung von sich selber.*'

The sermon is aimed at the salvation of the hearer, the hearer being not just the person addressed to, but it is also one of the starting points of the proclamation.

We find this clarified by Luther's *absconditas* thought which is not limited to his Christology, for in his preaching he shows man God's way with man for his salvation. The hearer would collapse under the direct confrontation with the glory and majesty of God. The hiding of God in the form of a man is an expression of his grace. God often reveals himself in an opposite way, and this is salutary to us as men. Thus, God's grace in Christ becomes *pro me*. Salvation is brought into relationship with the existence of us as men. For us he has suffered, for us he has borne the wrath of God, for us he was tempted so that he might overcome our temptations. Luther has always realised the danger that the hearers of sermons – for example in the Passion sermons – could be stirred to have compassion, which is precisely not the important thing. Bornkamm (1963) cites Luther:

Christus will deine Tränen nicht, die Passion ist dir zur Freude gesandt. Man muss das Wort Christi hören: 'Sieh, Mensch das hättest du leiden müssen, Ich nehme es alles auf meine Schultern.' Dieses glaubende Empfangen der Frucht der Passion ist die rechte Meditation, nicht die fromme Betrachtung der Vorgänge allein. Aus Glaubensmeditation erwächst die Liebe zu Gott und die Nachfolge des Gekreuzigten. (p. 63)

■ *Expositio and applicatio*

In one of his Easter sermons, Luther makes clear what the essential element of the ministers' work is: They have to preach Christ! *'Die Pfaffen haben kein anderes Amt, denn dass sie predigen sollen die klare Sonne Christus'* (Schütz 1972:91).

They are to bring people to Christ, by making clear, that the sermon's purpose is to help the hearers to justice and to salvation. For the believer, Jesus Christ becomes the only word, the key of all revelation, the mirror of God's fatherly heart. This was what Luther had in mind with his sermons and, because of this, his sermons have such surprising, stirring and stimulating elements: *'Darum kommt in ihr das Evangelium so zu Wort, dass es Herzen der Hörer und Leser zu ergreifen und zu "entzünden" vermag'* (Ellwein 1960:8).

Sermons preached in the churches were also meant to teach people. The sermon structure of Luther was logical, the leading thought was mentioned at the beginning and subsequently unfolded. This way of preaching is *deductive*. The general truth is declared and then expounded in the application. Luther's preaching created surprise because he spoke in a plain language and in a direct way, understandable for all the hearers. In his sermons, we observe more dramatic, as well as surprising exegetical discoveries. He was aiming at concrete situations and disliked abstractions. The hearer was 'seen' in his sermons. He focussed on the 'I' of the hearer (Rolf 2008:347). Ellwein speaks of Luther's sermons as a 'treasury containing precious treasures and jewels which were unknown hitherto, and which he makes to bear on the concrete reality. They are edifying and faith-strengthening' (Ellwein 1960:7). The hearers are stimulated to think and find themselves carried along in the thought process. There is an interaction between the preacher and the hearer.

Luther's sermons look like a conversation between the homilist and the hearer. Schooled in scholasticism, he allowed himself the liberty of not sticking to all the rhetorical rules which were usual at that time. With him there is something of the jolt and surprise of things which happen in the conversation between preacher and hearer. Van der Laan (1989:117–119) characterises the homilist as an '*Anwalt*' [advocate] of the listeners and of the biblical traditions alternatively. It should be important to the preacher that the language of the past is rendered in the language of the people of today, but also in such a way that the doctrine which is conveyed is transmitted in the proclamation. To Luther, the proclamation of the Word of God was '*das wesentliche und entscheidende Stück des Gottesdienstes*' (Ruprecht 1962:23), with the accent on the *expositio et applicatio Verbi Dei*. Typical of all his sermons is the *pro me* or the *pro nobis* character. He saw this as the key to the correct understanding of the gospel and therefore he used it frequently. By this *pro me* and *pro nobis*, Christ is being defined to us. But society was not left out, for Luther with God's Word in his hand, had a word for everyone (Thimme 1983):

Ein Prediger soll Zähne im Maul haben, beissen und salzen und jedermann die Wahrheit sagen. Denn also tut Gottes Wort, dass es die ganze Welt antastet, greift Herrn und Fürsten und jedermann ins Maul. (p. 40)

Luther's sermons have a strong exegetical backing and he knew to present difficult issues in ordinary language to the people. Intuitively, Luther carries how the hearer along in the Bible passage in which he addresses the hearer in his or her concrete situation. This gives his sermons something which is dynamic and communicative. When God speaks to man, man reacts to it. The hearer's experience with the text expresses itself in faith, being an existential assent which affects the hearer totally. Luther had a genuine concern for everyone in his congregation. However, his preaching style appears to have been differently understood by Ernst Lange in the 20th century, whose inquiry into the practical theology centres on the hearer in the proclamation. Luther is a corrective for Lange, because Lange lays the accent on the preacher and his work, whereas Luther powerfully begins with God and the operation of the Holy Spirit. Luther makes a stronger distinction than Lange between the work of God and the work of man.³

Deus dixit

God reveals himself to us in the Word and from the prologue of the Gospel of John we know that this is Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1, 14). For Luther, the testimony of John was that in Jesus Christ he too was connected with the Father and the Holy Spirit and that in Jesus Christ he had a total encounter with God himself. In the incarnated Word (Jn 1:14) he saw the exposition of God's heart.

Through the mouth of the preacher, people hear God himself speaking to them. In the *Deus dixit*, Luther sees himself as an authorised expositor and witness of the Word of God. Christ is in the centre of all the redemptive acts of God and consequently he is also the centre of the Word of God. This proclamation appeals to the hearer in such a way as it is *per Du* – personally addressed to the hearer. To Luther this is no homiletical trick but *the fundamental element of preaching*. In and during the proclamation, hearers are involved in the great '*Kampf Christi*' (Wingren 1955:108). For Luther it is sure that, '[s]eine Werke geschehen gegenwärtig durch das Predigamt' (Nembach 1972:27). Luther speaks out on this as follows (in Schütz 1972):

Oberflächliche, historisierende Predigt, in der der Hörer nicht vorkommt, bewirkt nichts. Darum heisst es: Ich predige das Euangelion von Christo und mit der leiblichen Stimme bringe ich dir Christum uns hertz. (p. 140)

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3. For more information and reflections on the homiletics and the development of Ernst Lange, see Bröking-Bortfeldt [2004].

This exegesis of the Scriptures makes Luther's preaching and speaking to be 'so unerhört gegenwartsnah, aufbauend und glaubensstärkend' (Ellwein 1960:7). Luther's view of faith is very existential: A personal meeting with the living God in the proclamation, in which the hearts of the hearers are touched, broken, comforted and healed. Here the Scripture becomes subjective to the hearer who senses that he is being addressed in the Word by the Spirit of God (cf. De Reuver 1997:103). The work of the Holy Spirit is seen in the proclamation of the gospel. Luther assumed that where the Word is being heard the hearers find themselves under the breath of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit meets us in the proclamation of the Word which comes to us from 'the outside', and thus brings about the appropriate hearing with faith which takes place inside the heart. That what is *intra me* [inside of me] lives entirely on what is *extra me* [outside of me]. This affects the whole existence of the believing hearer. De Reuver says that the 'discovering work' of the Holy Spirit is no 'solitary happening' in which the hearer is merely on his own, but is an 'encounter happening' in which the conviction of *sin coram Deo* is the fruit of law and gospel by the applicative work of Christ and the Spirit. The place where this critical, diagnostic event takes place is pre-eminently in preaching (De Reuver 2004:205). Churchgoers heard in Luther's sermons a living testimony which arose from his communing with the Scriptures.

■ Two poles

Here we see the two poles between which the whole inquiry in Luther's view of preaching swings back and forth; as it was already mentioned: It is with the *physical voice* and it is within *the heart*. On the one side stands the preacher, the theologian and, on the other side, the hearer. The *viva vox*, the living word of the gospel can be heard by the often simple men, women and children who are present. Luther had the educational insight to make the proclamation understandable to everybody, and to speak the language of the people (Aland 1983b):

Wir Deutschen sind ein wildes, rohes, tobendes Volk, mit dem nicht leicht etwas anzufangen ist, es treibe denn die höchste Not. (p. 90)

Man muss die Mutter im Hause, die Kinder auf der Gasse, den einfachen Mann auf dem Markt danach fragen, und denselben auf das Maul sehen, wie sie reden, und danach übersetzen, so verstehen sie es denn, und merken, dass man deutsch mit ihnen redet. (p. 85)

After having explained Psalm 110 Luther's secretary wrote at the end (in Mühlhaupt 1965):

So werdet ihr den Psalm nu wohl verstehen. Er las den Text noch einmal. Das ist der Psalm. Er ist durch seine prophetischen Worte finster, aber nach solcher Auslegung ist er nu klar. Denn er erhält dasselbe, was mit deutlichen Worten auch im Kinderglauben und im Evangelium steht. (p. 256)

Luther's entire communication process takes place against the background of a *relational horizon*. He was an academic with a commitment to teaching. A child of his time, schooled in the scholastic method and bound by the rhetoric tradition, yet he goes counter to his time. In doing so he was not always very discreet in his use of words. The Dutch translator of his sermons on Psalm 118 lets the following remark escape from his pen, '[u]ho wants to take offence at Luther, let him do so. He finds ample opportunity here' (Houwink 1936:7). In his sermons, we see a man who preaches in such a way '*dass man Kinder zur Schulen halten solle*' (Schütz 1972:144).

In holy awe of the Word and of its proclamation, he laid down the high Word in the depth amidst the congregation, and held it aloft to the praise of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He continued lecturing but did it in an educationally and didactically wise way. His sermons were a product of their time – necessarily so – yet in reading his sermons we are under the impression that we are listening to a *contemporary*. This is the result of the fact that his sermons have a strong exegetical backbone and that he presented the proclamation in an indicative manner.

■ The creative power of the Word

Luther's sermons in general are simple homilies (Ruprecht 1962:28). The preached Word makes Christ known to the people. In the prophetic word of the church the presence of the suffering and the risen Christ is mediated. Full salvation in Christ is offered in the proclamation of the gospel and is directed at the heart of hearer (cf. Graafland 1982:216–217).

To Luther, the important thing in the proclamation of the Word is the realisation of the eschatological salvation in our life, and therefore his Christological concentration is defined in a soteriological way. The history of salvation and the history of the faith of the individual meet each other. The 'second coming of the Lord becomes actually present, becomes present tense' (Graafland 1982:217). From this it follows that Luther sometimes identifies God's Word with preaching. He says (in Kooiman n.d.):

Believing and reading the Scriptures means hearing the Word from the mouth of Christ; when that happens to you, you know it is no human word but surely God's Word. (p. 198)

The Word of God is alive in the performance of preaching; as *explicatio* and *applicatio*, it finds its realisation here during this process, '[d]enn Evangelium predigen ist nichts anderes, denn Christum zu uns kommen oder uns zu ihm bringen' (Althaus 1975:43).

Our encounter with God is fully in the Word, but it reaches us by the words of men. Because in the Word God is the Creator of all things, and he reveals his heart in his Word to us and speaks to us through the living Word. Therefore, Luther can say:

God the Father is in the godly Scriptures, the grammar, for He gives the words and things. The Son is the dialecta. He shows us the good order of the things; and the Holy Spirit is the rhetorica. He blesses and hovers. (Gn 1:1 [NIV]) us to make us alive; see Matthias 2015:30)⁴

It is only permissible to identify God's Word with preaching when preaching proclaims God's revelation in Christ to man of today, in the awareness that preaching continues to depend upon God's Spirit. He kindles faith in men who can testify that they have received the Word of God. Rolf speaks about 'the *creative power*' of the Word (Rolf 2008:310). Christ, who is proclaimed for the sinner's salvation, makes the sinner fully certain of this salvation. If ever we see the power of such preaching, it is here. Luther makes the creative power of the Word to be heard, and this makes the once and only history of Jesus Christ's salvation a reality for today.

Still, Luther did not always make the difference between the Word and preaching quite consistently. Winkler notices that Luther was convinced of being a servant of God who has the power to communicate the Word ('*das Wort zu geben*') (Winkler 1983:79). He is a communicator of the Word of God, and as a good preacher he is first preaching to himself, but always it is, '[s]o speaks the Lord.' Furthermore (Schütz 1972):

In dieser Predigt wird die Gegenwart Christi in seinem Wort so direkt, real und konkret in die Welt des 16. Jahrhundert hineingestellt, dass mitten in ihr die Heuchelei entlarvt und die Macht des neuen Lebens aufgerichtet wird. Es schwindet die Differenz der Zeiten, und die Vergegenwärtigung ist so unmittelbar, dass die Welt des Neuen Testaments einfach die von Wittenberg und Kursachsen ist [...] das ist das unmittelbare Gegenwärtigsein Christi in seinem Wort und mit seinem Geist. (p. 94–95)

■ Origin

From where does such preaching come? Luther begins with the revelation of God. His theological approach starts with God because man by his own endeavours cannot find access to God. With Luther the emphasis lies with God speaking to man about God. Evangelical preaching is by its nature indicative preaching. Indicative preaching is (Bukowski 1992):

[S]chriftgebundene Ansage und Zusage der freien Gnade Gottes an alles Volk, also assertorische und promissorische Rede von dem Gott, der sich in Jesus Christus als Gott für uns geoffenbart hat. (p. 127)

According to Douma, the indicative form of preaching has an *argumentative* language form, typified by the following characteristics: the use of concepts, abstraction, logic, the

4. '*Pater in divinis est grammatica, dat enim voces. Filius est dialecta, dat dispositionem rerum. Spiritus Sanctus rhetorica, bleset vnd treibt vivicando*' [see the switch from Latin to German: *viva vox*; WA 48.463, v. 14 in Matthias 2015:30, note 68].

exposition of a standpoint, propositions, clarity, objectivity, scholarship, information, and unity (Douma 2000:171).

Such language use aims at clarity, at giving and getting objective information in order to convince. It is the Scripture-bound announcement and promise of the free grace of God to the whole congregation. In this way, God's speaking and acting reaches the heart of man in Luther's sermons. The text of the Bible is the door which gives access to the reality of God. In the inductive method in which we constantly find an interaction between the preacher and the hearer. Homiletically formulated, Luther brings the text and the hearer into a relationship; theologically formulated, his proclamation is a ministry of the Word of God in the church of Christ. Luther believes it is God's will that his message is proclaimed. He is the living God – a God who creates while speaking and speaks while creating. Doctrine and experience are neither separated nor seen as a contradiction in such preaching. In the indicative proclamation salvation acts, salvation history and the personal experience of the hearer grip each other. This is the essential, as well as the new thing which Luther in his view on preaching has given to the Reformation. In the time since the Reformation, the subjective experience of salvation and objective grace have grown apart. In post-Reformation times people were no longer able to bear the 'burden' of the paradoxical speaking of Word and Spirit (Kommers 2006:240ff.). In the Lutheran Orthodoxy of the 17th century the way of the sinner in coming to the knowledge of salvation has been systematised in a prescribed method, and so the exegesis of Scripture has lost its freedom.

■ Characteristics

It would require a separate study to expound the sources of Luther's method of preaching. He had the highest esteem for Quintilianus (c. 35 – c. 100 AC) among all the rhetoricians in Antiquity (Nembach 1972:130; cf. Rolf 2008:283–291). The first thing to mention is the fact that it is *the* characteristic of Luther's indicative preaching that the free character of grace is so clearly expressed. By this, each insistent and each distinguishing call become needless. In his sermons faith as a gift of the Holy Spirit is emphasised – it is not the result becomes of one's own efforts (Josuttis 1966:16ff.). We hear in the sermons urgent calls to faith and exhortations to listen to the gospel (Bukowski 1992):

Sie solle die frohe Botschaft durch ihr Tun in dieser Welt bewahrheiten. [...] Eine Predigt, die so vorgeht, ist infam. [...] Die freie Gnade ist nicht mehr frei, wenn ihre Wirksamkeit an eine Vorbedingung geknüpft wird. (pp. 132, 136)

Luther's sermons have a *pastoral orientation*; they are aimed at men's salvation (cf. Geyser 1930:66), and people see him, as it were, sitting next to them in the pew. Asendorf (1988) compares him with other preachers and concludes that, '*der Unterschied liegt vor allem in*

der seelsorgerlichen Absicht Luthers, sich in den Predigten der Aufnahmefähigkeit des Hörers anzupassen' (Asendorf 1988:18).

The pastoral emphasis opens the door to preaching God's comfort to the congregation. Though Luther's sermons may have a somewhat argumentative style, his intention was always to keep the pastoral aspect uppermost, as its essence is characterised by an appeal for a response in faith. Strictly speaking, such preaching is a call to faith. The hearer is confronted with Christ being both the object of faith and a sign of offence. The hearer cannot neutralise what he hears about Christ, and thus he cannot run away from a decision either because preaching about Christ appeals not to his *reason*, but to his *heart!* The sermon has to meet the gospel's aim, that is, to bring *metanoia* about in the hearer. The gospel as the Word of God will work this out, according to the *adagium* of the Reformation: *praedicatio verbi dei est verbum Dei* (cf. Bullinger [1566]1886:ch. 1).

As long as the gospel is preached it continues to be a preaching about the Cross of Christ. Hence the strong power of Luther's sermons is that the simultaneity of the events of salvation history – having taken place once – with today's hearer is made homiletically effective (Althaus 1975):

Und also kommt Christus durch das Evangelium in unser Herz, der muss auch mit dem Herzen angenommen werden. So ich nun glaub, dass er im Evangelio sei, so empfahe und hab ich ihn schön. (p. 42)

■ **Visuality**

Luther seriously makes the effort in his sermons to give the best visual picture of history possible. When the earthly life of Jesus is dealt with, we 'see' him sitting at the well, sailing on the lake with the fishermen and following, as a man like ourselves, in his path of sufferings to Golgotha. Everything is made so visible that the *perfectum*, the history which has happened, becomes the foundation of the building which Luther erects in his theology and preaching (Ellwein 1960):

Die Passionsgeschichte z.B. soll nicht nur Historie bleiben, sondern wir sollen sie recht brauchen lernen, d.h. sie im Glauben ergreifen, auf ihr stehen. [...] Wir dürfen nicht vergessen, dass alles uns gilt, mir und dir, dass es um unsertwillen geschehen ist uns angeht. [...] Wenn das Herz nichts von der Historie, etwas der Auferstehung schmeckt und davon 'angezündet' wird, ist sie vergeblich gehört und ist in dir tot. [...] Erst die Verkündigung macht das Ereignis zu einem Ereignis für uns. (pp. 108–109)

We see an aspect of Luther's sermons in which many people find it difficult to follow him. Luther preached very concretely. Also, he spoke openly about the enmity of man towards God. In much of today's proclamation there is an embarrassment when sin is mentioned and consequently there is an inability to speak the redeeming words in

preaching. Modern man stands in his own way. It results in the preacher being satisfied even though the preaching simply goes over the heads and the guilty hearts of the people. Today's preaching especially needs clarity about the question of God's presence. When sin is not confessed, but repressed and denied, no word of proclamation can penetrate with the power to open and to shut. These sermons worked faith in the hearts of the hearers, for by this sacramental way of preaching the sermons brought about what they contained.

■ Conclusion

Today we do not follow Luther as the exclusive model for our preaching, but in the Reformation something was started which must be continued. Also with our Reformed outlook we find it difficult to understand always Luther's viewpoint and therefore fail to identify our preaching with the Word of God *sui generis*. The Calvinistic tradition lays other emphases. Preachers of the Word are themselves to be under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. They minister the Word even as the apostles in the New Testament were inspired in their speaking and writing. When we look back on the past 500 years, we again need to think the matter through for our times in the light of what has been written about Luther above. The situation of the church today compels us to look again at the gold of the Reformation and make it accessible for our times. In Luther's own words (Bohren 1963):

Mit den Zeiten wandeln sich auch die Buchstaben und der Geist. Denn was jenen damals zum Verständnis diente, das ist jetzt für uns zum Buchstaben geworden. Man muss darum nach dem Verständnis suchen, damit wir nicht mit dem Buchstaben erstarren. (p. 228)

Because Luther had no objective view of the life of faith, he sees the hearer in the proclamation as someone to whose heart the Holy Spirit reveals and opens the grace of Christ. In his sermons Luther exposes his heart to us and he remains someone universally acclaimed; he 'is unique among his kind and inimitable' (cf. Winkler 1983:82). Even to this day his sermons still stand in their monumental strength and not only show us a way to understand his own labours, they also inspire our generation of preachers and offer perspectives for today's spirituality.

Though Bohren speaks of a '*Predigtmüdigkeit*' (Bohren [1980] 1986:17, 151) in our churches today, we would do well to apprentice ourselves to Luther again in order to receive a supply of new vitality for our preaching commitment and preaching praxis, and to open up a new preaching panorama. We must do this, because Bohren's complaint has still not really been heard. He also uttered it earlier, when he stated 50 years ago that (Bohren 1963):

Überblickt man die Predigtliteratur unserer Zeit, so muss man feststellen, dass sie als weithin enteschatologisierte nicht Zukunft zu eröffnen vermag, dass aus Mangel an Zukunft auch die Gegenwart des Christus präsens zu kurz kommt. (p. 82)

A systematic arrangement of Luther's sermons remains a difficult task, since he was no systematist himself. His sermons need to be heard and seen against the background of his life as a preacher. However, the Wittenberg congregation was never kept in doubt that the words which came from the mouth of their preacher opened the heart of the Scriptures in order to bring that heart to the heart of the hearers. Therefore, it did not matter when sometimes his sermons were one-sided. They have their starting point in God's generous offer of his mercy and faithfulness stemming from his promise, so that people may live out of the sacrifice of Christ, from that which is and will be proclaimed to the congregation again and again. Lessons from Luther's sermons warn the preacher of today not to lapse into moralistic speeches. They teach us to avoid the '*Predigtmüdigkeit*' within the congregation and within the circle of ministers. They enable us to face the future looking to Christ. I agree with Mühlhaupt when he recommends that preaching with the help of Luther certainly will not damage us, '*die evangelische Unterweisung unsrer Gemeinden wird bestimmt keinen Schaden davon haben*' (Mühlhaupt 1958:5).

In our theological training centres today students should have to learn again the classic rules of speech, which would teach them to reach the people in a good emotional and existential way. Luther's Scripture-bound experience of faith keeps him from digressions to where human thoughts are given free rein, and where self and human activity stand on a higher level than the humble – and at the same time lofty – glory of the crucified Christ. Luther looked back enquiringly hundreds of years; he went back to the Scriptures themselves, and from them he drew from that never-ceasing fountain. When this heritage of the Reformation is thus embraced in our 21st century, it points back to the fountain and it points forward as well. Then the adage *semper reformanda ecclesia* has not only a five-hundred-year-old power, but it also puts a guide book into the hands of today's people so that the church of Christ may be led into the future – a future anchored in Christ where the hearers hear him in the proclamation and look forward to the day of redemption when they will experience everything which is heard and believed here on earth.

Luther renewed preaching when he taught us *to read the Bible*. People that allow themselves to be used by God never belong to the past. In listening to Luther we become contemporaries and there is no need to demonstrate in a complicated way that he is our contemporary. Great thoughts speak to us over the ages. Luther, this original figure with a self-willed character, this superb homilist, has spread the gospel in such a way that the echo can be heard even today. His proclamation provides the means for us to face the challenges of the future and thus plays its part in God's ordained story.

■ Summary: Chapter 1

This study about Luther's preaching shows that this reformer emphasises the priority and power of preaching God's Word in such a way that it will be a feast and joy for Christ's sheep. For us, living in a time when many churchgoers do not have a high opinion

of preaching and preachers we see that criticism of preaching is affecting the heart of Protestant worship. What has to be done to overcome Bohren's statement that in our sermons God is no longer heard? (*Sein Schweigen geht durch unser Predigen*) (Bohren 1963:18). It is shown that Luther's preaching is spiritually challenging and that it provides real refreshment for the gospel ministry 2017 CE. What we need in our time is preaching that unpacks the message of the Bible and conveys a sense of the reality of God's presence.

Luther's Reformation brought a new spirit into preaching. It was as if God at last broke his long silence. Is there now, in the year 2017, a willingness to listen to Luther? Is the great question of life and death which he asked still getting through to people who have the antenna of their life pointing in a totally different direction?

The heritage of Luther and of other Reformers is, after 500 years, still the subject of critical investigation in many studies. We no longer find ourselves in the spring of the Reformation and so we can profit from 500 years of Luther research. Our sermons are preached in organised churches where awareness of the Reformation is being kept alive in one way or another. However, what has become clear in our age is that preachers find it difficult to bring the gold of the Reformation in real money to the customer. In our emotional culture Luther teaches us afresh to direct our ear to the Word of God alone. The intention of this chapter is to bring home to us Luther's 'speaking about God'. He appears to be a very relevant guide for the praxis of preaching and the hearing of sermons today because his preaching demonstrates characteristic features which provides a model for today's preaching: To prepare and to dish up the food so that those who hear the sermon will believe and take salvation. To believe the remission of sins means for Luther also to proclaim the remission, *'[d]enn auch die Predigt des heiligen Evangelii selbst ist im Grund und eigentlich Absolution'* (Luther in Bohren 2007:40).

To refer to Luther and to quote his words is not a proof for us today, that the movement Luther initiated is a vivid reality for us, we who boast to be heirs of the Reformation. Luther's preaching praxis many ages ago teaches us that, *'geschichte kann reden, sie kann sich gegenwärtig machen. Sie kann so reden, dass wir selbst dadurch erwachsen, um von ihr her unser Sein und unsere Aufgabe neu zu ergreifen'* (Iwand 1974:27).

Evaluation of the concept of continuous reformation (*semper reformanda*) in liturgy focussed on the Reformation of the 16th century and the emergent church movement

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■ Introduction

The principle of continuous reformation should be a stimulus when reflecting on theological research on the relationship between the theory and praxis in liturgy. Signs of the tension between theory and praxis were already visible in the 16th-century Reformation and are evident in 21st-century theological thinking. The impetus behind the 16th-century Reformation originated in a liturgical issue, namely the criticism and rejection of the Roman Mass. This rejection was the first step of a ground-breaking reformation in liturgy in general and in preaching as a part of liturgy. Unfortunately, deformation follows on reformation in the course of time. In truth, reformation or deformation of liturgy and homiletics has continued through the ages to the present time like a wave motion. Every time the voices in favour of reformation were heard or the ensuing suction force of deformation was felt, the equilibrium of the accepted theory and praxis regarding liturgy was disturbed. For this reason, the principle of *semper reformanda* [continuation of reformation] is also applicable to liturgical acts (including the homiletical part). Two approaches to the reformation of liturgical acts can be identified. The one is motivated by the conviction that the present acts must be reformed because they are in conflict with Scripture, the other is based on the argument that the liturgical acts do not consider the context of the continuous dynamic interaction between theory and praxis. A theory to be more specific, could be regarded as a discussion, consideration and planning pertaining to the praxis (a concrete action within the church and society) (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:24–26). The one couldn't determine the one without regard of the other, otherwise some kind of distortion will emanate.

Tickle (2012:17–29) offers a unique outlook on the history of believers by pointing out recurrent patterns in Christianity. These patterns in Christian affairs have contributed to our understanding of reformation. She indicates that every 500 years,⁵ Western culture, along with those parts of the world it has colonialised, goes through a time of enormous upheaval (rummage sales). Tickle (2012:17) thinks that in such times, essentially every part of Western culture is reconfigured. On 31 October 1517, the day Luther posted his 95 theses on the Wittenberg church door, remains a zenith in history. The emergence of the reformation was official, but it was also the starting point and birthing of a new way of ordering life, according to Tickle (2012:14). She concludes saying that day in history was proof that the world was in re-formation (Tickle 2012:29). Suddenly, churches became aware of critical voices and a movement away from the established church.

5. Five hundred years ago, the Great Reformation occurred. In 1517, Luther nailed his theses to the church door. Five hundred years before the Reformation brings us to the Great Schism (1054 CE). In 1054, the patriarch of Eastern Orthodox Christianity presented his anathemas and Pope Leo IX reacted with his bulls of excommunication. Five hundred years prior to the Great Schism brings us to the 6th century, the onset of the Dark Ages (Tickle 2012:20).

Today, people are asking about the heritage of the Reformation. How should we deal with merging cultures and the emergent church movement? The issue at stake is how modern Christianity, which emphasises individualism, propositional truth and rationalism, could connect with postmodern people that are sometimes dissatisfied with the church (Bohannon 2006:56).

The research problem of this investigation is defined as follows: 'How should we evaluate the liturgical reform of the 16th-century Reformation and its implications, and the 21st century phenomenon of the emergent church 500 years later?'

This investigation will be of an exploratory nature. A qualitative literature study will be undertaken and a process of analysis and interpretation will be executed. Deductions will also be made in order to provide perspectives on how practical theological research in liturgics (including homiletics) could possibly provide suggestions for the continuation of reformation and meet the challenges of an emergent culture. Browning (1996:6) explains that when a religious community faces a crisis in its practice, it begins reflecting on whether its practices are meaningful or too heavily theory-laden. This reaction results from the recognition that the present concern shapes the way we interpret the past and vice versa (Browning 1996:35).

■ Theoretical foundation of the interaction between theory and praxis in liturgy

To evaluate the concept of continuous reformation in liturgy it is necessary to lay down principles for the interaction between theory (scriptural and theological measures) and praxis (the context in which liturgy is currently functioning). A dynamic relationship between liturgical theory and praxis is not determined by complete separation or by identification of the two, but by a bipolar tension-filled combination (Greinacher in Heitink 1993):

The shift from theory to praxis, and vice versa, is a qualitative shift. Theory is in constant need of verification or falsification through praxis, while praxis must constantly be transcended by theory. (p. 152)

Swinton and Mowat (2006) highlighted the critical dynamic conversation in the following manner:

The dialectical movement is from practice (action) to theory, to critical reflection on practice, to revised forms of practice developed in the light of this spiralling process. The data and the practice are constantly challenged, developed and revised as they interact critically and dialectically with one another. (p. 255)

This sets up a tension-filled critical engagement of theory with praxis and praxis with theory in a continuing bipolar relationship. In attending to this interaction, 'practical

theology is not an occasional, problem-solving technique but an ongoing way of doing theology and living the Christian faith' (Kinast 2000:61).

Unrelated theory might become unreflecting theory, a theory constructed without specific reality points, standing free from challenge by praxis. Such an unreflecting theory tends to become static and ineffective when there is a change in its context (Pieterse 2011:50). Such theory, abstract and unrelated, constructed without due consideration of the praxis, unreflecting, applied dispassionately without regard for the specifics of the praxis is disconnected from the life of the spirit community (Smith 2016:134). Those that prioritise the existing praxis itself lean toward the confirmation and protection of the status quo. They are 'so comfortable with the existing state of affairs that they are fearful of all change. [*To them*] the status quo has to be preserved at any cost' (Heyns & Pieterse 1990:30). They have allowed the praxis in its entirety to drift from any reference to or reflection on theory, to such an extent that to them the current praxis is right.

Pieterse (2011:50) states that there is no such a thing as pure theory and therefore theory is always influenced by context and experience. Rather, we are seeking a theory of theology grounded in praxis (Anderson 2001:14). This is not to be confused with a theology that finds its authority in praxis or arises from revelation alone, but rather we are speaking of a theology that raises and addresses questions that seek the mind of Christ through Scripture as applied in a concrete situation (Anderson 2001:37). Swinton and Mowat (2006:26) concur with the idea that the process ought to move from practice to reflection on practice, and back to practice, a dynamic movement that is carried out in the light of the Christian tradition and other sources of knowledge and is aimed at feeding back into the tradition and the practice of the church. This produces an informed praxis where theory shapes praxis and praxis questions and reshapes theory. Theory and praxis therefore exist in a bipolar tension (Heitink 1993:195). Thus, the once linear process becomes a continual dynamic or conversational cycle (Smith 2016:146).

In this research, the *theory of liturgy* consists of principles from Scripture for liturgical acts and participation in these acts, as well as norms from history (cf. Osmer 2008:139). *Praxis* is seen as the liturgical context of the present day, including the participation of the congregation in the liturgical acts and culture of the day.

■ Evaluation of the interaction of theory and praxis in the liturgy of the 16th-century Reformation

This evaluation will take place under the following headings: The 16th-century Reformation as reformation of the existing praxis; The unity of Word and Sacrament;

God as initiator enables the acts in liturgy; Participation of the congregation; The principle of freedom in liturgy; Interaction of principles with culture; and *semper reformanda*.

■ The 16th-century Reformation as reformation of the existing praxis

The movements in various countries, cities and villages prepared the Reformation of the 16th century. There was no wish to break away from the Mother Church, but rather to purify the church by re-examining the whole question of faith (cf. Van de Poll 1954:9). It is no surprise that scholars describe the starting point of the Reformation as a liturgical move. In the Chapel of Saint John the Baptist in Strasbourg in 1525, a certain Diobald Schwarz, openly laid aside the Roman missal and used a *Deutsche Messe*. This was the first move in the direction of liturgical reformation (Barnard 1981:293). He used the vernacular German, and not Latin, but it was more than a translation. Although he followed the framework of the Roman Mass, he purified it from the character of sacrifice, the reference to holy persons and the worship of the Virgin Mary. Schwarz replaced the private confession with the congregation's confession, he served both bread and wine to the congregation and he faced the congregation instead of standing with his back to them (Van de Poll 1954:10, 11).

The Reformation of the 16th century was intended to reform elements of the late medieval church by going back to principles from Scripture as well as guidelines from the church of the 2nd century. The focus was on the unity of two elements, namely preaching in line with the liturgy of the synagogue and the sacraments of the New Testament (Baptism and The Lord's Supper).

■ The unity of Word and sacrament

Perhaps the most important character of the early stages of the liturgy of the Reformation is the fact that the service had two main parts: The service of the Word consisting of readings of portions of Scripture and a sermon, and the service of the Eucharist, intercessory prayers formed a bridge between the two parts (cf. Immink 2014:227; Schuler 2016:197; Wolterstorff 1992:278).

□ Reformation of the Mass

The degeneration of the church of late medieval times was evident in the act of the Mass. The effect of the degeneration was that Scripture did not control and correct practices

and tradition became the norm. The liturgy became the sole work of a few priests and because of most of the people's lack of knowledge of Scripture the worship service was gradually deformed. The Mass and the overwhelming thought that it had the character of the continuing sacrifice of Christ formed the essence of the liturgy (Barnard 1981:246). The Reformers repudiated any impression that the sacrament either repeated or effected Christ's sacrifice anew. Calvin was steadfastly opposed to understanding the Eucharist as the self-offering of the church. Worship to him was a sacrifice, but a sacrifice of praise and not propitiation (Witvliet 2003:142). The Roman Mass with its idea of transubstantiation and the character of sacrifice had to be replaced by the service of the Word, Scripture reading and preaching, especially on justification through faith without works of the law.

Luther followed Schwarz's *Deutsche Messe* (Van de Poll 1954:10). Although Luther had serious criticism of the Mass, he hesitated to change the texts and usages of the Mass. His version, *Deutsche Messe und Ordnung des Gottesdiensts*, was only published in 1526. It was not the first German vernacular liturgical order as other German masses appeared before his version was completed at the end of 1525. Luther accepted the liturgical continuity of the basic form and structure of the Mass, but at the same time, he also created a discontinuity by his innovations. He had a radically new theological interpretation of the traditional form. The proclamation of the gospel was the unifying principle of Luther's *Deutsche Messe*. The act of chanting the Epistles and gospels was thus given prominence, the sermon on the gospel became an integral part of the Lord's Supper. These practices were in contrast with the fact that at that time, sermons were infrequent and the canon almost unheard by worshippers that attended the medieval Roman Mass. The role of each member of the congregation was no longer to be one of a mute spectator but rather one of an active participant. The whole church, rather than the choir alone, was to sing parts of the Ordinary of the Mass, such as the Kyrie and the German Agnus Dei, as well as the newly introduced hymns. Above all, the *Deutsche Messe* was essentially a musical service of worship, a combination of chant and hymnody, with the sermon and the paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer, the only spoken elements of the liturgical form (Leaver 2001:318). Luther's *Deutsche Messe* is one of the most important liturgical documents of the Reformation era (Leaver 2001:317).

During his first stay at Geneva, Calvin (and Farel) stated the principle of the unity between Word and sacrament, but in 1538, they were banned from Geneva. In his short stay at Strasbourg, he stressed the same principle and the fact that the service of the Word had to spill over in the service of the Eucharist. In 1541, his attempt in Geneva to change the custom of the Zwinglian liturgy of celebrating the feast of the Lord's Supper four times a year to be part of the weekly Sunday service was denied. He protested against this 'wrong doing' during his entire life. He argued that this sacrament was another place in the worship service where it became clear that worship is abiding in the presence of God (Old 2003:420).

□ Reformation of the Pronaus

The Reformers recovered the audible reading of Scripture in the language of the people, together with its sermonic explication and application (Wolterstorff 1992:287). The late medieval preaching service, the Pronaus, was well known to the Reformers. Ulrich Zwingli, as a humanist, reformed the liturgy of the cathedral in Zurich to this Pronaus, a short service that had already been used in Germany and German-speaking cantons in Switzerland in medieval times. The Pronaus was a church service consisting only of a sermon and confession of guilt. Zwingli believed in the power of education and that changing the minds of people was a mere cognitive action. Because of his view that the sermon is the main item of the service, he banned song and music from his liturgy. He also reduced the frequency of the Lord's Supper to once a year, because in his mind it was only a memorial meal. The participation of the congregation was also limited in his liturgy. Farel brought the service of Zwingli from Zurich into the worship service of Geneva (Brienen 1987:33).

Calvin stressed the unity of Scripture reading and preaching. In his view, these two actions constituted the one single liturgical act of the service of the Word, which had to lead to the Lord's Supper (Old 2003:434). For Calvin, the unity of Word and sacrament stemmed from the 2nd-century liturgy. Wolterstorff (1992:278) judges the separation of the two main parts of the liturgy in strong language. He invariably wants the main Sunday service of the Christian church (except for certain sects) to include these two components at all places and times. Zwingli tore them apart. In place of one service with two main high points, he instituted two distinct services namely, a Scripture-sermon service and a Lord's Supper service, with the latter held just four times a year.

Wolterstorff (1992) comes to the following conclusion and the authors fully agree with him:

In the Reformation times after 1541 reformed people came to see it as right and normal to pull apart word and sacrament. They came to see it as right and normal to celebrate the Supper of our Lord just four times a year. In almost all Reformed confessions, the sacramental theology of Calvin prevailed. In almost all Reformed congregations, the liturgical practice of Zwingli won out. And so it is that, in spite of the sacramental theology of the Reformed churches and in spite of Calvin's strong preference regarding practice, the Reformed liturgy became a liturgy in which the sermon assumed looming prominence. The Reformed service became a preaching service – except for those four times a year when it was a Lord's Supper service. Whereas the medieval tilted Justin's (Second Century) nicely balanced bi-focal service way over toward the eucharist, the Reformed now tilted it almost all the way toward the sermon. Calvin's theological victory was overwhelmed by Zwingli's liturgical victory. (p. 295)

■ God as initiator enables the acts in liturgy

The liturgy is a meeting between God and God's people, a meeting in which both parties act, but in which God initiates the actions and we respond through the work of the Spirit

(Wolterstorff 1992:288). Calvin stressed liturgy deals with the graceful meeting of God with his covenantal people through the power and blood of Christ under the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Brienen 1987:169). Therefore, the participants have to know God, who wants to meet us and we have to know his deeds that will bring us to glorify God. Wolterstorff (1992:291) explains that the Reformers saw the liturgy as God's action and our faithful reception of that action. The governing idea of the Reformed liturgy is thus twofold: The conviction that participation in liturgy entails us to enter the sphere of God acting, not just of God's presence; moreover, we should have the conviction that we are to make God's action our own in faith and gratitude through the work of the Spirit.

In meeting God, he intercedes in the congregation so that the congregation might rise to him. The first movement in this dynamic sweep is always God's move towards the congregation and the first decisive movement of worship is mirrored by the upwards movement of God's people, the *sursum corda*, the lifting of our hearts (Witvliet 2003:135). It is not a movement back in time through mere memories but a movement of remembrance of the reality of God's presence. By way of the sermon, God speaks directly to the church in its contemporary situation. These two features, the meeting of God with the congregation and the sermon, embody the uniqueness of God's mode of speech. The Reformers insisted that we must receive this speech of God in humility and faith and that its effectiveness depends on the work of the Spirit (Wolterstorff 1992:289). The passionate concern to make us aware of the acting God runs throughout Calvin's entire liturgical and sacramental theology. God also acts in the sacraments. God seals (attests, confirms) the promises he made to us in Jesus Christ. This God really does, here and now. Here and now God says, '*My promises are "for real"*' (Wolterstorff 1992:292). Wolterstorff (1992:293) emphatically declares that participation in liturgy has the intention to be confronted by the acting God – or rather, by God acting.

Calvin's view of worship is accurately described as a Trinitarian vision. God the Father is agent, giver and initiator. God the Son is mediator, particularly in the office of priest. God the Spirit is prompter, enabler and effector (Witvliet 2003:146). To engage in liturgy is indeed to enter the sphere of God's action, however, to engage in liturgy is also to enter the sphere of our worship. Liturgy is divine and human interaction.

■ Participation of the congregation

The basic principle of Calvin's liturgy is that the gracious God comes to us in his Word through the sermon and sacrament and therefore we may answer in prayer and song, gifts and confession of faith and sin. Because God takes the initiative, the possibility of participation by the congregation is created. God is present in the congregation with his power, comfort and compassion to unite them in their actions of prayers, songs, gratitude and glorification (Brienen 1987:172). Sadly, during his second stay in Geneva, Calvin's

ideal of full participation by the congregation was declined as early as 1541. His burning desire and work for the participation of the congregation was motivated by his belief that songs, prayers, listening and glorification were living movements proceeding from the Holy Spirit (Old 2003:413). The worship service must consist of both the elements of doxology and epiclesis.

The point of an epiclesis is that we realise that our liturgical actions must be Spirit-filled. Worship is valid not because of what we have done, but because of what God's Spirit does with and through our worship (Old 2003:421). The Reformed churches have introduced the 'prayer of illumination' before Scripture and sermon into their liturgies. It is their deep conviction that there is no true preaching and no right hearing without epiclesis (Wolterstorff 1992:290). When God makes our worship alive by his Spirit working in our hearts, then our worship is the work of God's Spirit. Such worship is truly spiritual worship (Old 2003:427).

■ The principle of freedom in liturgy

The Reformers' conviction of the work of the Spirit in liturgy also brought reaction against the strict prescription in the Roman Mass. Bucer was outspoken in his view that because of the work of the Spirit, any congregant could lead in prayer and the congregation could sing (cf. Barnard 1981:297). Luther emphasised the Christian freedom in many of his works. Calvin founded his conviction of freedom in liturgy on the freedom in Christ. Christ freed us from legalism, also legalism in liturgy. The New Testament gives no prescribed order for the liturgy, only that Scripture (reading and preaching), sacraments and the response of congregants (prayers, songs, gifts) must be part of the worship service.

The liturgy of congregations in different places, times and cultures may differ. Unity does not mean uniformity. Calvin knows no binding to any of the forms of the Christian worship service. The reason is that liturgical work never ends, because the knowledge of the grace of God under the leadership of the Holy Spirit could further be deployed and enriched in the liturgy (Brienen 1987:159). Brienen (1987:159) makes the point that it is not Calvinistic to make the liturgy of Calvin a prescription.

■ Interaction of principles with culture

The Reformers took care of the language, culture and customs of the specific country. Calvin stated that congregants could not participate in the prayers of the Roman Mass or say 'amen' to the prayers as they were in Latin, a language foreign to the congregants. As early as 1525, Schwarz adapted the Roman Mass to German culture by translating and reforming it as the *Deutsche Messe*. The songs were also in the vernacular, especially the songs of Bucer and Calvin (Brienen 1987:166).

Part of culture is the use of symbols, both in language and in forms of art. In medieval times, sculptures of holy people and of Mary and Jesus were to be seen in many places of worship. Calvin's view was that the Roman church forsook Scripture because they argued that as God could not be known through the Word only, sculptures that could be seen were necessary (Brienen 1987:146). The Reformers were opposed to icons because the people did not really distinguish between the image and the person it denoted, thus, they worshipped the image – in effect becoming guilty of idolatry (Boonstra 1997:424).

Zwingli applied the objection to icons most consistently and radically. To him, worship was (or ought to be) a purely spiritual engagement between God and his people, devoid of all sensuous, corporeal involvement. This standpoint demanded the banishment not only of all visual distractions (icons), but also of music, both instrumental and vocal. Sometimes the organs were destroyed, sometimes not. It appears that the main exception to the iconic cleansing was the stained-glass windows. Here a sense of practicality must have prevailed – doing without the windows was too cold, and replacing them was too costly (Boonstra 1997:427). John Calvin did not banish singing, but in his objection to icons, he was at one with Zwingli. Calvin commenting on John 4:24 asserted that God, who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Calvin's stance was one of relentless protest against the presence of icons in the sanctuary. Both the production of images and worshipping them are forbidden in Scripture and destructive of genuine worship (Boonstra 1997:426). Calvin founded his view on the Second Commandment as well as on Acts 17 (Old 2003:428).

The use and abuse of images is of more than historical interest. The role of images – their nature, power and role for good or ill – affect persons at the deepest level of their piety and imagination. In Reformation circles from the 16th century up until today, the focus has been mainly on the cognitive aspect of the truth. According to Vos and Pieterse (1997:112), this is the reason why the emotional side, the experiential side and the contact with the mysterious side of God have not received the proper accent.

One cannot help but be grateful to Calvin (and others) for recapturing worship that came closer to biblical models. The emphasis on paying homage to God's name and glory, the return of song to the people, the renewed stress on preaching, the emphasis that worship ought to be intelligible – all these are reformation. On the other hand, Zwingli elevated the realm of the mind or spirit or soul in a manner that denies the biblical emphasis on our created (and redeemed) bodies. Calvin did not escape this tendency either. The Reformers muted or denied the biblical emphasis on all of creation (including our bodies and the work of our creative hands) praising God.

As authors, we agree with the following words of Boonstra (1997):

I lament the subsequent distrust of liturgical art in the Reformed tradition. Attempts to use visual symbolism and plastic arts in worship have too often been met with the dismissal of Romanism. Simplicity has too often been an excuse for visual barrenness, and the gifts of our

artists have been scorned [...]. We can also learn that using the visual arts in worship can lead to aestheticism and ornateness. At the same time, we need not perpetuate the visual severity and dreariness that has often characterized Reformed worship. Rather, we can explore and exploit that part of our theological heritage that celebrates creation and restoration, that gratefully used God's gifts of shape and colour and texture – also in worship. (p. 431)

Semper reformanda

The 16th-century Reformation led by John Calvin and others can be described as a reforming movement inspired by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. This description is captured by the motto *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*. Reformation theology emphasises the power of the living Word and the glorification of God. Calvin's vision was to reclaim the church from unjust and oppressive laws, superstition and idolatry. He sought to restore the one true church of Jesus Christ, which is characterised by powerful bonds of love among members of the body of Christ.

The liturgy since the 16th-century Reformation has seen growth, revision and continuous reform. Calvin tried to follow the line of the liturgy of the synagogue in combination with the sacrament of the upper room. That was the line of the liturgy of the 2nd century. During the next centuries, the sermon was the main part and all the other liturgical elements were seen as decorations of the sermon. People 'attended' the worship service to hear the sermon. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the so-called liturgical movement tried to focus on the participation of every member and to reinvent the principles of the early church. This movement could not break the power of the focus on the sermon and in most Reformed churches, the importance of all the other elements was underplayed.

During the last quarter of the 20th century, a most remarkable thing happened: All the mainline traditions of Christendom engaged in liturgical formation. All of them felt compelled to return to the structure of the liturgy of the church around 200 CE. In Wolterstorff's (1992:276) judgement, we must regard this emergent coalescence as nothing less than the work of the Spirit. We must reflect on Reformed liturgy in the context of a vivid awareness of the ecumenical developments to which we ourselves have contributed. As Wolterstorff (1992:277) states '[u]e must do so in the awareness of convergence and coalescence in liturgical theory and practice'.

Reformed liturgy, which is founded on the 'reformation' of the church 'according to the Word of God' and attested in Holy Scripture, is to be confessed anew in each new situation (Moltmann 1999:120). Reformation according to God's Word is permanent reformation, it keeps the church and theology breathless with suspense (Moltmann 1999:121). It is an event that cannot end in this world, a process that will reach fulfilment and rest only in the Parousia of Christ. The concept of *theologia reformata et semper reformanda usque ad finem* is appropriate. Moltmann (1999:121) concludes saying,

‘[a]s reforming theology, Reformed theology and liturgy as a part of it, FPK [Ferdinand P. Kruger] & BJK [Ben J. de Klerk] is eschatologically oriented theology’.

■ Evaluation of the 21st-century emergent movement

■ A different view on culture as manifested in a new way of thinking

The emerging church or postmodern church movement is posing invasive challenges regarding the (merging) culture and a different view of thinking and learning (Kimball 2003:91). This movement, however, is interested in the role of multisensory experiences during worship services in order that participating worshippers can learn through experience. Kimball (2003:195) also indicates that the emerging movement is testing worship services and preaching to the matrix and extent of life change. Culture and religion are inextricably linked in their relationship to each other. Furthermore, Viola (2008:15) brings the issue to the fore that merging of culture and religion is also asking for a renewal and the continuation of reformation (*semper reformanda*).

Tickle (2008:17) elaborates further on this challenge for continuous reformation and contrasts it with the background of a new expression and a more vital form of Christianity, which has indeed emerged. Suddenly people are looking for a brand-new expression of faith and the praxis of being church in this world. The emergent movement gained its name from the idea that when culture changes there should emerge a new movement, or church, in response. The new culture in the eyes of the emergent movement (EM) is the so-called postmodern culture. The EM is in line with basic postmodern thinking – it is about the dominance of experience over reason, subjectivity over objectivity, spirituality over religion, images over words, outward over inward, feelings over truth. The emergent movement is challenging, because it has long been appreciated in Christian tradition that although we shape our worship, the way we worship also shapes us. Fowler (1991:181), for example, states his opinion saying, ‘[w]ith liturgy we deal with kinaesthetic (the sensory experience) of faith’. To Fowler, liturgy as the sensory experience of faith focuses on the imaginable character of worship and its power to suggest form and evoke the images that represent our convictional knowing. The rituals and ceremonials of a worshipping community (church) are the most influential in the shaping of faith, character and consciousness (Westerhoff 1987:514). Liturgical practices give expression to the particular beliefs, values and feelings of the specific faith community and in that way, their identity (Anderson 1997:361).

The emergent church movement and the influence of postmodern thinking

Brain McLaren's viewpoint regarding the emergent church is that the dominant fact 'we have to prove to spirituality-seeking non-Christians in a postmodern world is not that Christianity is true; we have to prove that it is good and beautiful' (McLaren 2008:143). If they are convinced it is good and beautiful, they will be receptive to it being true. The seeker-services with beautiful music, praise and worship, as well as great performances must make way for silence, soft music and images of art McLaren 2008:146).

Using the EPIC (theory) acronym, Sweet (in Caldwell 2006:112) describes the ideal worship for an emerging church. He points out four categories that postmodern churches should pursue to prepare the 21st-century future church for new generations (Caldwell 2006):

(E) Experiential. Worship is not just about listening and thinking, but about the idea. 'Let's enter into worship as an experience.'

(P) Participatory. The idea is that worship is not just something you observe, like watching television. You really participate. For example, an important part of worship might be a period of about 20 minutes in which there are stations around the room where people might go to write down a prayer, make their financial offering, or have Holy Communion.

(I) Image-based. The idea here is that worship is not just words for the ears, but an increased emphasis on things you can see. Because of digital technology, you have the capacity to project images, show artwork, use film and video.

(C) Communal. There is a strong emphasis on community. People are saying, '[w]e don't just want to attend a service and look at the back of people's heads'. (p. 112)

Liturgy and utilisation of senses

The reaction of the EM against the Protestant mainline churches is that the centre of their liturgy is occupied by the exegetical sermon, which is overly focused on mental comprehension and confines spiritual authority to the pastor. It engages only the ear and not the other senses. It is hung up on the power of words. It is disconnected from most of Christian history. This does not satisfy the postmodern consciousness. Worship at emerging churches is widely divergent. Some practise alternative worship, including using just about every kind of music: classical to death-metal rock. Others attempt to revive ancient early church practices: candlelight services, prayer *labyrinths* and walking rituals. Creativity and an appreciation of the arts are celebrated in these circles. They are also technologically savvy and use the internet with great skill (Brown 2008:3). Kimball (2003:185) demonstrates that the modern church should adjust and move

towards a no-holds barred approach to worship. Worship services should be designed to be user-friendly and should be designed to be experiential and spiritual-mystical. Lit up and cheery sanctuaries need to be darkened because darkness is valued and displays a sense of spirituality. The focal point of the service, which had been the sermon, must be changed so that the focal point of the service could become a holistic experience.

Participation is very important and therefore people are not forced to remain stationary in their seats for the whole meeting. During the service, people are allowed to leave their seats to go to prayer stations to pray on their own, write out prayers, pray with others or to go to an art station, where they can artistically express worship, while worship music is playing in the background (Kimball 2004:89–90). In some emerging churches, people are encouraged to walk the *labyrinth*. The *labyrinth* is a structure that is growing in popularity and occupies an important space during times of contemplative prayer. The *labyrinth* originated in early pagan societies. The usual scenario calls for the *prayer* – any person doing the action – to do some sort of meditation, enabling him or her to *centre down* (i.e. reach God’s presence), while reaching the centre of the *labyrinth* (Woodbridge 2008:196).

The emerging church embraces multisensory worship, because experience is very important to people in emerging generations, in all areas of life. Kimball (2004:81) indicates that multi-sensory worship involves seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and experiencing. This means that our worship of God can involve singing, silence, preaching and art, and hence encompasses a wide spectrum of expression (Woodbridge 2008:197).

Another common theme woven throughout into emerging worship gatherings is the emphasis on prayer. Much time is given for people to slow down, quieten their hearts and then pray at various stations and with others. Each person needs to allow some time for the Spirit to convince or encourage his or her heart after a message, rather than rush out through the door (Kimball 2004:94). Prayer is therefore an important element in the emerging church. The emerging church thoroughly plans its worship gatherings and provides plenty of time for people to slow down (Woodbridge 2008:201). Contemplative prayer is a vital element of the emerging church and openly integrates the spiritual practices of other religions. Many involved in contemplative and centring prayer find their inspiration and practices in eastern mystics and Roman Catholic mystics (monks) (Anon. 2006).

□ Preaching

Religious truth is not proven, it is embodied in individuals and the community known as the church. People’s testimonies should be listened to with the same sense of respect and

reverence as one would listen to the Bible. No wonder Pagitt (2005:22) has reconstructed the sermon as a conversation! If personal testimony is at the level of the written Word of God, then conversation becomes the viable object of exegesis and exposition along with its community member – the Bible. To Pagitt (2005:23), the Bible raises its hand in a conversation, politely waiting until it is called upon to speak. However, in history the Bible has been the ‘thunder’ of God for reformation, revival and regeneration. Leaders of the emerging church movement promote postmodern hermeneutics. They argue for ‘hermeneutics of humility’, which would assert that we cannot know any propositional truth absolutely. According to Kimball (2003):

The scriptural message is communicated through a mix of words, visual arts, silence, testimony, and story, and the preacher is a motivator who encourages people to learn from the Scriptures throughout the week. (p. 193)

Christians should therefore exercise humility in interpreting God’s Word and systematic theology because anyone could theoretically be wrong.

Pastors position themselves as facilitators and conversation partners, not preachers. Groups sit in circles or in small groups, not in rows of pews facing an elevated pulpit. The preacher’s responsibility is to create an ethos in the church that is characterised by the body that becomes a learning community of the Word themselves and being not solely dependent upon the preacher (Kimball 2003:191). Two primary characteristics of an emergent preacher that would model vintage preaching for Kimball (2003:195–196) would be that of humility and dependence. Pagitt (2005:12–18) refers to preaching (in the traditional sense) as ‘speaching’. In his view, *speaching* refers to ‘the style of preaching that’s hardly distinguishable from one-way speech’ (Pagitt 2005:12). Speaching is an ineffectual means of communication and in relation to the church ‘damages our people and creates a sense of powerlessness in them’ (Pagitt 2005:22). Preaching carried out in a speaching format places the preacher in ‘control of the content, speed, and conclusion of the presentation’ and entirely ignores the Christian community (Pagitt 2005:22).

Pagitt (2005:36) calls preaching ‘progressional dialogue’, which presents the deconstructed and/or reconstructed form of preaching recommended for the emerging church in order to reach postmodern culture. Pagitt (2005) defines his method of preaching by pointing out the following features:

[T]he content of the presentation is established in the context of a healthy relationship between the presenter and the listeners, and substantive changes in the content are then created as a result of this relationship. (p. 23)

A primary focus of progressive dialogue is the emphasis placed on the role of the story in the lives of the audience. The aim is to get the participants to see themselves as a part of the story itself (Pagitt 2005:36). The form of the sermon should be storytelling, according

to Kimball (2003:172–176). He says that postmodernists, just as the Athenians in Paul's day (Ac 17), need to be told the 'grand story about God who created everything' (Kimball 2003:176). It is for this reason that Kimball exhorts emergent preachers to become storytellers again. To him, storytelling is not a minor initiative for the emerging church but rather a central and critical part of its mission – a part that should never be sidelined (Kimball 2003:172).

Preaching should be the deposit of the continuing discussion of the congregation in the form of brainstorming, a round-table format (McClure 1995:50). Ten or less members may be involved in a preaching workgroup that should partake in the discussion on the form and application of the sermon. Furthermore, there should be space and opportunity for the other hearers to contribute to the discussion on the sermon. In this way, persuasion can be reached through interaction (McClure 1995:56). McClure (1995:20) sees the unsatisfactory face-to-face contact between preachers and hearers as a major problem. Preachers can become lonely figures in their studies and can be alienated from their hearers (McClure 1995:21–22). McClure further indicates that the Word of God is communal and therefore it emerges in the process of dialogue that takes place within the community. The Word is brought forth in the give and take situation of conversations in which the meaning of the gospel is sought (Van der Rijst 2015:163). In McClure's mind, the otherness of people should open up preaching. The issue coming to one's mind is how open sermons should function in terms of the message of a biblical text. Should sermons function merely as discourses based on a biblical text? It is clear that voices from postmodern scholars are also making a challenging appeal to the concept of continuous reformation regarding the emerging character of the Word of God. The openness to the other views of liturgy and preaching has become a burning issue.

■ Evaluative perspectives from Acts 13:13–43 and Acts 19:23–41

Having evaluated the manifestation of the bipolar interaction between liturgical theory and praxis during the 16th-century Reformation and the revolutionary liturgical praxis of the emergent churches, the researchers intend to investigate if perspectives from the book of Acts could offer principles for the interrelationship between the theory of liturgy and the praxis of liturgy. The broader context of the passages identified for this section are dealing with the march of the early church in proclaiming the gospel and with the breakthrough of the gospel into the existing culture of that time. Acts 13 is chosen because of the contact with the Jewish culture. Acts 19 is chosen because of the contact with the Greek culture.

The influence of preaching on an accompanying liturgy in Jewish culture (Ac 13:13–43)

In this passage, two sermons of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch are described. It is evident that Paul and his helpers are connecting to the circumstances of the people of the synagogue. One good example of their indulgence towards the customs of people is the fact that they were worshipping on the seventh day, rather than on the already customary first day of the week (Manser 2010:1930). In the synagogue, people with different cultural backgrounds met each other, namely Jews from the diaspora and people from a pagan background (Osborne 1995:197). Larkin (2006:502) highlights the fact that Paul and his helpers showed sensitivity towards the different kinds of liturgies that were adhered to. They received an invitation to deliver a word of consolation (*λογος παρακλήσεως*) to the local people, who were in need of encouragement (Louw 1993:29). The people's expectation of sermons was therefore that they should contribute towards a meaningful experience. The incident therefore concerned people who really wanted to understand the meaning or essence of life and therefore the cognitive aspects were intertwined with their emotional experience (De Villiers 1985:229).

It is evident that Paul proclaimed the message of salvation (*λογος τῆς σωτηριας*). It entailed that he disclosed the gospel in a systematic manner (Joubert 1991:140). His systematic disclosure of the gospel also comprised the idea that a certain reaction was needed. It was really about the concreteness and the applicability of the message. It is striking that the leaders of the synagogue invited Paul for the next week's worship service, in which the message about salvation was a real attraction. There was a desire to hear more about the gospel. The message of encouragement and the message of salvation also emanated a desire to accompany Paul and his helpers, an accompanied liturgy that seeks a willingness to hear and experience more by going along (Manser 2010:1392). Although Paul experienced severe resistance against his preaching, the effect of the proclamation could not be prevented. Most of the hearers were full of joy (*ἐπληροῦντο*). This expression has the connotation to be satisfied with something or even to give meaning to something (Louw & Nida 1993:199). The joy about the preaching spread across the region. The influence of a preacher that was able to adapt his style to the concrete circumstances of his hearers certainly contributed to the positive reception of the proclaimed Word (Joubert 1991:141). It is important to note that his adaption never violated the truthfulness of his message (Manser 2010:1993).

This event occurred due to an urge to hear a word of consolation. In praxis, the people wanted to receive answers to the question about the meaning of daily life. The praxis opened doors to the proclamation of the Word. Paul chose to preach about the most meaningful theme in the particular context, for that matter, in all human life – salvation. His expository preaching offered him a further opportunity to speak boldly

about reconciliation. From these events, a few principles can be deduced for liturgical theory, namely the importance of the choice of the theme – in this case, the most important one for salvation – in response to the needs of the people, the adaptation of the presentation to local liturgies and that the proclamation of the Word would have far-reaching effects. In this example, the bipolar tension and the organic interrelationship between theory and praxis cultivated a new practice theory for joy in the midst of resistance.

Adaption to a Greek culture (Ac 19:23–41)

Larkin (1995:269) indicates that Paul was driven by a certain kind of ‘must’ (δεῖ). It comprises that he was guided by the Holy Spirit to visit Ephesus. In this city, the cult of Artemis and the tendency to make money from worshipping was the order of the day (Larkin 2006:564). Paul’s sermon immediately had an effect, namely that a commotion (ταραχος) occurred. The proclamation of the Word cultivated a cognitive dissonance. The content of the sermon deviated from the existing focus of their cult (Larkin 2006:566). Blount and Tubbs-Tisdale (2001:34) indicate that the proclamation of the Word and the language that is used could also experience resistance in certain cultures. In such instances, Paul adapted his preaching style. He utilised the method of the delivery of the sermon, namely dialogue (διαλεγόμενος) in order to persuade the hearers. He tried to convince or persuade his hearers for three months in their own liturgical space, namely the synagogue. He actually debated with them. When it became clear that they had hardened themselves against the proclamation, he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus (Larkin 1995:275). During that period, he addressed them on a typically Greek philosophical level.

It is evident that Paul did his uttermost to understand the essence of their philosophical cognisance. This is in stark contrast with the Jewish culture of expository preaching in Acts 13. Paul tried to operate at the level of the Greek people’s understanding of the philosophy of life in Acts 19.

In this passage, Paul was confronted by the problematic praxis of the cult of Artemis, which operated with the idea of a consumerist liturgy. Against the background of the organic framework of a bipolar tension between theory and praxis, it seems as if this relationship was threatened due to resistance against Paul’s theory of proclamation. Despite Paul’s method in his preaching, namely dialogue or debate, it seems as if his attempt was in vain. This passage ends with an open end as regards a problematic praxis, because the people rejected the theory of proclamation that confronted their praxis. It is clear that inadequate cognisance of the influence of theory results in the resilient effects of a problematic praxis. Without a clear and organic bipolar interaction between theory and praxis, a distorted practice theory will emerge.

■ Evaluation

■ Evaluation of theoretical foundation of the interrelationship between theory and praxis

In the previous sections of this chapter, it has become evident that the following three lenses could be helpful to evaluate the implications of continuous reformation:

- In the interaction between theory and praxis, there is no separation or identification, but a bipolar tension-filled combination.
- Theory constantly needs verification or falsification through praxis by theory. There should be a dialectical movement theory to praxis, to critical reflection and revision of praxis, to revision of theory as they interact.
- An unreflective and abstract theory leads to a static and ineffective deterioration in liturgical praxis. Prioritising the existing praxis protects the status quo and leads to a situation of fearfully clinging to one's own comfort zone, which could possibly lead towards deformation.

■ Evaluation of the interrelationship between theory and praxis in the 16th-century Reformation

- The first steps in the Reformation were aimed at reforming the problematic praxis (e.g. liturgy in mother tongue) through interaction with a reforming theory that set out changes in the contents of the *Deutsche Messe* regarding the sacrifice in the Mass and worship of so-called holy persons.
- The existing theory of the medieval liturgy was tested according to scriptural principles as well as norms from history. The result was a new focus on liturgical theory, namely the unity of Word and sacrament.
- The application of the principle of the unity of Word and sacrament resulted in the reformation of the liturgy in the sense that members of the congregation were no longer spectators but participants, which created a dynamic praxis.
- On the other hand, the praxis occurred where the proclamation of the Word became the main and only liturgical act and the sacraments were degraded to remembrance (Zwingli). In interacting with the theory, this practice produced a wrong theory. The participation of the congregation was limited and their participation comprised cognitive actions only.
- The principle in liturgical theory that God is the main actor in the liturgy and that his actions open the possibility for the congregation to respond leads to a praxis where the importance of listening to Scripture readings and preaching and response in

praying, singing and offering are all acknowledged. This is also an inheritance from the Reformation.

- In the theory of Reformed liturgy, the principle of God's presence in the acts of the sacraments leads to a praxis in which the congregation concretely experiences that God seals, attests and confirms his promises at that specific moment. Thus, the organic connection between the cognitive and emotive elements comes into a functional relationship.
- A praxis in which the illumination of the Holy Spirit is underplayed leads to an anthropocentric theory that liturgy is the performance of one or more people.
- The theory of freedom in liturgy founded on the freedom in Christ leads to a praxis in which variety is possible. Through deeper knowledge of God's grace and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the liturgy can be deployed in a theonomic reciprocity functioning where people are enabled and enriched to be participants.
- In a theory in which the cognitive faculty of the participants is overstressed and the emotive (experience) side is underplayed, the visual and creative aspects in liturgy are missing links. The dysfunctional relationship between the cognitive and emotive aspects will lead towards a distorted praxis. In the time of the Reformation, the reaction against art went too far and, in later years, led to a boring and colourless type of liturgy. This result emanated from a distorted interaction between the three components in the triangular relationship between the cognitive (thinking), emotive (feeling) and conative (doing) pillars.

Evaluation of the interrelationship of theory and praxis in the emergent movement of the 21st century

- The theory of the emergent movement that multisensory experiences during worship services are necessary leads to praxis of greater participation and learning through experience.
- In a theory in which the present culture is the decisive factor for liturgical actions, the biblical principles play a minor role and do not correct a problematic praxis in liturgy.
- In a theory in which the participation of the congregation is overstressed, God as the main liturgist in worship is downplayed.
- In a theory in which experience is prominent, the praxis will be losing the important aspect of giving information and educating the congregants. This theory could possibly lead to arbitrariness in praxis.
- In a protesting praxis against the authority of the pastor or the authority of the Bible, the result could be a theory where there is no certainty of what the truth is. Truth is embodied by individuals through discussion (and the Bible is one partner in the round-table discussion). How open should the circle of the otherness become before the important voice of God speaking through his Word is endangered?

A normative theoretical foundation from two passages in Acts on the interrelationship between theory and praxis

- Acts 13 stresses the importance of the context (praxis), which should function in interaction with the act of proclaiming the Word (theory).
- The cognitive aspect as well as the emotive experience is addressed in the word of consolation in preaching that consists of explanation and application.
- The balance between theory and praxis in this episode brought joy because the word of consolation and salvation satisfied the need of the audience to be assured of meaning in life (conative aspect). The triangular relationship between the three pillars of the cognitive, emotive and conative aspects are coming into their own.
- In Acts 19, Paul interrelated with the existing praxis by adapting the proclamation to a typically Greek philosophic space and level. He also used an appropriate communication method, namely dialogue (praxis), to reach them with the proclamation of the gospel (theory). He operated at the level of the Greek people's understanding (cognition).
- In the bipolar interaction between theory and praxis in this episode, the theory threatened the existing context (praxis). Because the praxis rejected the theory, the praxis became even more distorted.

Perspectives on continuous liturgical reform

The authors suggest a few perspectives on the relationship between theory and praxis in liturgy, namely:

- In a bipolar interaction, the theory of liturgy shapes praxis, praxis questions and reshapes the theory of liturgy.
- The acknowledgement that God is the main liturgist in worship opens a clear place and opportunity for holistic participation of the congregants where the cognitive, emotive and conative pillars are in balance.
- The scriptural principles for liturgy (theory) may be applied in different situations (praxis) and in various manners.
- Reformed liturgy is founded on reformation of the church according to the Word of God, attested according to the Holy Scripture, which is to be confessed anew in each new situation (praxis). Reformation according to God's Word (which is time-directed but not bound by time) is a continuous reformation and an event that keeps the church and theology breathless with suspense regarding the organic functioning between theory and praxis.

- Engagement in liturgical formation needs to consider what is happening ecumenically in a broader context (praxis), in order to enrich denominational reflection on the relationship between theory and praxis.
- The primacy of the Word implies that scriptural principles control liturgy and should correct all existing praxis. All theories about liturgy should also be tested according to the Word of God.
- The balance between cognitive and emotional elements is important in a holistic participation in the liturgy. Cognitive and emotive elements should provide direction for the conative (doing) aspect to function properly.
- Continuous reformation will keep the liturgy full of excitement and the process will reach fulfilment and rest in the Parousia of Christ. The tension between theory and praxis will endure until the end of time. Perhaps one could say then the two focal points of the ellipse will come together to be the single focal point of a perfect circle.

■ Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been indicated that the principle of continuous reformation should be a stimulus when reflecting in theological research on the relationship between liturgical theory and praxis. The 16th-century Reformation, with its emphasis on the continuation of reformation and the emerging churches in the 21st century, with the focus on the role of multisensory experiences, cannot be evaluated from a liturgical vantage point without a meaningful reflection on the relationship between liturgical theory and praxis. To be more concrete, a coherent balance between the cognitive and the emotional elements in liturgy is important. Cognitive (knowing) elements and emotive elements (feeling) should provide direction for the conative (doing) aspects to function properly. A non-organic functioning in this triangular functioning could lead towards a distortion in ecclesiastical and liturgical practice both in the churches with a 16th-century Reformation background and in emergent churches. In bipolar interaction, theory should shape praxis and praxis could possibly question and reshape the theory. In a theory in which the participation of the congregation is overstressed, God as the main liturgist in worship is downplayed. In a theory in which experience is prominent, the praxis will lose the important aspect of providing information for participants in worship services to understand the essence of the liturgy of life (praxis).

■ Summary: Chapter 2

Research in the field of liturgics has indicated that churches are confronted with the need for liturgical formation. The authors of this chapter are investigating the manner in which churches should reflect on the relationship between theory and praxis.

The following research question is regarded as *ad rem*: How should we evaluate the liturgical reformation of the 16th-century Reformation and its implications and the 21st century phenomenon of the emergent church 500 years later? This issue is addressed from a practical theological vantage point with cognisance of the importance of the organic relationship between theory and praxis. In this ostensibly bipolar relationship between theory and praxis, two focal points within an ellipse are identified. The authors evaluated the concept of continuous reformation during the 16th-century Reformation and thereafter, but they also addressed the dynamics of the emerging churches. From Acts 13 and 19, perspectives are derived regarding the enrichment that should take place between theory and praxis. The importance of cultural phenomena in this process is also addressed. In conclusion, perspectives are offered on the way in which theory and praxis should function within a proper understanding of continuous liturgical formation.

Convinced by Scripture and plain reason: Reasonable reformational apologetics

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■ By Scripture and plain reason

When the reformer Martin Luther used the following famous words at his apologia at the imperial Diet of Worms, he set a basis for Protestant apologetics (Edgar & Oliphint 2011):

Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. (p. 17)

The Protestant Reformation was built on and fuelled by a high regard for Scripture as the final authority for our understanding of God, the world and Gods relationship to the world. This can be seen in the expression *sola scriptura*, but also in Luther's statement

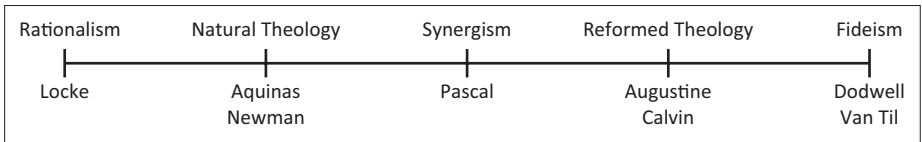
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above, which could and should have cost his life. Luther emphasises his high and total regard for Scripture as the Word of God – the Word that held his conscience captive in this matter of life and death.

It is important to see that in the statement above, Luther not only refers to the Bible, but also to ‘plain reason’. He underlines the importance of reason by adding that the authority of the church leaders is not to be fully trusted, because of a basic logical argument that opposite things or contradictions cannot both be correct.

Faith and reason are two concepts used to make divisions in reformational apologetics, saying that some apologists depend mainly on reason in their apologetic endeavour, and other mainly on faith. When Beilby (2011:88) for instance discusses the view of the relationship between reason and faith in Christian theological apologetics since the Reformation, he puts different apologetic approaches and persons on the reason-faith-continuum (see Figure 1).^{6,7,8}

This chapter, however, assumes that one should not only focus on the differences between Protestant (reformational) methods of apologetics, but rather highlight the fact that they all hold to the relation between faith and reason as crucial for apologetics. Accordingly, the Bible is always held as an essential part of God’s revelation to sinful human beings and reasonable argumentation is viewed as an intrinsic part of apologetic approaches. The aim of this chapter is therefore to go beyond confessional and methodological boundaries and to reaffirm the shared Protestant heritage of apologetics, thereby providing insight into what could be understood as reasonable reformational apologetics.



Source: Beilby 2011:88

FIGURE 1: Beilby’s reason-faith-continuum.

6. Locke’s apologetics on the one continuum is rationalistic because, according to Beilby [2011:88], Locke saw reason as ‘the sole arbiter of truth’ and faith as ‘unnecessary when rational arguments are present.’

7. On the other end of the continuum Dodwell and Van Til’s apologetics are fideistic because, according to Beilby [2011:89], they ‘sharply delimit the use of rational arguments in apologetics.’

8. To label Cornelius van Til a fideist does not do justice to him. According to Van Til [1974:197] sinful man suppressed his knowledge of God. The task of apologetics is to address this suppressed knowledge in a logical way, because it is not total. Van Til can be described as the father of modern-day reformed apologetics, and should be put with Augustine and Calvin under Reformed theology on the continuum above.

Reason and Christian apologetics before the Reformation

While it is not possible or the purpose to give a thorough account of Christian apologetics before the Reformation, it is important to highlight some aspects thereof for the understanding of apologetic reasoning since the Reformation – starting with the New Testament. Thereafter, a short summary of the views on reasoning and apologetics of two influential Christian apologists of the first 15 centuries, namely Augustine and Aquinas, will be given before discussing the influence thereof on the time of the Reformation and afterwards.

The New Testament

The word *apologia* appears 19 times in the New Testament. Eight times it is used as a noun, three of them deal with the defence of the gospel (Phlp 1:7, 1:16; 1 Pt 3:15), one is used to describe a congregation defending itself (2 Cor 7:11), and four describe Paul's defence of himself (Ac 22:1; Ac 25:16; 1 Cor 9:3; 2 Tm 4:16). The focus of apologetics, accordingly, is to give a reasoned response to the attacks of opponents, as well as to answer the probing questions of those who wonder about the gospel and aspects thereof.

Without using the term 'apologia', other passages in Scripture also describe the apologetic task the Bible asks of Christians. According to these passages the task of apologetics can be described as defending and contending, for example demolishing arguments (2 Cor 10:5), refuting those who oppose sound doctrine (Tt 1:9), contending for the faith (Jude 3) and 'gentle instruction' (2 Tm 2:25). Romans 12 emphasises the importance to support Christians not to:

[B]e conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (v. 2)

The main elements of Christian apologetics can be described as:

- **Apologists:** Important to understand the reason for their hope and to be prepared to answer and react to worldly views.
- **Action:** Defend and commend – reasonable, effective and gentle.
- **Content:** The Christian faith (or aspects thereof that are in debate).
- **Goal:** Upholding Christianity as true and the renewal of minds.
- **Context:** To understand what answer (apologia) should be given, the people, place and reasoning should be kept in mind.

One Peter 3:15 (English Standard Version [ESV]), urges Christians to be involved in apologetics – 'always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.' The importance of preparation and of the use of reason in apologetics is described, as well as the personal character thereof ('hope that is in you') and the way of doing 'with gentleness and respect'.

In discussing the importance of ‘gentleness and respect’ in our reasoned defence according to 1 Peter 3:15, Groseclose (2009) mentions Calvin’s way of doing apologetics as an example:

Too often, people who would defend the Christian faith in the world around us, do so with an arrogant and a haughty spirit. Sometimes, when you are right and you know that you are right, you find yourself in a dangerous position. I think that this is one of the reasons that Calvin’s model is so valuable for us today. Because as you read Calvin’s writings against those who would challenge the reformation, you do not see an arrogant man ranting and raving, but you see a man of humility speaking with grace. (n.p.)

Because of who God is, our apologetic reasoning must reflect caring truthfulness.

■ Augustine

In the beginning of the 5th century, Augustine had played a major role in the growth of the understanding of the task of Christian apologetics. He laboured on two fronts, defending Christian teachings against heresies from within Christianity (e.g. Donatists and Pelagians) as well as from outside of the Church (e.g. Manicheans, Jews and Pagans). His well-known work, *De civitate Dei* [The city of God], focussed for instance on paganism that tried to regain lost ground. Its thorough refutation was ‘eminently successful and doubtless did much to undermine whatever prestige paganism still enjoyed at that time’ (Dulles 2005:84).

The importance of the use of reason by Augustine in these apologetic discourses and the influence thereof, is well described in the following remark of Beilby (2011:46), ‘Augustine’s articulation of the importance of reason and the reasonability of faith set the tone for apologetic work in the Middle-Ages.’

■ Aquinas

The 13th-century theologian, Thomas Aquinas, is well known for the influence he had on apologetics – not only in the Middle Ages, but also on the strong stream of classical apologetics of today. By incorporating insights of Aristotelian philosophy into Christianity, Thomas Aquinas taught that, while there are aspects of the Christian belief system that need divine revelation (such as the resurrection of Christ), human reason is sufficient to convert people in other aspects (such as the existence of a one and only God).

■ Reason and Protestant apologetics in the time of the Reformation

Due to profound differences between the Roman Catholic church leaders and the Reformers, and the numerous debates and writings as a result thereof, the Protestant

Reformation of the 16th century caused an increase in apologetic material. Luther's 95 statements which he nailed on the church door at Wittenberg in October 1517, and which can formally be seen as the start of the Reformation, were essentially apologetic statements based on Scripture, as a reasonable reaction against false teachings and wrong practices of the church of the time. In the words of 2 Timothy 3:16 it was 'profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction.'

The monumental work of Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian religion* (written in 1559 in Latin),⁹ is not only an exposition of biblical reformational theology, but clearly also an apologetic work that highlights the heresies of the time and deals with them.¹⁰ The Protestant confessions that arose at that time had an apologetic aim to show that the Protestant differences with Roman Catholic doctrines were based on the Bible.¹¹

■ Luther

Since the time of the Reformation questions were asked by proponents of the Reformation, about the place and role of reason in theology. This debate on the place and role of reason in reformational theology logically involved apologetics.

In response to Aquinas and the influence of Aristotelian philosophy, Luther (1483–1546) emphasised that it is foolish to think that reason will convince the sinful man to become a Christian. To attain true knowledge of God is, according to Luther as true Reformer, a gift of grace (*sola gratia*). He even questioned a rational defence of the faith by saying, '[w]e must take care not to deface the Gospel, to defend it so well that it collapses' (quoted in Beilby 2011:55–56). He even refers to human reason as 'the devil's whore' (Lotz 1981:280).

On the other hand, Luther refers at the imperial Diet of Worms to 'plain reason' as one of two prerequisites needed for him to change his views (see 'By Scripture and plain reason' above). He explains the importance of plain reason by referring to the logical fallacy of mutual contradiction in the statements of the church.

9. All references to Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian religion* in this chapter refer to Simpson's 1984 Afrikaans translation [Calvin 1984].

10. In the preface to the *Institusie van die Christelike godsdiens* [1984] Calvin defends the Reformers against heresy charges before king Francis 1.

11. Guido de Bräs [1561:1], a preacher of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands writes in the preface of the Belgic confession to King Philip II in 1562 'that they were ready to obey the government in all lawful things, but that they would "offer their backs to stripes, their tongues to knives, their mouths to gags, and their whole bodies to the fire", rather than deny the truth expressed in this confession.' In 'The Heidelberg Catechism', Ursinus and Olevianus [1563] motivate for instance on Sunday 30, answer 80, why the Protestants see the papal mass as a form of idolatry.

To solve the apparent contradiction in Luther's thinking on reason, his distinction between magisterial and ministerial uses of reason must be considered. The former is the type of reason that Luther rejected, since it appoints reason over Scripture as a magistrate to judge the truth or falsity of Scripture. But Luther endorsed the ministerial role of reason, where reason has the task to serve Scripture and its application. Craig (2000:36–37) referred with appreciation to this distinction that Luther makes and says that 'reason under the sovereign guidance of God's Spirit and Word is a useful tool in helping us to understand and defend our faith.'

■ Calvin

What captures the reader's attention of the various works of Calvin, is both the logical way in which he elaborates on his thoughts, as well as the rational consistent way in which he defends a true understanding of Scripture against bias, distortions and attacks. In the preface to his *Institusie van die Christelike godsdiens*, Calvin (1984:89–90) gave the King of France an apologetic reason why he composed this important and extensive doctrinal work that he was sending to him. He pointed out that in this book, he gave an account of the gospel to those who accused the Reformation movement of heresy and intended to act with violence against the Protestants.

Luther's statement that believers need to be convinced through the Scriptures and logical reasoning which is according to it, and not by the force of church leaders and the outcomes of councils which contradict themselves, are expanded in a logical way by Calvin's elaborations on Scripture as it speaks against the heresies of his time. In Book 1 of his *Institusie van die Christelike godsdiens*, Calvin pointed out in Chapter 1 that man's knowledge of God and of himself go hand in hand (*Inst.* 1.9.1). In Chapter 2 he writes that man could have a true basic knowledge of God from what he observes in nature, if the fall had not occurred (*Inst.* 1.2.1).

A proof that man has an awareness of God in himself and in nature, is according to Calvin (*Inst.* 1.3.1) evident, among others, in the idolatry of the nations (*Inst.* 1.10-1.12). Even atheists show that they are not without an understanding of God (*Inst.* 1.3.1). The problem is that the knowledge of God is stifled and distorted by sinful man, partly due to ignorance and partly to malice (*Inst.* 1.4.1). Yet, the revelation of God in nature as well as the culture accordingly formed by man, deny him any excuse for his rebellion against God (*Inst.* 1.5.1). About this approach by Calvin, Vorster (2014:7) noticed that Calvin 'resists theoretical and philosophical speculation on God's divine nature.' Through observing the revelation of God in Scripture and creation and his involvement in it, man comes to know God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

When Calvin (*Inst.* 1.9.1) discusses the position of the libertines who wanted to separate the Word of God from the working of the Holy Spirit, he called it insanity. He gives several rational arguments on why such a step not only leads to heresy, but is also illogical. According to Calvin it implies that the Spirit of Christ, which has enlightened the apostles and the first Christians to write down the Word of God and receive it in all reverence, is now replaced by another Spirit (of Christ), leading the libertines to something else than what is revealed in the Word. Among other arguments, he also referred to Paul who wrote that he was taken to the third heaven, and after that still continues to refer to the law and the prophets with respect, to the Old Testament as authoritative. Based on Scripture, Calvin used thus logical arguments to combat heresy, while he aims with his reasoning based on Scripture to reach the heart and specifically also the mind of the people.¹²

Reason and contemporary reformational apologetics

Five hundred years have passed since Luther nailed his 95 apologetic statements to the church door of Wittenberg. This was a time in which the influence of Protestantism expanded all over the world and apologetic answers had to be given to a variety of religious ideas and life and world views. It was also a time when rationalism grew, and the issue of the place and role of reason and even different views of the Bible had to be addressed by Protestant apologists.

Before focusing on the way in which reformational apologists in the last hundred years dealt with these questions, referring back to important conclusions reached by the reformers during the time of the Reformation, a brief overview will first be given of the thoughts of influential apologists in the 300 years after the Reformation.

From the 17th to the 19th century

Beilby (2011:66–68) describes Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) as ‘the best and most influential apologist of the Enlightenment’. This is despite the fact that only notes of his apologetics remained preserved (the so-called *Pensees*), because he died young while he started to work on his *An Apology for the Christian faith* (Beilby 2011). In line with the reformers of the

12. When Floor (1970:16) discussed Calvin’s polemic with the Anabaptists, he admits that Calvin pointed out to them that, although the Spirit gives the Word its authority, it in no way means that the Word can be viewed as redundant and that only the Spirit without the Word should be sought. For the Spirit is linked with an unbreakable bond to the Word of God – one of the famous statements of Calvin according to Floor.

16th century, Pascal states that humans are capable of knowing God, but sin has limited their knowledge of God and made it murky. Similar to Augustine and Luther, Pascal describes the function of reason as apologetical in its aid to people to submit to God.

In his ‘An essay concerning human understanding’, John Locke writes in the late 17th century, that God’s existence and our obedience to him can be proved by reason. According to Locke (2012:10) ‘the existence of God is made clear to us in so many ways, and the obedience we owe him agrees so much with the light of reason.’¹³ In contrast, John Henry Newman (1801–1890) (1888:310–320), stated that reason alone is not capable to bring a person to truth. He warns that reason unconstrained by Scripture, may bring errors to its listeners.

■ Recent reformational apologetics

The 20th century gave rise to a new emphasis on reformation from the perspective of a specific Calvinistic life and world view, standing in contrast to other paradigms. At the beginning of the 20th century Warfield of Princeton, as well as Kuyper and Bavinck of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam were very influential in their views on theology, apologetics and reasoning (Beilby 2011:75). They were closely followed by other influential apologists in the Calvinist tradition such as Cornelius van Til, and reformational philosophers such as Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and Stoker (Braun 2013). The reformed or pre-suppositional line of Van Til brought forth apologists such as Francis Schaeffer working in Europe, as well as Bahnsen, Oliphint, Frame, Clark, Keller and others that have had (and still have) tremendous influence in the United States of America and abroad (Cowan 2000:19). Also within the stream of classical apologetics there are R.C. Sproul, Norman Geisler and others striving to do apologetics within a broader Calvinist approach (Beilby 2011:97).

In the rest of this section, important aspects regarding the place of reason in reformational apologetics will be discussed.

■ Suppressed knowledge of God

Based on the Bible as the revelation of the Creator to all man, contemporary reformational apologists tie up with the 16th century reformers in their anthropological point of

.....
13. While being a Catholic, it is still worthwhile to take notice of the influence of Joseph Butler on Christian apologetics, because of his defence of Scripture. In 1736, Butler [2003] wrote his *The analogy of religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature*. In this apologetic work Butler answered the deists’ claim that nature gives us pure science, while Scripture is not useful because it is filled with nothing but problems, fables, contradictions and moral errors. Butler showed that when comparing nature with Scripture, nature is also filled with problems – worse than the problems that someone may find in scripture.

departure, according to which man was created special and unique, in the image of the Creator himself (Gn 1:26–28), to live in a relationship with him, and to reign over the earth with normative choices made in responsibility and reasonability, being in charge of taking care of everything.

Van Til's (1974:197) views correspond with those of Calvin when he states that by being created as image of God, it is possible for man to know God, although this knowledge is suppressed (Rm 1:21). It is this suppressed knowledge that needs to be addressed in apologetics, for the suppression is not total. That is where apologetic reasoning comes in. Frame (1994:88) describes the presuppositional apologist as someone who works from the presupposition that unbelievers have knowledge of God, something they suppress in rebellion against God.

Even in conflict with their own assumptions, unbelievers see and say things matching the biblical truth. Apologetics may depart from the unbeliever's native, but suppressed knowledge of God. Therefore, reformational apologetics do not have to (and should not) pretend to be neutral. Their legitimate apologetic arguments and reasoning presuppose the truth of Scripture and reject the idea of man's intellectual independence or autonomy – the same way as Luther did. Man is still in the image of God after the fall into sin, although the image and what it implies was marred by the Fall. While distorted he can still see things as they are and can still reason logically.

God did not only create all men in his image, but also brought every human being into a covenant relationship¹⁴ with him. When the first humans sinned, the harmony in this relationship changed to rebellion against God – but according to the reformational view this relationship still continues. Oliphint (2013:42) sees it as a crucial part of apologetics to defend the faith against these covenant breakers who deny their relationship with God and thus do not fulfil their part of the covenant.

■ Aim at heart and mind

Human beings need reasoning to fulfil their God-given task in cultivating and preserving the earth. With reasoning, man can think about his own thinking and can structure his plan and argument logically. In order to defend and commend the truth, apologetics needs reasoning. To reach the heart of a person, the mind is involved.

Faith is a matter of heart and mind. The Lord does not ignore people's thinking by focusing merely on feelings. Well-reasoned logical arguments are necessary to address errors and wrong-headedness, and to create the opportunity for people to be taught in the truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and uses the clear

14. Referring to the so-called covenant of works, not the covenant of grace.

preaching of the gospel and the refutation of false reasoning and views in order to bring people to that which is really true.

In his book *Learning evangelism from Jesus*, Barrs shows extensively the great variety of means Jesus used to communicate the truth to people, to reach their hearts and challenge their minds. Barrs (2009:249–250) concludes that Jesus, in accordance with the needs and ignorance of people, spoke on different and specifically needed aspects of the truth. In following him, Christians in their missionary apologetic endeavours have to speak specifically to the needs and ignorance of people, praying to God for wisdom and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit – the primary witness and apologist.

The importance of the mind and its clear grasp of God's revelation in both Scripture and Creation or nature cannot easily be overemphasised. The antirational trends in the Church that focus on personal piety or on mindless devotions – singing the same words over and over as in a mantra – deprived many Christians from the wonder of knowing what they believe, why they believe it and the reasons why Christians throughout history have been willing to die for their faith. The antirational and antidogmatic trends in the Church that took the insight into the basics of Christian beliefs away from members, is one of the important reasons why people leave the faith, as well as why extreme charismatic leaders and cults get others to believe many heresies and even to participate in atrocities. To train the human mind in its dogmatic understanding and apologetic defence of the truth helps people to make conscious decisions. Without it, men can easily fall into the traps of cults and heresies. Apologetics and its understanding of the biblical world view are therefore also important in order to prevent backsliding. It is important for building the church and the kingdom of God, 'because it helps the believer to overcome intellectual obstacles in the course of the believer's spiritual growth' (Njoroge 2010:15).

While reformational apologetics takes the coherence of God's revelation in the Bible and Creation as a departure point, the question remains pressing why it does not speak convincingly to the hearts and minds of today's atheistic thinkers. Based on God's clear revelation to man, Van Til (1963:103–104) states that reformational apologetics claims the validity of the argument for the existence of God and Christian theism as clearly displayed in the Bible and Creation. It is man who does not do justice to the objective evidence of the truth of Christian theism if he comes to any other conclusion.

Psalms 8 celebrates the wonders of the incredible universe and the order of everything and uses it as an indisputable proof of the existence and greatness of God. God's almighty existence can clearly be seen in creation (Rm 1:18–23) – so obvious that it is foolish to deny God's existence (Ps 14:1). Those who deny the existence of God, do so from a heart that is turned away from God, by suppressing the truth that is available to them (Rm 1:21–23), having become blind to it (2 Cor 4:4). Nevertheless, there are many people who look at the stars and the wonders of the land and sea, and come to the conclusion that someone planned and made it. The revelation of God's creation is persuasive even beyond our logical explanation of the teleological and cosmological arguments (Frame 1994:65–66).

■ Philosophical reasoning in reformational apologetics

Apologetics is not only a theological endeavour, but a part of the calling of every Christian and should include all the different fields of scientific research. Among others, reformational theological apologetics can make use of non-reductive reformational philosophy and its reasoning, because it takes God's revelation in an integral sense into account – including the radical diversity and totality of created reality. In his *Festschrift*, Van Til (Geehan 1971) as theologian and apologist replied positively to the reformational philosopher Stoker's suggestions on a methodological combination of reformational philosophy and theology. In his study on this relation Braun (2013) puts it as follows:

Stoker's treatment of the relation between faith, knowledge and the revelation of creation converges with Van Til's position concerning the dependence of human consciousness on the Self-revelation of God [...] He reaffirms Van Til's approach, while reinforcing the importance of God's Word-Revelation in an integral sense, i.e. including the meaning diversity and totality of created reality by means of reformational non-reductionism [...] Stoker implicitly suggests a complementation of Van Til's understanding of the Word-revelation, which should not be reduced to Holy Scriptures, but rather include the other forms. (p. 6)

Following Van Til and Stoker's epistemology, Oliphint (2011:111) claims that the only way to get full knowledge of anything in the universe is through faith in Jesus Christ. His salvation can break through our distorted views of reality. Faith therefore does not take one from utter ignorance to a basic understanding of reality, but from a distorted understanding and reasoning, to knowledge that understands creation for what it is.

■ Scripture-based reasoning

God has created this world knowable and has created human beings as reasonable, able to think rationally. He endowed man with the acts and functions to know, to plan and to reason, to reign responsibly over the earth, and fulfil his calling to know and to act (Stoker 1971:29). In order to fulfil the responsibility that God placed upon man since the beginning of Creation, towards one another and towards God, the human being had to be able to reason, plan and communicate verbally. Human beings are designed to see that which is true and logically makes sense, and to point out and avoid that which is false or illogical. The influence of the Fall, however, also caused human beings to misuse logic in order to justify errors and try to get away with them. When God questioned Adam just after the Fall about his actions, he pinned the guilt on Eve and on God himself with the following logically constructed argument, underlying that it was actually not his fault, '[t]he woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate' (Gn 3:12 [ESV]).

Despite the Fall, human beings still have retained the image of God as beings that can take responsibility and reflect, plan and reason (Col 3:10). People understand that an argument should hold water, conclusions should be reached in a responsible manner and should not be contradictory or inconsistent. Even in the normal course of discussions, logical forms and basic patterns of argumentation are used explicitly or implicitly, of which deductive and inductive reasoning are the most common. The problem that was caused by the Fall in the human being's use of logical reasoning, is therefore not related to logic itself or to aspects of it, such as a logical and valid conclusion and truth as outcome. The problem, however, is the manner in which human logic is used, and also often abused (knowingly or unwittingly) for own purposes.

The Lord Jesus does not avoid logic, but uses logical arguments in order to teach the truth (the truth that makes one free), to oppose false doctrine and to rectify incorrectness (Jn 8:32; 2 Tm 3:16). Jesus' usage of logic to break through the Pharisees wrong understanding of the law can be seen in his handling of their argument that he broke the law by healing someone on the Sabbath (Mt 12:9–14). His argument can be rewritten in the following deductive argument:

Premise 1: While you will help your sheep in need on the Sabbath.
Premise 2: And while man has more value than sheep.
Conclusion: It follows that it is lawful to help a man in need on the Sabbath.

There are different ways in which logical deductions may be made from statements or points of view in a deductive, as well as inductive argument. In a deductive argument, the point is put forward that if the claims or points of view are true, the conclusion or conclusions should also be true. In an inductive argument (that is especially used to further science) the point is put forward that one or more points of view are probably true and for that reason the conclusion is probably correct. Basic logical conclusions (i.e. syllogisms) and their possible use in apologetic reasoning, are, among others, the following:

Deductive argument (the first claim constitutes a general truth):

- the human being was made in the image of God
- I am a human being
- I have **therefore** been created in the image of God.

Hypothetic argument (the first claim constitutes a hypothesis):

- if something has not been in existence since eternity, it must have been created
- the universe does not exist since eternity
- the universe therefore must have been created.

Excluding argument (the first postulate gives excluding choices):

- the Son of God is either eternal or is only a temporary creature
- the Son of God is eternal (cf. Is 9:5; Jn1:3; Col 1:16–17)
- the Son of God can therefore not be a mere creature.

Extended deductive argument (deduction from various arguments):

- the Bible states that the Son of God is himself God
- the Bible states that Jesus was born 2000 years ago as a human being
- the Bible states that Jesus is the Son of God
- the Bible states that God is eternal, while the human being is a created being
- Jesus is *therefore* eternally God born as a human being – truly God and man.

Stronger argument (inductively founded upon more logical or preponderance of the evidence):

- evolutionism states that the temporal world came into existence spontaneously from nothing
- the doctrine of Creation sees the temporary world as created by the eternal God
- *logically* it makes more sense that something as temporary as the Creation around us as well as the rules and norms for its existence, has come into existence through someone eternal and divinely wise.

When one is working with arguments, it is important that errors in thinking should be recognised and avoided or pointed out. In Matthew 22:23–24 the Sadducees put an excluding syllogism to the Lord Jesus, namely that either there is no life after death, or else if there is life after death, there would be great marital problems when a woman died that was married a number of times in succession to his brothers after her husband's death. The Lord points out the error in their thinking (that of a false dilemma that was postulated) in the second part of their statement. It is true that there is life after death, but there are no marriages in heaven. There consequently is not such a dilemma as that which was purported by the Sadducees.

The lack of logic in their reasoning was a key aspect of the Lord Jesus' apologetic handling of people and their questions.¹⁵ In a special way he pointed out contradictions and logical errors in thinking and in the actions and manner in which people reasoned.

■ The application of reasonable apologetics

An important task and aim of apologetics is to help Christians in their understanding of the reasoning other people give for living and following their different world views. In the reformational tradition this has been done with the focus on breaking through the barriers erected by people in their rebellion against God. To show how 'Scripture and plain reason' come together in Scripture-based apologetic reasoning with others, the application thereof will be tested in three different fields of apologetics, namely where

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 15. Many examples may be given. One of these is his handling of the conundrum whether one should pay tax to the emperor – Matthew 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17; Luke 20:20–26.

God is denied (e.g. scientific atheism), where a variety of gods is acknowledged (e.g. polytheism), and in cults that base their views on the Bible (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses).

■ Scientific atheism

In scientific atheism faith and reasoning are seen as opposites. The naturalistic view and its pretension that science is based on logic while faith is illogical, is often one of the first things that has to be handled by Christians in an apologetic discussion. Coming from a Christian world view, an example of how these atheistic assumptions can be answered, is by the logical reasoning that if everything was made by chance, there would be nothing to enforce logic as normative on us. Even the naturalistic belief that the preservation of the species motivated the evolutionary process would only be a concept with no coercion or force. Frame (1994:104) notes that if logic was an evolutionary development people would not have to heed it. An important aspect of the theory of evolution is that it is about the preservation of life – but cockroaches can survive in places where humans cannot, and that is not because they can reason more logically.

Part of defending the faith in reformational apologetics is to show the inconsistency of other world views. Luther did it for instance at Worms when explaining that he could 'not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other' (Edgar & Oliphint 2011:17). The logical fallacy that is basic to an atheistic or naturalistic view of science is evident in the remark of Lennox (2009:43) when he states that scientism is self-destructive, having a fatal error in itself, for the scientism assertion that only science can bring to truth, is itself not derived from science. The statement that only measurable and logical deductible scientific endeavours bring truth, is in itself not a scientific statement according to the standards naturalists require. Their view on what is truth and scientific is a point of departure, a statement about science, a meta-scientific statement based on a world view or belief system. If contemporary atheistic scientists' basic statement that only science can bring truth, is true, the statement must accordingly be false. Accordingly, scientism destroys itself. If logic is to be normative then naturalistic science self-destructs. This needs to be shown in an apologetic discussion where the idea of evidence and neutrality is being put to the forefront.

The external conceptual problems of naturalism should receive serious attention from the natural sciences and must be discussed in apologetic discussions. A naturalistic view of human beings is an example of a theoretical concept that may sound possible when specific aspects of the human body are examined, while it cannot fit in a broader life and world view or in everyday life experiences. Pinker (1997:55–56), who is an advocate of naturalistic evolution, refers to the dualism into which such a naturalistic paradigm forces a scientist when he says that he views humans as complex mechanisms within the context of a laboratory but as free and dignified outside of that environment in everyday life. In his

own words, he is forced to deal with people at the same time as machines and as free moral beings with choices ‘depending on the purpose of the discussion’ (Pinker 1997:56).

Pearcey (2006:237) rightly points out that evolutionary naturalism forces thinkers to work with two contradictory approaches. Their professional ideology describes man as a mechanism at the mercy of natural processes, which contradicts their own life experience where man is free to make moral choices and must be handled with human dignity. The imposition of these inconsistent presuppositions can be seen in their acceptance of this dualism even though it contradicts their intellectual system. Following Schaeffer (1986), Pearcey calls this kind of thinking a secular leap of faith. Perhaps this description is too kind. The world view of this contemporary atheist scientist is a contradictory one, which must be apologetically challenged to be changed to one that is consistent with everyday life experience as the Christian world view is.

Naturalism, not only deprives man of his faith, but also of his freedom and responsibility, meaning and dignity, love, respect and kindness (Oliphint 2013:21). Materialists depart from the physical causal relation in which every effect (including human actions) is determined entirely by a previous cause, working according to physical natural laws which allow no exception. When naturalists reduce human actions to natural laws, human freedom disappears (Stoker 1983:90). Without freedom and responsibility, human beings cannot live as human beings, think for themselves, nor even create science, for things such as choices, freedom and responsibilities are attributes required for the establishment of science.

■ Polytheism

The use of logical reasoning and evaluation is not foreign to the Christian church and is an inherent part of reformational apologetics, as Luther stated at Worms by saying that views will only be convincing if based on Scripture and when plain reasoning is used in accordance with it. This point of departure concurs with Scripture itself, where things are explained in a logical, coherent manner, and logical arguments are used to point out illogical beliefs or ways of life. When discussing the wisdom surrounding the worship of idols, Isaiah 44:14–20 for instance, pointed not only to the falseness of idolatry, but also that it is illogic. The same wood that is used for heat and cooking, is also used to make an idol. It is not reasonable to believe that part of the wood of a tree that you cut down for household purposes, can be changed by your making it into a god that you must worship, who holds your life and destiny in his wooden hands.

Religions such as Hinduism (and its offspring the New Age movement) and certain groups coming out of Christendom such as Mormonism and churches following the little-gods-theory, can be seen as modern-day proponents of polytheism. Dennett (2013)

states that the basic polytheistic belief of many limited, finite gods who each play one or other role in events of the universe, goes logically against what is meant by being God:

In the most basic sense, to be God means to be the ultimate being, the greatest being, in the most perfect being who is himself unlimited in any way, but also infinite in every way. The polytheistic idea of God runs head on against this classical concept of God. (n.p.)

These limited 'gods' still need an infinite cause – an eternal Creator. How can man put his trust in limited beings that (as is a common belief) strive for power, prosperity and position? How can there then be any certainty about anything?

Christianity sees God as a reasonable, omnipotent being that can be relied upon. The universe is God's personal Creation and therefore a rationally coherent, lawful, permanent structure, ready for man's logical thinking and understanding of it. In opposition to the idea of polytheism where each of the gods act according to his or her own whims and preferences, Christians proclaim a God who rules all things according to his law and order – ordinances which were in place from the beginning for man to discover and work with (Gn 1:28, 2:19). The universe is a created and permanent structure which is reliable; it makes the variability of a world made and governed by selfish and untrustworthy gods unthinkable.

■ Jehovah's Witnesses

In their apologetic book against the Trinity, *Should you believe in the Trinity?* the first main argument against the Trinity that is used by the Jehovah's Witnesses organisation, is that the teaching that God is a triune God cannot be accepted, because it is 'incomprehensible to the human mind' (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society [WTBTS] 1989:4–5). The logical question may be posed whether, when one is faced with a situation where we do not understand something, it necessarily means that it does not exist? It may be put as follows to the Jehovah's Witnesses: Do you only believe in that which you understand? Is therefore only that which you understand actually true? Examples may be given of things that the person has little understanding about, but still sees as being true – such as the precise nature of cancer and how it goes about multiplying.

Because reasonable persons accept the concept of non-contradiction, it is usually a good way of reasoning to point out that a certain view of a group is contradicting itself. A good example is the above logic of the Jehovah's Witnesses that the Trinity cannot be accepted, because of its incomprehensibility to the mind, while maintaining on the other hand in their booklet 'Reasoning from the Scriptures' (WTBTS 1985:148) that although the human mind cannot comprehend that God has been in existence from eternity and therefore has no beginning, it 'is not a sound reason for rejecting it.' This booklet even gives examples of concepts such as 'time' and 'space' that are being used, even though no one is able to point 'to a certain moment as the beginning of time' and even though one cannot understand how space can be endless.

It is therefore clear that the Jehovah's Witnesses level down their argument against the teaching of the Trinity, namely that if one does not understand something, it (probably) means that it does not exist:

- Postulate 1: Something that is incomprehensibly relative to God should not be accepted (should you believe in the Trinity?).
- Postulate 2: Something that is incomprehensibly relative to God should be accepted (reasoning from the Scriptures).
- Conclusion: Jehovah's Witnesses' publications are contradictory in their reasoning, because both cannot be true.

To say that what is generally accepted is necessarily true, is a logical fallacy. Something is not right or wrong just because it is the view of most people. The argument is often used by children when they want to convince their parents by, for instance, saying '[e]veryone is going to the party', or '[n]obody can do maths'. The Jehovah's Witnesses' statement that because the concept of the Trinity is supposedly incomprehensible to most people, it is necessarily false or wrong, it is illogical. It is not even possible to know and understand how everything in Creation works. Scientists have been examining Creation for centuries, and most answers they obtained soon became outdated. They are increasingly discovering how precise and complex the actual nature and function of things are, with the result that one has to acknowledge that we are increasingly discovering how little we still know. If it is the case with something such as life that was created, how little do we really know about the Creator, who (also according to the Jehovah's Witnesses) created everything from nothing, and eternal life. Human beings can only know what God has revealed through his Creation and Word. To describe God is very difficult, because with what can God be compared, or in which terms is it possible to fully describe him?

In an apologetic discussion about the comprehensibility of the Trinity, it may be pointed out that there are different forms of understanding. Someone can for instance understand the operations of a computer in so far as he is able to work with it and its programmes. Someone else who claims to understand the operations of a computer, understands the more technical aspects of the hardware, while again someone else understands the software and the creation of programmes. The emphasis in the Bible is not placed on our comprehensibility of God in the sense that we should know everything about him, but that we can know him personally, as he reveals himself adequately to us, for us to be able to understand and know him.

Based on 'Scripture and plain reason' to know God may be explained in an apologetic discussion with Jehovah's Witnesses in light of the Bible's description of believers as children of God. There are many things that little children do not know about their parents, they would, for example, not be able to give an accurate description of their parents' profession and everyday activities. Yet those children know their parents on a very personal level. They can tell people about their parents, and if somebody says bad or

untrue things about, for instance, the actions or character of their parents, their reaction will be that it is not true – not because they have all the facts, but because they know their parents on another level.

The same applies to the believer's relationship with God – God who differs much more from believers in terms of his nature and knowledge than parents differ from their children. Although what people know about God is very limited, it is still possible for believers to know him intimately, when they are in a personal relationship with him through his Word and Spirit. It is due to the fact that believers are in this relationship with God that he could say to his people in Isaiah 43:10, 'You are my Witnesses.' His people know him well enough to be able to witness about him.

■ Reasonable reformational apologetics

Responsible reformational apologetics uses consistent reasoning, based on Scripture as the Word of God, to bring truth to people and to expose falsehood. Because God has created this world knowable and has created human beings as reasonable beings, even those who deny God or worship illusionary gods in his place, know the difference between logical reasoning and logical fallacies. From the beginning of Christianity, through the time of the Reformation and until this day, logical reasoning, based on scriptural truth, was used to break through the falsehood people believe, to show the inconsistency in their world views and the errors in their reasoning, with the purpose to open the way that people can be introduced to and confronted with the gospel.

That said, instead of focusing on differences in methodology, reasonable reformational apologetics reaffirms its root in the Protestant Reformation, as a renewal of the biblical world view and its use of reason. And by seeking to make best use of the works of different apologetic methods, reasonable reformational apologetics highlights contributions of different apologetic streams as inspired by their shared heritage. Such emphasis on the unity (although diverse) of inspiration of Protestant apologetics is not merely a heuristic strategy, but rather an acknowledgement of the rich diversity of the reformational world view and the apologetic streams proceeding from it.

In conclusion, reasonable reformational apologetics can be seen as a plea for a view of apologetics that seeks to celebrate the legacy of the Protestant Reformation.

■ Summary: Chapter 3

According to the Bible, Christians have the apologetic task to reasonably defend and contend the truth of Scripture. This chapter focuses on what could be denoted as reasonable reformational apologetics. The latter implies a specific understanding of the

relation between apologetics and reason, which has its roots in the ancient Christian tradition and has been cultivated by heirs of the Reformation, as it became clear in the course of this chapter in terms of different apologetic figures and nuances. Further, the term 'reformational' is used to indicate the basic apologetic orientation which has its starting point in the Reformation and is thus shared by Protestants.

The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century led to a flourishing of Christian apologetics and to a substantial increase in apologetic material. The motivation for such a renewal of Christian apologetics can already be seen at the very beginning of the Protestant movement. In his famous defence at Worms, the reformer Martin Luther refers to both Scripture and pure reason – not reason as judge of scriptural matters, but reason as servant to scriptural truths. On several occasions Calvin used reasoning in a consistent and logical way to defend a true understanding of Scripture. In line with this assumption, contemporary reformational apologists tie up with the 16th-century reformers in their view that man, being created as image of God, is inclined to know God, although this knowledge is suppressed. Accordingly, it is stated that this repressed knowledge needs to be addressed in apologetics, for the suppression is not total. Conversion does not take people from utter ignorance to a basic understanding of reality, but from a distorted understanding and reasoning, to knowledge, built on Scripture, that understands Creation for what it is. Based on this understanding of man and reason, reformational apologetics acknowledges that part of defending the faith is to show the logical inconsistency of other world views. Thence, while the main apologetic focus of the reformers is characterised by the contrast between the biblical world view and the Roman Catholic deviation from it, contemporary reformational apologetics confronts world views such as atheism, polytheism and the cults with the biblical world view, in a similar reasonable fashion.

Was the church made only for mission? Revisiting *missio Dei* and *missio ecclesia* from the perspective of Paul's letter to the Ephesians

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■ Problem statement

Wright (2013) verbalises a view that is widely proclaimed in the current discussion on the missional church (cf. also Bevans & Schroeder 2004:8; Lemons 2008:1):

It is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world; rather, God has a church for his mission in the world. Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – God's mission. (p. xi)

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Wright does not explain here (2013:xi) precisely what he understands by ‘mission’. If he would mean that the purpose of the existence of the church is completely absorbed in carrying the gospel to people that do not believe, an important part of being church would be disregarded. From other works by Wright (2008:531–535) it is clear that he would probably not make such a radical statement, but his words above could very well be understood in this way. The consequence is that there are indeed other authors that carry this (wrong?) interpretation of Wright’s words to a greater or lesser extent to the point where the church is described as an optional extra (Keller 2012:199).¹⁶ Something of this view is described by Niemandt (2007:149, 151), ‘[t]en diepste gaan dit nie oor die kerk nie, maar oor almal wat die Here deur sy kerk wil seën’ [Basically, it does not concern the church, but everyone that the Lord wants to bless through his church] and ‘[d]ie totale gemeentelike lewe is gefokus op God se sending na die wêreld’ [‘The entire congregational life is focussed on God’s mission to the world’]. From these words, it may be concluded that the conviction of the author is that the church only exists for the sake of the world (cf. also Niemandt 2008:610).

It is true that the church as the covenant people exists to be a blessing to others, but is that the only reason for which the church exists or primarily exists? (see Bolt & Muller 1996:196, 197).¹⁷ The aim of this chapter is to find an answer to this question.

At the heart of the discussion about the missional character of the church is the theme of the kingdom of God, as well as the task of the church to move into the community and, with a sensitive eye for culture, to bring the gospel to life in word and deed to the community. To answer the main question about the reason for the existence of the church, two important questions that must be considered are how God and the church are involved in the world and how the church is involved in the kingdom of God (cf. Flett 2010:52). Furthermore, the topical subject of the missional character of the church poses the question of renewal in the church.

Diverse answers to these questions are found. Stephan Joubert (2008:50, 51), who regards churches (not only some churches) as religious aquariums, encourages his readers saying, ‘Stop wasting time in religious safe harbors’ (Joubert 2008:50). To follow Jesus

16. Consult also the criticism of Janse van Rensburg (2011:75–89) on the viewpoints of Joubert and Niemandt the church and reformation.

17. This debate is closely connected to the debate on the emerging and emergent church. See also Janse van Rensburg (2011:61–123) for a detailed discussion of the different schools of thought in the emergent church movement. Driscoll (2008) distinguishes the following four schools of thought into which the emergent church has developed: Emerging Evangelicals, House Church Evangelicals, Emerging Reformers and Emergent Liberals. In his detailed discussion, he divides the different schools into two sections: in the first three, schools are persons and churches that acknowledge the authority of Scripture and want to act according to it, while those in die fourth school do not regard Scripture as authoritative; they want to search for new unrestrained ways of being church. The main role players in die fourth section are Brian McLaren, Doug Pagitt and Rob Bell.

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means to move out of the church, to find him outside in the world and to cooperate with him there (cf. also Joubert 2009).¹⁸ Joubert's view of the relation between church and kingdom agrees with Hoekendijk (1952), who already in 1952 expressed the view that God does not work through the church in the first place but in the world. Flett (2010:53) emphasises that the main points in Hoekendijk's view are that God's kingdom is outside the church in the world and that God does not accomplish renewal through the church but through his Spirit in the world. Flett (2010:53) concludes his summary of Hoekendijk's view saying, '[f]or the church to follow Christ, she must be active in the world' (Flett 2010:53). Cox (1965:23, 25) identifies the underlying philosophy of this school of thought saying, 'it is the world, the political world and not the church, which is the arena of God's renewing and liberating activity' (Cox 1965:24). This statement further relates to Wickeri's (2004:187) viewpoint, who says, 'the church is active alongside other movements which anticipate God's reign'. Flett (2010:55) says Wickeri's opinion states that the church must identify herself with the marginalised people of the world and that she must cooperate with alternative (non-Christian) religious traditions to promote the reign of God. The uniqueness of a religion does not contribute to God's actions in the world and therefore it must not play a role in the mission of the church.

When the central position of the church is denied in the coming of the kingdom, it may result in also denying the essential place of proclaiming the gospel, an assignment that has been entrusted to the church (Keller 2012:251–252). This denial is indeed found in the following statement of the World Council of Churches and Department on Studies in Evangelism (1963):

[T]he world is already a redeemed world so that, whether men discern their true condition or not, and even if they deny it, they are still heirs of God's redemption. (p. 7)

This conviction implies that the whole world has already been reconciled with God in Christ, and therefore rebirth, faith, conversion and a holy life are not necessary anymore. The emphasis falls on all people and religions living peacefully together in the *shalom* of the kingdom of God (cf. Flett 2010:57–61).¹⁹ The kingdom of God is separated from the Word and therefore the church, which is the messenger of the truth, is not necessary anymore (cf. Keller 2012:91–93). The work of the Holy Spirit is also separated from the Word and from the Church.

18. Consult also Niemandt (2007:46–163), who holds the emergent churches up as prototypes for churches in South Africa. He makes no distinction, however, between the widely diverse viewpoints in the emergent church movement, of which some deny the necessity of the church in the *missio Dei*. Niemandt (2007) quotes Newbigin to justify the viewpoint regarding the missional church without referring to Newbigin's (1995) criticism in his later work *The open secret* of the viewpoints that are now propagated by the emergent church (cf. Keller 2012:252, 253).

19. Compare Keller (2012:194–217) for a thorough analysis and evaluation of different viewpoints on how the church has to become involved in culture.

A multitude of schools of thought regarding the concept of the missional church exist. As each one has assigned an own content and methodology to the term *missional church*, it is impossible to give an overview of every interpretation here.²⁰ The above references, however, are sufficient to show that a finely nuanced articulation of concepts and views is necessary in this discussion.

In the light of the literature review above, it is clear that there is an appeal for renewal in the church with regard to the *missio Dei*. The point of departure in this chapter is that renewal must be guided by principles from Scripture; otherwise, it might become deformation instead of reformation. This study is an exegesis of Ephesians in an attempt to find out whether the Letter to the Ephesians provides principles with regard to the *missio ecclesia* and how such principles can be applied as guidelines for the renewal of the church. In the discussion, attention will be given to the concepts of *kingdom* and *church*, with attention to the relationship between kingdom, church, culture, knowledge and mission.

■ Kingdom in Ephesians

Firstly, as the coming of the kingdom is at the heart of the *missio Dei*, Ephesians is investigated with regard to the kingdom of God. The word βασιλεία [kingdom] is found only once in this letter (Eph 5:5), and then in the warning that states who will not inherit the kingdom of Christ (Hoehner 2002:662). However, the difference between those that have a share in the kingdom of Christ and those that do not or that consequently are part of the kingdom of the evil, constitutes the theme of the whole letter (Arnold 2010:277), as will be shown in the overview hereafter.

Ephesians 1 is a description of the eternal plan (οικονομία) of God, according to which he manages history and steers it to its fulfilment (Eph 1:10), when all things in heaven and on the earth will be united under Christ as the head (Breed 2014). It will be the time when the full reign of the Messiah, as promised in the Old Testament, will become a reality (Hoehner 2002:219). In this eternal plan, each person in the Trinity fulfils a special role. The outcome of this plan is that Christ, who has been raised from death through the strength of God, will be exalted as ruler over all things. Everything will be subjected to him and he will be the head over all things. His exaltation is described spatially by phrases such as ‘at his right hand’, ‘in heavenly places’, ‘above all’ (English Standard Version [ESV]). Thus, he is compared to all other powers and exalted far above them (Eph 1:20–22; Fowl 2012:59, 60).

20. Compare Van Gelder (2007:12–43) for an overview of the development of the discussion on the missional church.

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Ephesians 2 describes how God in his great mercy set the readers free from the power of the evil. He enabled them to participate in the victory of Christ by raising them with him from death and letting them sit in heaven together with Christ (Eph 2:5, 6; Thielman 2010:133–135). In this way, God made the readers that had been heathens without hope and without God in the world (Eph 2:12) part of his people. He did this, so that they are now a holy temple of the Lord (Eph 2:21) and are built up as a dwelling-place of the Spirit (Eph 2:22).

In Ephesians 3, the service of Paul and the church is described within the context of the eternal plan of God (Lincoln 1990:167). By involving Paul in his plan, by assigning him the service of proclaiming the mystery of the gospel to heathens, God established his church (Eph 3:10–11, American Standard Version [ASV]).

He did this so that now, through the church, he could let the rulers and authorities in heaven know his infinite wisdom. This was God's plan for all of history, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The church is the evidence of the victory over the rulers and authorities according to the wisdom of God as contained in his eternal plan. The chapter ends by confirming (as in Eph 1) that the glory in the church belongs to God (Eph 3:21; Arnold 2010:196–198).

Ephesians 4:1–16 is seen in the light of the Ascension of Christ, which is described as a triumphal procession after his victory in which he took prisoners of war (Eph 4:7–10). Moreover, he endows his church with gifts to equip them for leading a victorious life in which they will not be tossed about like waves by each wind of doctrine, but will share in his victory (Eph 4:14; Thielman 2010:268–274).

In Ephesians 4:17–6:9, the readers are encouraged to live as conquerors based on the indicative described in Chapters 1–3. This indicative is described as the calling with which they have been called (Eph 4:17) and relates to the two prayers in Ephesians 1:15–18 and 3:13–19. Paul prays that the readers will understand what their places are as part of God's plan (Eph 1:17, 18), how exceedingly great the power of God working in them is (Eph 1:19–23), and that they will understand the immeasurable scope of the love of Christ (Eph 3:17–19). Paul describes the knowledge that they have received in this way negatively as follows in Ephesians 4:20 (ASV), '[b]ut ye did not so learn Christ'. From this way of coming to know Christ, flows a life of victory over the old human being and the life as a new human being (Eph 4:1–6:18; Hoehner 2002:594; Thielman 2010:300–308; cf. Breed 2014:5 of 10). The church is in the first place called church, as has been stated earlier in this paragraph. She is called to live in unity in Christ at a *specific* place, the very reason why she is also a sent church (Branson 2007:104).

In Ephesians 4:17–6:9, the work of the Holy Spirit is central. In Chapter 4 verse 30 (ASV), the readers are exhorted '[a]nd grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye

were sealed unto the day of redemption'. From the context (Eph 4:17–32) it is clear that they will cause the Holy Spirit great distress when their lives are not determined by the knowledge of Christ and when they fall back into the customs of their previous lifestyle from which they have been freed. In Ephesians 5:18 (ASV), Paul summarises the lifestyle with which they have to break saying, [a]nd be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot'. The opposite of this lifestyle is 'but be filled with the Spirit'. By being filled by the Spirit, believers can become followers of God and live according to his will. Whoever does not live under the reign of the Spirit lives a life of extravagance and grieves the Spirit (Arnold 2010:278, 305–307, 348–351).

The letter concludes with the appeal to believers to search for their strength in the Lord and in his great power, to put on his suit of armour and thus gain victory in wrestling with the evil forces. The battle between the power of God (Eph 1:19) and the heavenly powers (Eph 1:21) is a recurring topic in Ephesians (1:21; 2:2; 3:10, 20; 6:12). It is clear from the words that are used for the hostile powers (Eph 1:21: ἀρχή, ἐξουσία, δύναμις, κυριότης; Eph 2:2: ἄρχων, ἐξουσία; Eph 3:10: ἀρχή, ἐξουσία; Eph 6:12: ἀρχή, ἐξουσία, κοσμοκράτωρ, πονηρός), as well as those that are used to describe God's work (Eph 1:19, 20: δύναμις, κράτος, ἰσχύς, ἐνέργεια, ἐνεργέω; Eph 3:7, 20: ἐνέργεια, δύναμις, ἐνεργέω; Eph 4:8), that the kingdom of God can only come because of victory in a staggering power struggle. The believers are also involved in this power struggle and can only conquer through their access to the Lord and his power (Eph 6:10–20). This struggle therefore does not merely concern the combat of social problems and injustice, but it also deals with the struggle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of evil. The struggle against social problems and injustice therefore flows forth from the primary focus on the kingdom and serves the purpose of the primary focus, namely to bring all things under the reign of Christ.

The triune God creates the church and involves the church in executing his eternal plan (*missio Dei*) to unite all things under the headship of Christ.

The following can be deduced from the study of the kingdom in Ephesians:

- God's kingdom will fully come when all things are united under Jesus Christ's reign.
- The boundaries of the kingdom reach beyond all things and all powers. The kingdom of God is therefore wider than the church.
- God's kingdom will be realised according to his eternal plan.
- The crucial work for the realisation of the kingdom has been done and is still being done by the triune God.
- The coming of the kingdom entails a victory over hostile spiritual forces.
- The victory is certain and the victor, Jesus Christ, has been enthroned high above every power.
- The coming of the kingdom according to God's plan is inextricably related to the work of the triune God for, in and through people.

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- The kingdom of God is a mystery that God has made known to the cosmos through the Apostles, prophets and the church.
- Through the mighty work of God, the kingdom is still to come in the hearts of many people who are still dead in their sins (Eph 2:1).
- The kingdom comes into the hearts of those who believe when God brings them to life together with Christ and lets them sit with Christ at his right hand.
- Knowledge of Christ, his work, his love and his gifts are necessary for realising the kingdom in the hearts, thoughts and deeds of believers.
- The kingdom will be realised in the believers when they live the new life in Christ.
- The Holy Spirit fills the believers and actualises the kingdom of God in their daily life.
- The believers have access to God and his power, in whom and through whom they will be able to be victorious over the enemy within themselves and in their lives, as well as to be instruments in God's hand to free other people.
- The building up of the believers to equip them to live as part of the kingdom of God takes place in the church.
- The church springs forth from the coming of the kingdom in and through the work of the triune God.
- As the main question in this chapter concerns the role of the church in the context of the *missio Dei*, the next section concentrates on what God reveals about his church in the Letter to the Ephesians.

■ Church in Ephesians

Four topics receive attention in this section, namely the church as an alternative community, the church as a display window of God's grace, Christ's unique relationship with the church and the relationship between church, kingdom and knowledge.

The word *ἐκκλησία* occurs nine times in Ephesians (Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23–25 [3 times], 5:27, 29, 32). Louw and Nida (1992:127) say the word *ἐκκλησία* always has the meaning of the corporate unity of believers in the New Testament.²¹ The fact that the content of the letter makes it clear that the church plays an important role in this letter is supported by the use of the word *ἐκκλησία* (Eph 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23–25 [3 times], 27, 29, 32; Arnold 2010:502–505).

■ The church as an alternative community

There is a parallel depiction of the contrast and struggle between the reign of Christ and the evil forces on the one hand, and the contrast between the human beings that believe

21. See Metzger (1963) for an in-depth discussion of the church in the New Testament.

(Eph 1:1, 13) and those whose minds are still darkened and whose hearts are still hardened (Eph 4:17–18) on the other hand (Lincoln 1990:272–276).

Those that believe have received this faith from God (Eph 2:8) because of his grace, not because of any merit on their side. They came to faith when they heard the word of the gospel and accepted it (Eph 1:13). The way in which they came to faith is described in Ephesians 2:4–6. God raised them from their death in sin because he is merciful and loves them with his great love. Because Christ shed his blood (gave his life) and in that way accomplished forgiveness for their sins (Eph 1:7), God raised them together with Christ from death and let them sit with Christ on his right hand. The believers therefore share in Christ's victory and reign together with him (Lincoln 1990:85). That he shows them this grace is based on the fact the God chose to adopt them as his children and to be his heirs even before founding the world (Eph 1:4, 11; Stott 1997:46–47).

These insights have an important influence on the image the church has of herself. The missional church in the togetherness of her members and in the individual lives of every believer, is aware of the fact that being in the service of God they participate in this saving work every day.

Ephesians 2:1–12 describes God's journey with the individual believer. In Chapter 2, verse 13, the journey of the believer as part of the church is described. Ephesians 2:13 echoes Ephesians 2:4 and verbalises the turning point in the lives of the readers. With the words, 'But now', Paul describes the contrast between their previous relationship with God and his people and the truth about them now. The change took place when they were incorporated into Christ (Cohick 2005:91). The core of the change is that they were far from God and now they have come near through the blood of Christ. The hostility between Jew and heathen has been changed into peace and separation has been changed into the unity that is present in one body (Mbennah 2009:48, 49). The unity is found in their relationship with the triune God as summed up in Ephesians 2:18 (ASV), 'for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father'. Ephesians 2:19–22 continues to describe the close bond that exists between the believers and God. Firstly, the believers are joined by the truth that has been proclaimed by the Apostles and the prophets and on which their faith is built. Secondly, they are also joined in Christ, who as the corner stone is the core of the message that binds them together as a temple of the Lord. In the third place, they are bound in a unity by the mutual work of edification that brings about that they are increasingly and continuously filled by the Spirit of God to be a dwelling place of the Lord. Not only are they the dwelling place of the Spirit, but they are also a dwelling place for the new believers that build each other up (Eph 2:19–22). In Ephesians 4:3, the believers are called upon to seriously pursue and preserve the unity of the Spirit (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:102–104).

The missional identity of the church does not only mean that everyone in the church is involved in the need of the world, but also that they are involved with the purpose of

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letting people become part of the people of God. In the church as temple and dwelling place of God, people share fully in the grace of God that he gives to his covenant people. The kingdom of God, the covenant of God and the covenant people of God cannot be separated from each other (cf. Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:38).

The way in which the believers are brought together under the headship of Christ is described in Chapter 3 for the third time. In Chapter 1, it is described from the perspective of eternity. In Ephesians 2:4–6, the life-giving work of God to the believer is described. In Chapter 3, the role of Paul's work of service (*diakonia*) in the work of God is explained. Paul has made the mystery of God's plan known to the heathens (Eph 3:2–9), so that they in turn can make this mystery known to others (Eph 3:10). Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011:145) describe the process saying, '[t]he church is the communal body bearing God's promises in Christ. No other community plays that unique role'.

The change in the believer's relationship to God is described twice (Eph 2:18; 3:12) by the word *προσαγωγή* [access]. Those who share in the kingdom of God, which is under the rule of the Spirit, have access to God now (Cohick 2005:93–95). The purpose of Paul's mission (*missio*) was the coming into being of the church and this mission has been transferred to the church. As this task might entail that the church will be prosecuted, the church must have free access to God to carry out this calling (O'Brien 1999:250).

In contrast to those that have found grace with God in this way are those that are still dead in their sin and in the power of the ruler of the evil forces. They experience the anger of God just like those that believe now did previously. Their minds are darkened and they are alienated from the living God; because they have hardened their hearts they live in ignorance (Eph 4:18). About them it is said, '[h]aving lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more' (Eph 4:19, New International Version [NIV]). Such persons have no 'inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God' (Eph 5:5 [NIV]).

It is important, however, that Paul impresses the fact on the readers that they were also like this previously (Eph 2:1, 11–12; 4:17–24; 5:8), and yet they have been saved without any contribution from their side (Lange et al. 2008:68). Salvation means that a radical renewal takes place in the believer's relationship with God, as well as that he or she becomes part of the church, which is the dwelling place of God through the Spirit (Eph 2:21–22). The church has a missional identity for the sake of the world and at the same time for the sake of the edification of the church to the glory of God (cf. Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:73, 113). Continuous edification is therefore part of the renewal of the church.

Three important facts relating to the relationship between the church and the *missio Dei* have been shown in this section. Firstly, the church is the dwelling place of the Spirit and new believers; secondly, the church must continuously build herself up and renew herself; thirdly, God's sending of Paul to make the mystery of God's salvation known to

the heathens and bring everyone together under the headship of Christ has been transferred to the church. For these reasons, the *missio Dei* is inherent in the church and cannot be separated from the church's existence as unique expression of God's kingdom (alternative community).

The church, display window of God's grace

As new human beings, believers are the workmanship of God (Eph 2:10 [NIV]). This workmanship is equalled to creation (Eph 2:9–10; cf. Eph 4:24). Through this workmanship, believers become part of the people of God, the church. The church is also described as a creation of God in Ephesians 2:15. The purpose of this workmanship of God is that those who are recreated in this way will do the good deeds that God prepared (Eph 2:10). Those that have been renewed must 'walk in' these deeds (περιπατέω; Eph 2:10 [ASV]). The word περιπατέω plays an important role in the Letter to the Ephesians. It is used to describe a way of life (cf. Eph 2:2, 10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; cf. Breed 2015:42; Hoehner 2002). In Ephesians 4 and 5, the new way of life of the believers is frequently described by the word περιπατέω. Hoehner (2002:vii, 62, 66–69; cf. also Fowl 2012:125–214) identifies a certain structure in Ephesians 4–6 based on the use of this word. Ephesians 4–6 is the description of the way in which believers must think, talk and act every day. It can also be said that Ephesians 4–6 describes the new culture of the believers (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:139).

Those that have been renewed by God and have been made part of the life of his church must be characterised by the good works they do. The purpose of the good works is described in different places. In Ephesians 1:6 (ASV), the purpose of God's adoption of human beings as his children is described as 'to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved'. The object of the praise is 'the glory', but not glory in itself, or God's glory, but 'the glory of his grace' (Lange et al. 2008:35). In verses 12 and 14 the praise goes to the glory of God, because of the work of the triune God in and through the redeemed. The pattern in verses 6, 12 and 14 (v. 6: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ, v. 12: εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ, v. 16: εἰς ἔπαινον τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ) shows that the ultimate task of the church is the glory of God (solī Deo gloria) in both the church's being redeemed in view of the work of each person of the Trinity, but also in the effect that this work has on the being and function of the church (good works).

In Ephesians 2:7 (ASV), it is said that the purpose of God's work in each believer is 'that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus'. In Ephesians 3 (ASV), God's purpose with the church is described as:

[T]he intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places* might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vv. 10–11)

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God recreates the human beings and makes them part of his church so that his grace and wisdom will become clear from their life together and from the individual lifestyle of everyone. Cohick (2005) explains the meaning of these texts for the church:

The resurrection of Jesus indicates that God did not reject his creation, but seeks to redeem it through Christ. Our worship and our mission should be eschatologically focused. That means we do away with the dualism between spirit and body, which in church mission looked like saving souls without tending to the bodily needs. Instead a humble church should sing notes of grace to the present world. (p. 51)

If it is accepted that the purpose of God's eternal plan – of which the recreation of the human being with a view to perform good deeds is a part – is to bring all things together under Christ (Eph 1:10), the object of the good deeds also becomes clear. God chooses people, saves them in Christ through the rebirth that is brought about by the Spirit. In this way, he recreates them with the purpose that they will be able to do the good deeds that he prepared according to his eternal plan. The good deeds of the believers are a specific new way of life in which they show the greatness of God's wisdom and grace. They do it in living together as a unity in Christ, as well as in their daily lives separate from one another. God uses these good deeds (way of life, attitude, words and deeds) to reveal himself and to let recreation take place in more people so that they can also be gathered in the church under the headship of Christ. However, where his church comes together and lives together, he also reveals himself in his wisdom to the different forces that are working in the world.

The conclusion from this section is that a new culture flows forth from people whom Christ saves and in whom the Spirit of God lives. They will bring this culture to life by doing the good deeds that God prepared for them when they respond to the call of the *missio Dei* together as church and as individual believers. Moreover, this culture should be a display window of God's grace to the world.

Christ's unique relationship with the church

The different images that are used in Ephesians not only motivate the existence of the church, but they also elucidate the special relationship between God and the church.

Children, heirs and inheritance (Eph 1:5, 11, 14)

According to his plan, God has adopted the chosen ones in Christ as his children so that the glory of his grace will be praised. In Christ, they have received an inheritance according to God's plan so that his glory will be praised because of them (Eph 1:11). Through the seal of the Holy Spirit, the believers have become the property of God so that his glory will be praised and he will be glorified (Taylor 2007:36–37).

Raised together with Christ and by letting them sit together with him in heaven (Eph 2:6), is the workmanship of God (Eph 2:10).

As a result of, the effect of the life-giving work of God's love and grace is spelled out in the lives of the chosen ones. They have been raised from death and now they participate in the victory of the exalted Christ. Their lives are now characterised by the fact that they are with Christ. They share in his merit and victory, without any merit on their side. They are the workmanship of God, created by him.

□ One in Christ

In Ephesians 2:11–22, different images are used to explain how renewed human beings across all boundaries form a unity with one another and with God. Those that have been renewed by God share in the blessings of the covenant people of God. All are created in Christ as one new body, which is reconciled with God and has access to God. They are now fellow citizens and part of the family of God. They are also a holy temple, a dwelling place of God through his Spirit. This temple is brought together and built up by God himself (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:4, 121).²²

The church is the body and bride of Christ (Eph 1:22–23; 4:12–16; 5:19–33). In Ephesians 1:23, the relationship between the exalted Christ as the ruler over all powers and things and his church is described. Christ's reign over the entire cosmos is closely connected to his headship of the church, according to Lincoln (1990):

The writer has elaborated on the supremacy God has given to Christ in relation to the cosmos in vv 20–22a, but now all these statements about his lordship over the cosmos are subordinated to a statement about God's purpose for Christ in regard to the Church. Syntactically, the weight of this clause falls on τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ at the end, and the emphasis on the Church continues in the two descriptive clauses which follow. (p. 67)

Christ, the head above all things, is given to the church. The church is the fulfilment of his work. He is the One that fulfils everything in everyone. Christ is self-sufficient and not in need of receiving anything from the church. Yet, as the head of the church, he chose the church as the fulfilment of his work. Lloyd-Jones (1978) explains it as follows:

A head alone is not complete. A head needs a body, and you cannot think of a head without a body. So the body and the head are one in this mystical sense. As such we Christian people are part of 'the fullness' of the Lord Jesus Christ. (p. 431)

The church thus becomes part of the coming of Christ's kingdom and of his fulfilment of everything in everybody in a unique way. Lincoln (1990:79) explains it saying, '[t]hat

.....
22. See Lloyd-Jones (1978:425–435) for an in-depth discussion of the unity between the church and Christ and the unity between believers.

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God's power is available for his people is underlined in the assertion that God has given Christ as head over all things to the church'.

However, the church is not the whole kingdom. The kingdom reaches over all things, including the Creation external to the human being. The kingdom is wider than the church. Christ reigns as king not only through the church, but also by setting a course for all things in such a way that the entire cosmos will eventually be united under him as head. However, the church has a special place in his kingdom (Van Gelder 2007).

In Ephesians 4:7–11, the triumphant Christ is described as the giver of grace, who measures out gifts to each member of his body. He gives special gifts to his body so that the members can be equipped for their ministry of service (Eph 4:12). The aim of the ministry of service is building up the body so that the members can reach maturity. Maturity means that they will increasingly experience and live up to the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13). Through the contribution of every member, maturity will be reached in every respect (Eph 4:15–16). The church grows when church members equipped with the special gifts perform works of edification by ministering the grace of Christ; this growth is an inseparable part of the coming of Christ's kingdom (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011:4). In this respect, the church as the image bearer of Christ is in an intimate relationship with Christ.

In Ephesians 5:19–33, the images of the church as the body of Christ and as his bride are used together to express the special relationship between Christ and his church. Christ is the head of his body and its Saviour (Eph 5:23). Thielman (2010) says about these verses:

This correlation between Christ's role as head and his role as Savior is reminiscent of passages in the first part of the letter in which Christ has used his authority and power for the church's benefit. (p. 379)

He loved the church and gave himself for it so that he might present to himself a glorious (ἐνδοξος) church, not having spot (σπιλίω) or wrinkle (ρυτίς) or any such thing; but that it should be holy (ἅγιος) and without blemish (ἄμωμος) (Eph 5:27). The church is a member (μέλος) of his body, his bones (ὀστέον) and his own flesh (σάρξ), which he nourishes (ἐκτρέφω) and cherishes (θάλπω) because of his love for them (Eph 5:28–30). The unity between the church and Christ is a mystery as is the unity between man and wife (Eph 5:32; Lincoln 1990:392).

Lange et al. (2008) say the following about Ephesians 5:30:

The phrase denotes the personality and corporeality of Christ, in which the Church with her members originates. The connection with and origin from Christ, from the historical, incarnate Christ, from His personal body, is designated in such a way, that we as well as the whole Church are to be regarded as His production and possession. (p. 202)

From these comments, it may be deduced that like a woman is not merely an instrument for her husband to bear children, so the church is not merely an instrument for Christ to expand his kingdom, but also an objective in herself. Christ is busy with his church in love so that she will be perfect and mature when she appears before him. In his kingly reign, he is connected to her in a special way and lets his kingdom come through her ministry of service (cf. O'Brien 1999:414). The church does not only work together for the fulfilment of Christ's work, but she is also part of the fulfilment of his work.

Moltmann (1977) interprets the relationship between the church and God's kingdom as it is found in Ephesians saying:

It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church. (p. 64)

Woodward (2012) emphasises that:

If we seek to create a missional culture, it is imperative that we understand that God created the church as a sign, foretaste and instrument by which more of His kingdom would be realized here on earth. (p. 28)

To these viewpoints, it must be added that the church is also an objective in itself. It is the place where God is praised and where he dwells, as well as the instrument that shows the greatness of God's grace for the salvation of all the chosen ones (Engelsviken 2003:482).

The images in Ephesians leave no doubt for the church regarding the justification of the existence of the church in her unique relationship to Christ.

Church, kingdom and knowledge

Paul describes two parts of believers' becoming part of the kingdom of Christ. The first part is described as a unique event that is the work of God and has immediate consequences for the life of the believer. The first description of this is found in Ephesians 1:7–9, where it is said that God has made the mystery (*μυστήριον*) of his will known to his chosen ones and that they have therefore received salvation through his blood, that is the forgiveness of their trespasses according to the riches of his grace (Thielman 2010:45–54). In Ephesians 2:4–7, the same event is described. Here it is said that God has raised the chosen ones from death and let them sit with Christ in heaven. This is a description of the rebirth through the Spirit and the Word and the sanctification in Christ. In Ephesians 1:13, the event is described as the sealing with the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has promised (cf. Eph 4:30).

A second part is distinguished, though not separated from the first, of becoming part of the kingdom, namely the faith of the chosen ones. Faith is described on the one hand as a gift from God (Eph 2:8), but on the other hand, as the response of the believer to the Word of God (Eph 1:13). Two of Paul's prayers (Eph 1:15–23; 3:14–21) for those that

Was the church made only for mission?

have come to faith are recorded. He prays both times that they would grow in their understanding of what they have received, their new identity. In Ephesians 4, knowledge plays an important role in the transition from the indicative section (Eph 1–3) to the imperative section (Eph 4–6). The believers must be equipped for their ministry of service. This equipment will have the effect that they will not be deluded by the deceit of people, but that they will speak the truth in love (Eph 4:1–16). The equipment therefore leads to preparedness with regard to the truth with which they equip each other to be steadfast to grow towards Christ in the face of the assault of false doctrine. In Ephesians 4:17–21, the contrast between unbelievers and believers is depicted in terms of the insight into the teachings and knowledge of Christ. The thoughts and actions of the unbelievers are determined by their lack of insight and knowledge. The believers' actions are determined by their knowledge of Christ indeed, they have been taught in the truth that is Jesus. That means they must break with their previous sinful way of life and start to live in accordance with that for which God has created them anew, namely to live in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:22–24). For this, it is necessary that they be renewed in 'the centre of perception and decision' (Petrenko 2011:132, 133) ('attitude of your minds' – Eph 4:23 [NIV]). Furthermore, when believers are called upon in Ephesians 6:10–17 to search for their strength in the Lord and his great might by putting on the full armour of God, it is clear that the armour is the knowledge of God's grace. They must use the knowledge about the salvation in Christ, the righteousness through faith and the knowledge of the truth to be able to stand firm against the assault of the evil.

The missional character of the church is also found in the knowledge that the church has received, but it is knowledge that renews and makes it live a new life in its unity with Christ. The church must spread this knowledge, in this way, it can renew others and not only facilitate a more comfortable life for them.

Conclusion

The purpose of the chapter was to present a corrective on a diminished understanding of the purpose of the church in light of the notion of the *missio Dei*. From this research the following perspectives can be presented. These perspectives only add to the very multifaceted meaning of the church and God's intention with it.

- Being part of the eternal plan of God to reunite all things under Christ is an essential part of the identity of the church. It is not just one of the tasks of the church.
- The attention of the church is directed at her own maturing in Christ which is also an essential part of her identity as temple, body and bride of Christ.
- The attention of the church is directed at her own maturing and building up herself and is not opposed to her attention directed at the world, but stands in the service of the world.

- The *missio Dei* and the *missio ecclesiae* are both directed and aimed at bringing all people in the church together under the headship of Christ to the glory of God.
- The *missio Dei* and the *missio ecclesiae* are also directed at bringing the entire cosmos under the headship of Christ.
- The church therefore equips church members to enable them to have an influence on society, politics and culture.

■ Summary: Chapter 4

The place of the church as missional church in the context of the *missio Dei* is investigated. The question whether the church exists only for the sake of mission to the world is answered based on an exegetical investigation of Ephesians. From the research, it has become clear that the church as children of God, body of Christ, people of God, temple of the Spirit and bride of Christ also has the purpose to exist as such to the glorification of God and his grace. The church in her very being is missional in everything she does. The mission of the church, however, includes her own edification and growth with a view to be a display window of the grace of God to the world and for the sake of the salvation of those who embrace faith through God's grace. The purpose of the mission of the church is to lead people to the radical new way of life that follows rebirth through the powerful work of the Spirit. These findings provide an important correction to views that regard the church merely as an instrument or even as being redundant.

Missiology and Reformation in a post-Christian Western world

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Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew documents a vivid image. On a specific day, the disciples with shock and trepidation became aware that Jesus was turning his back on the temple. In his last sermon, Jesus did not only announce judgement over the Pharisees and teachers of the law, but also over the city Jerusalem (Mt 23). Matthew 24 commences with the pertinent message that Jesus left the temple and went to sit down on the Mount of Olives. His whole action compelled the disciples to direct his attention to the temple buildings, as if they wanted to linger there for a brief while. However, according to the biblical testimony, Jesus' disconcerting answer was, 'I tell you the truth, not one stone here will

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be left on another; everyone will be thrown down.²³ From this one can infer that Jesus left the temple because of the nation's spiritual bankruptcy – they were still practising religion, but were not subservient to God any more.

However, this was not a first-time occurrence. This event reminds us of something that also happened in the history of Israel. It was recorded in the book of Ezekiel. In the narrative, God took his prophet on a 'guided tour' of the temple in Jerusalem (Ezk 11), and pointed out to him the evident spiritual degeneration of the whole nation. Then 'the glory of the Lord went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it' (Ezk 11:23), which points to the Mount of Olives. The narrative depicts God leaving the temple, his dwelling place among his elected people. His accusation: In their religious practices they did not serve their Lord anymore, but were occupied with perfunctory and self-directed 'self-service'.

From this documented testimony, it is clear that the Lord places a high premium on his people's subservience. According to the vision from the last Revelation in the Scriptures, the Lord, finally in his seven visitation letters to the New Testament church, stated clearly to the congregation of Ephesus that he would remove their lampstand if they as congregation had forsaken their first love and ceased to be subservient to him (Rv 2:5).

In light of God's Word, particularly in the time of commemorating the Reformation of the 16th century, it is not only necessary to assess the present state of the Christian church and current events taking place, but also to postulate a few reasons why this is occurring.

■ Dawn of the post-Christian world – Christendom declared dead

After the time of the Bible, the church's history broadly can be categorised into three periods, namely pre-Christendom, Christendom and post-Christendom (Kreider 2005:62; Nikolajsen 2012:364).

■ Pre-Christendom

In this context, pre-Christendom refers to a specific period in which the emerging Christian community displayed a certain disposition. At that time, the Christian religion was considered a *religio illicita* (Kreider 2005:62). This implied a community of marginalised people living on the fringes of the cultural society of that period.

23. Except where indicated differently, all the biblical citations in this chapter derive from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

As community they received no benefits and as group they were unable to exert any political influence. According to Murray, they were a 'powerless and sometimes persecuted minority' (Murray 2004b:129), 'operating from the margins' (Murray 2004a:147).

To be part of this community meant a clear and decisive, individual choice. For the person making this choice, it had far-reaching consequences. When someone was converted to the pre-Christendom, this convert, according to Meeks (quoted in Kreider 2005:62), transferred from an ordinary citizen to a 'fanatic member' of a group that deviated consciously from the accepted customs and norms (culture) of the broader society. As a result, a continuous tension field underlay the first Christians' movement ('societal commuting') between the Jewish world on the one hand, and the Hellenistic world on the other hand. This entailed a dual movement, namely 'relating to and distinguishing from the cultural milieu of the first century' (Mays 1999:247). The process led to the development of a specific paradigm of church life. Mead (quoted in Mays 1999:247) terms this form of church life the *apostolic* paradigm. Within this paradigm the locus of mission was the local congregation that had to cope in the midst of a mostly hostile and foreign environment. Nevertheless, the Christian church was documented to have grown and expanded in this milieu, due to God's grace.

The Christian church within pre-Christendom had a missional inclination that focused strongly on ecumenical unanimity and unity between the existing congregations. They busied themselves with the Word of God and understood the sacraments in terms of their testimony to the community of which they were part (Nikolajsen 2012):

- Christian baptism was a visible sign of being incorporated into a covenantal community that had to lead a different life as their testimony to the world.
- The Lord's Supper emphasised the privilege of being part of Jesus Christ, which meant a renewal by participating in his mission in subservience to the world. (p. 369)

■ From pre-Christendom to Christendom

In the year 314 CE, the situation began changing for the Christian church. The Roman Caesars Constantine and Licinius proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which set the Christian religion on equal footing with the other religions within the Roman Empire (Nikolajsen 2012:365). Whatever the assessment of Caesar Constantine, his 'conversion' brought about a turning point in the European and Christian history (Murray 2004b:37). As a result, the Christian religion transposed from a *religio illicita* to a *Corpus Christianum* (i.e. institutional Christendom). According to Mays (1999:247), this also saw the introduction of the so-called *Christendom* paradigm.

For the Christian church, the whole situation changed. In 380 CE the Christian religion was declared the only legitimate religion of the Empire. This implied a watershed

period for the Christian religion and the church as institution (Smith 2002:134). The Christian church transferred from the outside margins of the society to its core and centre. In the process, the church accumulated wealth and was granted political participation and influence. The stark distinction between church and culture within the pre-Christendom time began fading away. The Christian religion and the rapidly expanding Western culture began developing together, to such an extent that in reality both became a single cultural, political and religious entity, according to Herrin (quoted in Nikolajsen 2012:366).

The Christendom paradigm, as a linked partnership between the Christian religion and the emerging Western culture, would prosper for the following 1500 years. Frost (2006) explains aptly:

Christendom is the name given to the religious culture that has dominated Western society since the fourth century. It had become the meta-narrative for an entire epoch. A metanarrative is an overarching story that claims to contain truth applicable to all people at all times and in all cultures. (p. 5)

The transformation from pre-Christendom to Christendom brought about a radical change for the Christian church. The shift to a Christendom paradigm altered the DNA of the Christian church to such an extent that, due to the changes, the church increasingly became alienated from the Christian foundation of the New Testament era (Murray 2004b:74). In this regard, Murray (2004b) elaborates:

From being a powerless and sometimes persecuted minority that nevertheless could not refrain from talking about Jesus and his impact on their lives, the church had become a powerful institution able to impose its beliefs and practices on society. (p. 129)

The Christendom church increasingly became an active partner of the established cultural powers and authorities within the society. As a result, the church gradually began forfeiting its prophetic-critical standing in the society of its time. Instead, the church began fulfilling the role of 'the protected and well decorated chaplaincy in the camp of the dominant power' (Nikolajsen 2012:370).

Christendom divided the world into two blocks. On the one side was the Western developed world, in which the Christian religion determined the norms and values. On the other side, and on the furthest fringes of the Corpus Christianum, was found to be the mission context, or the 'darkened world of unbelief' in which cultural development from a Western viewpoint was totally absent. As explained by Smith (2002:135), '[t]he church was the centre, the mission was its periphery. We had the model here, the copy over there.' In that period, the ministering activities of church life were focused inwardly, on the personal spiritual needs of individual church members. Believers became passive recipients of sacraments, and it was the church's 'business' to minister to them (Nikolajsen 2012:369). Thus, the church ministry was in the hands of professional ministers who were remunerated full-time for services rendered for pastoral care and conservation of

the church as institute, and they had to ensure that church members stayed loyal citizens of the country. 'Over the centuries the church became an institution rather than a movement and its energies were primarily directed towards maintenance rather than mission' (Murray 2004b:129). Mays (1999) elaborates on this point:

[T]he church identified with the empire and mission shifted from the front door to the empires frontier boundary. The common Christian no longer had a role in the witness and mission of the church. That was reserved for the religious professionals. (p. 247)

The consequence was dire, as Shenk (in Guder 2007:252) points out 'Western Christianity became Christianity without mission'.

■ The phase of the new post-Christendom

The paradigm of Christendom that survived for approximately 1–500 years, began showing signs of erosion over the past 500 years (Mays 1999:247).²⁴ In this regard, Frost (2006:5) posits that the Christendom as socio-political reality was already declining rapidly for the past 250 years. Owing to this perceived degeneration, theoreticians of history (secular and Christian alike) already refer to a post-Christendom culture. The disconcerting fact is that the Western churches over the past approximately 250–500 years were experiencing a phase of spiritual demise and decline.

According to Frost (2006:4), it is unfortunate that some adherents of Christendom only in recent times became aware of this state of affairs, while others are still living in denial. In reality, the Western churches at that stage in history can be seen as a wave that broke and broke on the shore, leaving its members stranded and exposed (Frost 2006:4).

One may consider the transition to the mentioned new post-Christendom as nothing less than a paradigm shift and also a possible reason why the church in the West has experienced such a period of cultural turbulence. This is noted as the *shared experience* of the majority of Christians within Western culture (Murray 2004b:15), but not the unanimous perception of Christians globally. Seemingly, this is the experience particularly of Christians residing in Western Europe who have historical roots within that culture (Murray 2004b:14).

The main issue is that the Western churches are facing an extended transition phase, or are already busy processing it. Therefore, the Christian church should prepare itself for a period of change. At present, various transitions are taking place:

24. The Reformed churches in South Africa are about to celebrate their 150th commemoration. Viewed within the bigger picture, the history of this church is interwoven with the period that saw the decline of the institutionalised Christendom paradigm.

- **Cultural ‘eviction’:** The Christian church is brushed aside by popular culture (an erstwhile social ally) to the outer fringes of society – it has been marginalised.
- **Influential depletion:** From a majority in the Western world, the church is rapidly becoming a minority, losing influence.
- **Shaken foundations:** The church is moving from an established social entity to a role of social migrant and outward motion:
 - from privilege to pluralism
 - from control to witnessing
 - from maintaining the status quo to mission
 - from established institute to migratory movement (categorisation based on the motives by Murray 2004b:20).

In this regard, there remain strongholds or at least outposts within the new post-Christendom world (Murray 2004b:9). The overall perception, however, is that the Christendom is a deceased entity and is currently decaying in other sectors of society as well.

■ The Reformation in historical perspective

The Reformation of the 16th century entailed a watershed in the church’s history. As such, it provides a crucial and pivotal reference point for scholars of biblical theology. Regarding the state of the church at that time, the Reformation, however, was unable to attend to all the issues. Hence, the motto of *semper reformanda*, which formulates the church’s focus throughout history. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the lauded ‘Great Reformation of Martin Luther and Johan Calvin left unfinished business’ (Ogden 1990:7). In hindsight, church historians point out the ‘blind spot’ of the Reformation of the 16th century as the Christendom paradigm at that time. This provided the milieu and static background as décor for the events of the Reformation, as strikingly put by Murray (2004b):

For all the laudable attempts to improve Christendom, the Reformers remained entrenched in the configuration of church and society that had survived the cultural and political turmoil of the past millennium. (p. 146)

The question remains as to the ‘unfinished business’ of the Reformation. According to Ogden, the reformers²⁵ approximately 500 years ago, attempted to unleash a revolution, with the promise to liberate the church from hierarchical priesthood, by implementing a ‘priesthood of all believers’. However, history reports that the Reformation did not live up to this promise, as pointed out by Ogden (1990:11) ‘[i]n spite of the Reformation clericalism has more often than not held sway’. In light of this statement, it becomes

25. Ogden refers to, among others, Luther and Calvin, the main exponents in this case.

evident that the ‘unfinished business’ of the Reformation concerns the full functioning of the so-called ‘general office of believers’.

The Reformation movement took place in a Christian Europe, within a church environment in which seemingly only the specific offices of ‘pastors and teachers’ were required. Hence, the Reformation would turn into a struggle for the right doctrine ‘[b]eing a Christian was now defined primarily in terms of doctrine and not in terms of behaviour’ (Ferguson in Murray 2004b:70). Within the realm of the *Corpus Christianum*, the Great Commission (Mt 28:18–20) was considered a ‘done deal’ with the witnessing task already completed within Europe and the Western cultural context. Mission was considered an activity that was performed outside the church boundaries, viewed as essentially ‘God’s responsibility’, and delegated to ‘specialist agencies’ (Murray 2004b:130, 158). As a result, the spreading of the gospel was separated from the usual congregational ministry work. The congregation focused its ministry mainly on inward edification and the interests of the church members. The church’s identity was determined particularly by the pastoral dimension and the inward focus on conserving the institutional aspects of church life (Goheen 2011:9). In this regard, O’Donovan (in Goheen 2011) gives the following assessment:

In the midst of a more hospitable cultural context Christians forgot their unique story and identity [...]. Historical Christendom had ended by the eighteenth century when the Enlightenment emerged to offer an alternative vision of public life based on a rationalistic humanism and the Christian faith began to move from the centre of public life to the private margins. [...] From the Enlightenment forward the church’s role in Western culture contracted steadily until it functioned merely as culture’s chaplain, caring for the religious needs of individuals and giving private instruction in matters of morality. But it no longer exercised influence on a grand scale. (pp. 10–11)²⁶

During the stage of the *Corpus Christianum*, the Christian church became increasingly defined by events inside the four (or more) church walls, not as during the pre-Christendom stage, in terms of the missionary commission to Christ’s followers. The Reformation was realised fully by establishing state churches and constructing systems of pure doctrine with its corresponding Christian-ethical conduct. However, the church espousing pure doctrine, forfeited the missionary dimension and was more inclined to be scholastic than apostolic (Bosch 1991:249). Thus, even though the Reformation has a crucial standing in the history of the Christian church, it carried with it unfinished work. Ogden (1990:11) rightly asserts that currently, the church encounters the generation that is able to complete the Reformation.

26. Goheen (2011:5, 10) refers to the ‘domesticated Western church [...] [that] often succumbs to the seductive temptations this new social location offered’.

The Western church environment as well as its theology are at this period in its history facing tumultuous times. Smith (2002:138) identifies this dilemma, '[i]t is not easy to live between paradigms at a point when the old model no longer works and the new one has not yet emerged'. In this regard, various responses are possible, as is discussed subsequently.

■ Reforming the reformation

Regarding the above-mentioned dilemma, Murray (2004b: 206–216) mentions a few possible responses, which he explains in detail. The main trajectories can be drawn as follows:

- Churches and members that deny this condition of post-Christendom totally.
- Those who acknowledge the problem but still attempt to maintain the *Corpus Christianum* – a non-existent mirage.
- Those who maintain that the Christendom paradigm is still applicable, and may survive through a sharper focus and increased effort.

Guder (2007:254) explains that the 'mind set of Christendom is much more resilient than its structures'. Even though the structures are largely tumbling, globally the basic theoretical framework is still in place. An example from the biblical testimony: The temple ministry in Jerusalem was perpetuated in spite of the fact that Jesus turned his back on the temple and the physical structure had been destroyed a few decades afterwards (70 CE). In the same vein, for an extended time already, the Western culture and society could not be typified as 'Christian' anymore. Nevertheless, this is the silent assumption of numerous Christian followers. Mays (1999:246) diagnoses the crisis aptly, '[t]he Western church is blinded by a paradigm of church and mission constructed to meet the needs of Christendom and the institutional church'. In this regard, Goheen (2011:4) asserts that the idols of Western culture have compromised the Western churches to a large extent.

In light of the development described above, Ogden (1990:12) calls the Western churches to a New Reformation, which he defines as follows:

The New Reformation seeks nothing less than the radical transformation of the self-perception of all believers so we see ourselves as vital channels through whom God mediates his life to other members of the body of Christ and the world [...] The New Reformation is a spiritual battle bent on replacing our thinking patterns, which have crippled the church, with a new set of pastoral expectations that can empower God's people for ministry. (p. 91)

This call by Ogden for a New Reformation, is in essence a call that the church should return to the paradigm of the pre-Christendom period. This development is confirmed by Mead (1991:22) when he affirms that the Western church finds itself in the preliminary stages of a new paradigm similar to that of the early church, and which he terms the

‘apostolic paradigm’. In this sense, it is paramount that the current Christian church rediscovers the missional orientation of the pre-Christendom movement. The reason is that the mainline churches currently do not operate in a Christian environment anymore where the majority of the people are nominal Christians and neglected churchgoers. The Christian church urgently needs to understand that the Western world is by no means permeated with the ‘objective truth’ of the gospel anymore. This environment currently poses one of the largest missional challenges for the Christian church – for this era, or any other period in history, for that matter (Smith 2002:140).²⁷

This is the main reason for the urgent and intrusive discourse on the ‘missional church’, a debate which began in earnest over the past few years in most parts of the Western world. However, the unfortunate truth is that not all the role players (church leaders in practical ministry) in South Africa have taken note of this discussion as yet. Therefore, it is crucial to define the term ‘missional’ and urgently broaden the conversation.

The concept ‘missional’ holds different connotations for various people. For some, it is merely a novel way to describe a traditional practice – mission as just another function of the church. For others, however, this term describes the true core of the church’s existence, and ‘how the being of church provides the basis for the doing of the church’ (Van Gelder 2009:viii). Furthermore, the discourse on the missional church is directly related to the most recent research on the *missio Dei* notion and its implications for ‘being church’. This discourse, informed by current research, is at the same time a call to the understanding that churches in the post-Christendom period should espouse a missional ethos that is apparent in the core values of the local congregation as well as the communal life of its members (Murray 2004b:137). In this regard, Guder (2007:271) emphasises that the understanding of ‘missional church’ means nothing less than a ‘radical revision of traditional ecclesiologies which largely neglected the central biblical theme of mission’.

■ The reforming road ahead

The road ahead will not be without its potholes. Murray (2004a:155) points out that the church must learn to function as ‘marginal mission movement’, which implies that the church discards preconceived ‘attitudes and assumptions’ as its inheritance of the Christendom entity. In other words, as the heir of traditional Christendom, the church needs to make a ‘baggage check’ – see which facets weigh it down, and which are the ‘precious resources for the ongoing journey into post Christendom’ (Murray 2004b:10).

27. See also Guinness (1993:17–20). He describes ‘modernity’ as the biggest cultural challenge to the church in the history of the world.

This means that missiology as ecclesiological motive should be extracted from the theological bookshelf where it was gathering dust, and applied to direct the New Reformation. The Christian church should have new clarity on their *raison d'être*, namely 'to continue the mission that had brought it into existence' (Guder 2007:258). Those who shun the missiological challenges that confront the contemporary Western world, will also be blind to the dramatic development of what Buhlman (1986:6) terms the 'Third Church'. This implies a growing Christian church within the non-Western world, which was not part of the traditional Christendom paradigm. The new historical awareness is expressed by Smith (2002) as follows:

Seen in this light the collapse of Christendom and the emergence of the church as a truly multicultural community of faith represents not the end of mission, but the beginning of its latest phase, which may turn out to be the most amazing time in the long history of the Christian movement. (p. 144)

■ Conclusion

During this period of commemorating the Reformation, Christians worldwide are fully aware of the far-reaching spiritual transformation that confronts the Christian church in the West. In a certain sense, missiological scholars would readily have called attention, as did the disciples to the Lord (Mt 24:1–2), to the large buildings and stones of the temple – the glorious heritage of the Reformation. However, there is a much more urgent task to address. The church needs to find answers to crucial questions:

- Why did Jesus turn his back on the temple in Jerusalem? (Mt 24:1; Mk 13:1; Lk 21:5–6)
- Why was the Lord prepared to remove the lampstand from the large and powerful congregation of Ephesus? (Rv 2:5)
- Why did the Christendom, after being terminal for 250 years, eventually die?

The reason is self-evident to the current church: Religion needs to be more than mere spiritual customary practices. It should entail a caring and sacrificing subservience toward God and on behalf of fellow humans. The alternative? The Lord can turn his back on his church and pass it by. The biblical testimony attests to this danger. It may be asked whether this is not what befell the institutional Christendom?

The good news is that the Christian church as such has not as yet ceased to exist. Owing to the current challenges, the church is undergoing a transition ('reformation') in which the original form of being church is rediscovered, the only way to comprehensive healing. In light of these new realities confronting the church, Missiology as neglected discipline in the Western theology, should direct the way – back to God's future.

■ Summary: Chapter 5

In Reformed theology, scholars in light of God's Word, should not only take into account the 'what' of events, but also 'why' they occur. Why is the Christian religion, as it became known as 'Christendom' within the Western world, rapidly losing its relevance? When studying the disconcerting fact of Christendom's demise (the 'what' question), the understanding dawns that God, in his *missio Dei* (his mission of saving grace directed towards a lost humanity) can bypass his church (the 'why' question). Missiology, as a focus within theology, provides at this point the only hope-filled way (back) to God's future.

Paying unpaid debts. Reformational antidotes for some of the challenges posed by prosperity gospel theology

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■ Introduction

It has often been stated that ‘cults live off the unpaid debts of the church’. It implies that when churches neglect and deviate from key biblical truths, it may give rise to theological ideas and practices that overreact to voids that developed in churches and the spirituality of Christians. Spykman (1972:33) used this well-known phrase to explain a typical recurring trend in church history: When churches fail to proclaim the whole council of God with fervency and effectiveness, a seedbed is created and a foundation laid for the growth of movements that are poor substitutes, since they inevitably preach a

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reductionistic gospel. Such movements then overemphasise some part of the truth, present it as the whole truth of God's Word and may neglect core aspects of the gospel (cf. also Downes 2007; Gardner 2011:1; Roberts 1998:2; Van Baalen 1962).²⁸

It has often happened that church leaders then draw from pagan and occult ideas and 'baptise' these with Bible verses pulled out of context, leading to teachings that may eventually produce stumbling blocks in the progress of Christ's kingdom.

If applied to the prosperity gospel theology (PT)²⁹ Kasera (2012) says that PT may also be a wake-up call to the evangelical churches especially on issues of faith. The question arises: To what extent have Christian churches deviated from important aspects of the gospel and thus created gaps that proponents of PT are trying to fill? Wilhelmsson (2017) formulates:

The so-called 'Faith Movement' arose in the context of a Christianity that has lost much of her original message and practice. This must be recognized as true whether the church is viewed from the traditionalist wing or the charismatic/Pentecostal wing of Christendom. (n.p.)

Magezi and Manzanga (2016) pointed out how a lack of a compassionate proclamation and teaching of the providence of God in the midst of suffering, provided a seedbed for the development and flourishing of PT in Zimbabwe. Kasera (2012), evaluated in his master's thesis the rapid growth of prosperity theology in the context of Namibia and concluded that PT is flourishing because of the lack of church-based community development and poverty alleviation as one of his findings.

At an international consultation facilitated by the Lausanne Movement on 'Prosperity theology, poverty and the gospel', in Atibaia, Brazil, Haakon Kessel (2014) made challenging statements in his report about PT in Europe, especially Scandinavia, about people belonging to the mainstream, national church, drifting away to PT-type fellowships. The findings of his research are that they have a desire to experience God more tangibly, more real, to get an assurance of his existence. They want a more radical walk of faith. In that sense, their walking out of mainline churches represents a silent critique of the traditional church. In interviews, they expressed the view that the national church became spineless, rationalistic and irrelevant. They have a longing for deeper fellowship, in praise and prayer.

28. It seems that the phrase 'paying unpaid debts' was of Dutch origin, but it cannot be established who was the first person to use it, ([i]n de uitspraak: "sekten zijn de onbetaalde rekening van de kerk" zit zeker een kern van waarheid. Als de kerk bepaalde gedeelten van de leer verwaarloost dan gaat vaak een sekte daar op onverantwoorde manier mee aan de haal' (Geelhoed 2016).

29. This article will follow the practice – as it is done in the Lausanne Movement documents – to use the abbreviation PT when referring to prosperity gospel theology (cf. Lausanne Movement 2010; 2014; cf. also Kasera 2012).

At the same international conference Freston (2014) delivered a paper in which he analysed the social factors that feed PT. He stressed the point that we need to *understand* and *empathise* with adherents of PT before the fallacies are exposed. He states:

This is good *sociological* practice, but also good *Christian* practice. The ability to put ourselves in others' shoes, to see things in the round, to find good where none seems to exist [...] these are Christian virtues. They don't mean losing our critical sense, but putting it on hold. In the end, we might be just as critical [...] but perhaps better informed in our criticism. (p. 1)

It is indeed true that all religious expressions are influenced and shaped by historical settings and socio-cultural contexts.

In the final recommendations of the Lausanne Global consultation in Atibaia (Lausanne Movement 2014), it was stated that:

[W]e recognize that we have often been too quick to judge and recognize that we have often denounced the excesses of PT while failing to denounce the ways a therapeutic or self-help gospel has replaced the supremacy of Christ in many of our churches. (p. 2)

I fully embrace the acknowledgement made by the Atibaia Lausanne consultation that it is not enough simply to claim that 'the Bible is on our side', since Christians with different convictions, who would also affirm the authority of Scripture, will make the same claim, pointing to numerous texts that they believe support their practices (Lausanne Movement 2014:3). It will be more fruitful to go beyond the Bible verses being used and try to understand the historical backgrounds, world views and sociological motives of PT proponents in order to offer alternatives for consideration.

This chapter is an effort to do what is stated in the concluding sentence of the Atibaia (Lausanne Movement 2014) consultation:

We trust that it will inspire biblical preaching, teaching and living that confronts the abuses of Prosperity Gospel Theology, and that it will encourage Christians to lead ethical lifestyles that indeed make us bearers of a better hope, the hope we have in Christ Jesus. (p. 3)

It is a pity that the Atibaia consultation did not consider how the doctrine of the sovereignty of God and the providence of God may offer some corrective for the weaknesses of PT. It is not possible to describe and evaluate all aspects of PT within the limitations of this chapter. I will endeavour to compare the view of God and the teaching of the providence of God in the midst of suffering, of proponents of PT with theological tenets in the theology of Martin Luther that influenced thought patterns of the 16th-century Reformation on these issues.

In order to understand the deviations of prosperity gospel theology its historical roots will first be considered.

■ Background and summary of prosperity gospel theology

■ Extent

Several researchers (Fee 1984:39; Hollinger 1988:145; Sarles 1986:329) established beyond doubt that PT is a broadly-based, worldwide movement with influence on both charismatic and non-charismatic churches and denominations. Among these researchers there is general consensus that PT certainly has a charismatic flavour to it, but is by no means limited to Pentecostal or new Pentecostal churches and actually did not originate in Pentecostal circles. The movement radiates a strong influence of the existentialism of the present age, with a heavy emphasis on human experience to authenticate the Christian faith. It also borrows heavily from the materialistic emphasis of affluent, suburban Christianity.

Some of the prominent personalities who have strongly propagated PT in the past five decades include Kenneth Hagin, pastor of the Rhema Bible Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, founders of Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas; Bob and Marte Tilton, founding pastors of the Word of Faith Church, Farmers Branch, Texas; John Osteen, pastor of the Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas; Jerry Savelle, evangelist and former associate of Kenneth Copeland; Charles and Frances Hunter, faith healers and founders of the City of Light, Kingwood, Texas; The New Apostolic Reformation (Ocaña 2014); Korean minister, Paul Yonggi Cho; Joseph Prince from Singapore (Van der Breggen 2015:1), Ulf Ekman from Sweden and his Word of Life church and organisation (Kessel 2014:2) and many from Africa and Latin America.

In July 2007, both *Christianity Today* and *The Christian Century* published articles that pointed out the global influence of PT (Glifford 2007; Phiri & Maxwell 2007).

This observation is confirmed by a *Time* magazine poll, which determined that in the United States of America, '17% of Christians' who were surveyed 'said they considered themselves' to be part of the 'Prosperity Theology' movement (Van Biema 2006). Additionally, a 'full 61% believed that God wants people to be prosperous'. On the African continent, the Pew Research Center conducted a survey in 2006 in which individuals were asked whether God would 'grant material prosperity to all believers who have enough faith' and whether 'religious faith was "very important to economic success"'. Roughly 9 out of 10 participants from Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya agreed wholeheartedly (Phiri & Maxwell 2007). Magezi and Manzanga (2016) made it clear how widespread the trends of PT are in Zimbabwe and Kasera (2012) proved the rapid growth of PT in the Namibian context.

Historical origins

McConnell ([c.1998] 1995), who holds to charismatic convictions himself, has conducted research which is extremely illuminating in establishing the origins of PT. While Kenneth Hagin is seen by many as the father of the PT movement, McConnell in his research documents Hagin's extensive plagiarism of E.W. Kenyon. McConnell ([c. 1988] 1995; cf. also Hollinger 1988:142; Jackson 1989:16; Johnson 1995:114) sums up:

Whereas Hagin appears to have copied only occasionally from sources other than Kenyon, he has plagiarized Kenyon both repeatedly and extensively. Actually, it would not be overstated to say that the very doctrines that have made Kenneth Hagin and the Faith Movement such a distinctive and powerful force within the independent charismatic movement are all plagiarized from E. W. Kenyon. (pp. 3–13)

Gnostic-metaphysical origins

The immediate origins of PT over the past five decades can be traced to the USA and later spread to other countries around the world, promising people health, wealth and happiness.

It actually developed out of the New Thought movement that began around 1895. New Thought writers include Phineas Quimby, Ralph Waldo Trine, Norman Vincent Peale, Ernest Holmes, and Charles Fillmore (Jones & Woodbridge 2011:231–232). Among the prominent pioneers of the New Thought movement in the USA were Mary Eddy Baker, the founder of Christian Science. She developed a trend of thought similar to that of the pioneers of New Thought in that her Christian Science basically represents a denial of the material world (Tucker 1989:149).

McConnell's research proved that the dominating influence on Kenyon's theology were the Gnostic-metaphysical cults which abounded at the turn of the 19th century in the USA.

Kenyon attended the Emerson College of Oratory in Boston, during the last decade of the 19th century, a college which was at the time immersed in the Gnostic-metaphysical cults and the underlying New Thought.

New Thought developed out of the theology of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the theosophical ideas of Blavatsky and Olcott as a spiritual movement in the 19th century, along the lines of the teachings of Phineas Quimby. Some of the key underlying principles of New Thought are the pantheistic world views of the existence of an omnipresent God immanent in nature, universal life, intelligence and energy, underlying and pervading the universe, finding expression in every created entity (Allen 1908–1926:359). The spirit is the totality of real things, true human selfhood is divine, divine thought is a force for good, sickness originates in the mind, and 'right thinking' has a healing effect.

The leaders of the New Thought movement had an intuitive belief in the all-saving power of healthy-minded attitudes as such, in the conquering efficacy of courage, hope and trust, and a correlative contempt for doubt, fear, worry and all nervously precautionary states of mind. The trouble is in the mind, for the body is only the house for the mind in which it dwells. Therefore, if your mind had been deceived by some invisible enemy into a negative belief, it becomes some form of a disease, with or without your knowledge.

It is interesting to see that one of the key leaders in the New Thought movement, J. Allen, already published a book in 1903 with the title *From poverty to power* (Allen 1903) and in 1907 on *The path to prosperity* (Allen 1907).

Quimby (in Hollinger 1988) embraced these ideas and formulated his healing methodology in this way:

By my theory or truth, I come in contact with your enemy, and restore you to health and happiness. This I do partly mentally, and partly by talking till I correct the wrong impression and establish the Truth, and the Truth is the cure. (p. 140)

McConnell ([c.1988] 1995:19) pointed out the indisputable influence of the New Thought metaphysical cults in Kenyon's work. While he claims to remain resolutely Christian, and indeed explicitly refutes some elements of the metaphysical cults, he at the same time, often in the same breath as his rebuke, asserts the foundational beliefs of these cults.

Living at a time when the New Thought metaphysical cults were growing rapidly, Kenyon's 'Christian' response was a 'Christianised' form of the metaphysical cult. Because of the failure of the mainline churches to produce signs and wonders, Kenyon was keen to redress an anti-supernatural tendency. He sought to establish a teaching which provided Christians with all the benefits of the metaphysical cults, while continuing to profess basic Christian beliefs. The result was prosperity theology, which is, with a very few trappings, the theology of the present-day 'Word of Faith', which is part of the wider PT movement!

Gnostic world view background

It is important to understand the Gnostic dualistic world view inherent in these metaphysical New Thought cults, that became a major influence on the world views of the proponents of PT.

Gnosticism is used here to refer to the religious systems exemplified by the 'Great Gnostics' which flourished from the 2nd to the 4th century CE, such as those of Cerinthus, Manander, Saturninus, Valentinus, Basilides, Ptolemaeus and the ones contained in the apocryphal gospels of Judas (Iscairiot), Philip and Thomas. Several researchers unveiled

the conceptual links of Gnosticism to Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Hellenistic philosophy. The movement has basically dualistic and syncretistic roots and spread throughout the ancient Near East immediately before and after the time of Christ (Helmbold 1975).

It became best known through the apologetic writings of Irenaeus, a 2nd-century Greek church father, who described certain groups of heretics as the ‘gnostic heresy’ and Hippolytus of Rome (Roberts Donaldson & Coxe 1886:47). Since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Scrolls in 1945 and the translation, popularisation and publication of them (Attridge & Pagels 1996; Robinson & Smith 1996), a floodgate of publications about Gnosticism came on the market. Two collections of essays have been edited by K-W. Tröger, one on Gnosticism and the New Testament, and the other on Gnosticism, the Old Testament and Early Judaism (Yamauchi 1984:22).

Modern times witnessed the resurgence of Gnosticism in world views of the Enlightenment, Hegel’s idealism, some existentialist currents, Nazism, Jungian psychology and the New Thought Theosophical Society. All of these contributed to this resurgence and prepared the way for dominant thought patterns in PT (Wright 2009). For the engagement with core thought patterns in PT it is important to recognise how it relates with Gnostic world views.

Gnostic world views blended with Charismatic Pentecostalism

McConnell did not sufficiently point out other influences on PT other than the theology and publications of Kenyon. For example, Kenyon rejected ‘speaking in tongues’ as being altogether too subjective an experience, while for the Faith movement, speaking in tongues today is often stressed as a necessary sign that one has been baptised in the Spirit. Charismatic Pentecostalism has also left its mark on PT, especially so because such are the roots of many of those in the PT movement today. Thus, while the original doctrines are undoubtedly those of Kenyon, very often the current practices are mostly those of the charismatic Pentecostals (Hollinger 1988:140).

The theme of prosperity is found early on in the healing revival movement. In the 1950s the controversial A.A. Allen began to accentuate the financial blessing theme. In 1963 Allen claimed to have received a revelation directly from God. In a personal encounter with God, God said to him (quoted by Hollinger 1988):

I am a wealthy God! Yea, I am not poor [...] But I say unto thee, claim my wealth in thy hand, yea, in thy purse and in thy substance. For behold, I plan to do a new thing in the earth! (p. 140)

Key aspects of Gnosticism that also appear in the writings and sermons of Kenyon and the PT preachers will be indicated in the following paragraphs.

Experience the gateway to truth

In an article with the title 'The heresy that wouldn't die' Jenkins (2007:n.p.) said, 'though Gnostic sects faded in the early church, Gnostic ideas have had a long shelf life'.

He then argues convincingly that key aspects of the Gnostic world view and main themes survived, especially the idea of seeking a mystic ascent to God.

For the Gnostics, knowledge of God is based on personal, intuitive, private and mystical experiences (Scholer 2007). Gnostics believe that humanity is trapped in the material world and the human body. In order to provide salvation, the ultimate God sent a redeemer, who navigated the journey from the Pleroma through the intermediary beings to earth. Inner personal experience is the only true knowledge.

God is not in any way accessible through reason or rational understanding. Not doctrinal teaching, but a flight from the mind into pure reason-free experience, is the way to God. Gnostics distinguish sharply between mind and spirit. We must escape from the prison house of the rational mind and explore our non-rational spirits if we are to know God and ourselves. The Apocryphal book of James puts it this way, 'hence become full of the Spirit, but be in want of reason, for reason (belongs to) the soul; in turn it is (of the nature of) soul' (Williams 1996:35).

In order to attain this non-rational state of consciousness Gnostics use chanting, often of nonsense words to disengage rationality and induce raw spiritual ecstasy (Bean 2015).

This flight from reason is revealed in the writings and rituals practiced by several proponents of the Word of Faith PT. As a result, the Christ of experience replaces the Christ of Scripture as the centre of key figures of PT as it can be seen in videos of their sermons where personal experiences of contact with God are presented as having more weight than biblical and theological teachings (Rosebrough 2015; Thompson 2015).

Divine nature of the human soul

One of the core convictions of Gnosticism is that the human spirit is a spark of divinity encaged in a body of flesh. To know God, is ultimately identical to knowing your inner self as being divine. In yourself there is a divine spark which your outward trappings like your upbringing and social context have squashed. The basic problem of evil is that man has forgotten his own divine nature. The function of Jesus is that he restores to us the knowledge of our divine self and awakens us to a sense of our own divinity. We ourselves become Christ's through the spirit of enlightenment of our inner self (Wright 2009).

Man is composed of body, soul and spirit. The spirit is man's true self, a 'divine spark', a portion of the godhead. In a tragic fall, man's true self, or spirit, was thrown into this dark world and imprisoned in each individual's body and soul.

This Gnostic conviction is also widely proclaimed by adherents to PT. Paulk (1984:97) said, '[u]ntil we comprehend that we are little gods, we cannot manifest the kingdom of God.'

Hagin (1989:35–35) teaches that Adam was created equal with God – an exact duplicate of God, in the same class of being as he, and can therefore stand in his presence without any sense of inferiority whatsoever (Hagin 1989:35–36).

Referring to the creation of man, Copeland (2016) adds 'God and Adam looked exactly alike'.

In the words of Hagin (1980:14) the Christian is as much an incarnation of God as was Jesus of Nazareth.

In PT Word of Faith mythology, Adam lost his privileges and status as a god. Man recovers them through conversion to Christ. Benny Hinn (1991:n.p.) says of himself, 'I am a little messiah walking on earth, [...]. You are a little god on earth running around. Christians are little messiahs. Christians are little gods.'

Elsewhere he (Hinn 1991:n.p.) says, '[a]re you a child of God? Then you're divine! Are you a child of God? Then you're not human!'

Newman (1997) refers to this trend in the following way:

Any well-thinking, discerning believer finds himself greatly alarmed when Kenneth Hagin claims that all Christians are 'little gods' spawned by God just as a dog has a litter of puppies, or when Kenneth Copeland declares that when Christ called Himself the great 'I Am', in Copeland's own words, 'I say, "Yes, I am too!"' (p. 142)

The God concept in the teachings of prosperity gospel preachers, proves to be the same as the pagan and Gnostic views of God. Pagan religions and Gnosticism split the difference between God and man, by reducing God to become more like a human and exalting man to the status of a god. Mythology, whether ancient or modern, invariably diminishes God to less than what he is, and exalts man to the same level as God (Geisler 1999:273–275).

At the Lausanne global consultation on 'Prosperity theology, poverty and the gospel' in Atibaia, José Daniel Salinas (2014) formulated the impact of PT's view of God for Latin America in this way:

PT's Christology has left our people with a powerless Christ. PT proposes a faith that we control, a deity we manipulate. This is similar to animistic or pantheistic religions where the gods exist to give us what we want because we perform some rituals which are supposed to appease them and to convince them to act in our favor. (n.p.)

Smalling (2010) in his book *The Prosperity movement: Wounded charismatics*, summarises as follows:

Christian revelation, in contrast, brings man and God together in a relationship, while leaving both intact. The meeting point between God and man in Christianity is a mutual righteousness,

that of Christ, credited to the believer's account through faith in Jesus (Romans 3 & 4). No change in quality of existence or essence of being takes place in either God or man. (p. 33)

The Bible teaches union with Christ through the Spirit. Gnosticism and PT doctrine teach joining with Christ through a mix of our supposed divinity with his.

In pagan thinking where gods are seen like human beings, people think that they have to manipulate gods with sacrifices and rituals to obtain health wealth and prosperity.

That is why God revealed himself as totally different from the pagan gods when he said to his people according to Deuteronomy 10:17, '[f]or the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe'.

In paganism, in Gnosticism, and with proponents of PT a progression takes place. Firstly, a human is like a god. Then he is part god. Then he is a god. Ken Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Joyce Meyer, Paul Crouch, Paula White and Benny Hinn, all openly state in their recorded sermons that we are little gods (Rosebrough 2015; Thompson 2015).

Visualisation and positive confession

Visualisation and positive confession are of vital importance in PT and are inseparably linked together as one spiritual law. In his booklet, *I believe in visions*, Hagin (1979b:20) based his whole theology on the personal visual experiences he had of Jesus visiting and communicating with him. Hagin (1979a:23) then teaches that if believers want to be successful in their circumstances they must confess, and confess positively. In doing so, their words have power to create a positive reality.

The use of a visualised Christ in order to enter an altered state of consciousness, also became a vital part of 'inner healing' techniques. This process of meeting a visualised 'Christ' in the imagination is a recurring theme in the writings of the Christian visualisers. It originated with Agnes Sanford (1897–1982). After the publication of her book 'The healing light' (1947), her worldwide ministry had an enormous influence on the subsequent development of the use of healing in the charismatic movement. She later published *The healing gifts of the spirit*. She taught that 'experience comes before theology', and offered various visualisation techniques, emphasising that one could forgive another's sins through visualisation (Sanford 1966:100–113).

Another major influence in the use of this visualisation technique with the goal to 'inner healing' was Ruth Carter Stapleton, the sister of the former president of the USA, Jimmy Carter. She packaged visualisation into a form of therapy which she called 'faith imagination'. She recommended that people visualise, as vividly as possible, Jesus coming into their past experiences and taking charge of any seriously troubled and disturbing situation. In this process of faith imagination, with Jesus at the centre, deep

healing inside the person occurs. As Jesus dominates the visualisation, persons are guided to experience freedom and allow themselves to become whole again (Abi & Malony 1999:624).

One of the prime reasons for the use of visualisation in the imagination is to effect extraordinary changes in people's lives and in their circumstantial environments through powerful visualisation of the desired change. A good example of this technique is the charismatic Korean minister, Paul Yonggi Cho. In his book, *The fourth dimension: The key to putting your faith to work for a successful life* (1979), Cho develops a doctrine of prosperity through the use of 'mind power' which any occultist would enthusiastically applaud.

A simple perusal of his books reveals a theology which has been 'ripped off' from some primary teachings of new Gnosticism. Cho has devised a theory which he calls 'incubation'. He uses this to refer to a period of development which is needed in the imagination before a desired object can be physically manifested. He argues that because Scripture tells us that faith is the substance of things hoped for (Heb 11:1), this substance must undergo a period of 'incubation' in what he calls the 'fourth dimension' before its usage can be full and effective (Cho 1979:9). His proof text for this occurs in Genesis 1:2, where the Hebrew states that the Spirit of God was 'brooding' over the waters. Cho, claims this act of Creation can be repeated by each Christian believer, who only has to visualise something in his or her mind's eye and it will become a reality, provided it is painted in sufficient detail. He (Cho 1979:31) puts it like this, '[w]hat becomes pregnant in your heart and mind is going to come out in your circumstances'.

These developments make it clear that if we are not to drift into Gnosticism or new Gnosticism, or merely experience PT spirituality, we have to insist that God is not accessible to us through some mindless mystical, or mere emotional experience that bypasses or twists the truth of Scripture or annihilates the rational mind. God is accessible through scriptural truth as grasped by a spiritually enlightened mind that although he has not been seen, 'you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy' (1 Pt 1:8). Referring to the Westminster confession Hollinger (1988:145) warns that it is the enjoyment of God, not the glory of God, which seems to have captivated the hearts and minds of adherents of PT.

New revelations

As part and parcel of their experienced-based spirituality, Gnostics claim that they receive guidance and inspiration from spirit guides, exalted beings from a higher spiritual realm that reveal mysteries to the spiritually receptive. Gnostics often appeal to private revelations and visions. For example, the Gnostic apocalypse of Paul describes Paul's

alleged ascent into the different heavens culminating in the tenth heaven. There – according to this apocalypse of Paul – he obtained a record of the esoteric truths and learned things there which are not to be found in the New Testament (Laird 2016).

Thus, Gnosticism was seen as an esoteric knowledge of higher religious and philosophic truths to be acquired by an elite group. They claimed that they were more enlightened than the Apostles. A Gnostic is one who has gnosis (a Greek word for ‘knowledge’) – a visionary or mystical ‘secret knowledge’ – capable of joining the human being to the divine mystery.

■ How do these ‘new revelations’ surface in PT?

In his booklet, *Two kinds of knowledge*, Kenyon (1942:20) falls into the typical Gnostic and mystic trap by using reason to deny the validity of reason. Information derived from our five senses, he terms ‘sense knowledge’ and the correlation of that information is done by logic. But ‘revelation knowledge’ comes directly to our spirit, bypassing both reason and the five senses. Kenyon believed that since God is spiritual, it is impossible to understand God or spiritual truth without this special ‘revelation’.

In Chapter 6 of his book McConnell ([c. 1988] 1995:107–110) also provides evidence of the strong parallels between the doctrines of revelation and Gnosticism supported by Kenyon and the metaphysical cults in terms of *dualism*, *antirationalism* and *classification*.

Adherents to PT see faith as a mystical force that we use to manipulate situations to our advantage. In combination with our spoken words, faith becomes a catalyst to create our own reality. In the words of Hagin, ‘[o]ne must by-pass the brain to get into the things of God’ (quoted by McConnell [c. 1988] 1995:109).

Copeland (1989:10) describes faith as a powerful force. It is a tangible force. It is a conductive force and has the ability to effect natural substance.

In his evaluation of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), which is rapidly spreading in several Latin American countries, Ocaña (2014) observed that this blend of PT, according to which ‘God speaks directly today’ means in fact that, (1) the Bible is not enough or sufficient as the authority with regard to faith, doctrine and praxis, (2) the Word of God is not limited by the canon that is expressed in Scripture, but goes beyond it and (3) God speaks today by other ways, that in the practice of the NAR are known as the ‘rhemas’, supposedly a fresh voice, that can in some cases be audible.

In his qualitative empirical research conducted in several countries in Latin America he always heard the same reasoning, ‘[i]t is that you haven’t experienced what we have experienced’ Ocaña (2014). His conclusion is that the intention of the NAR is to substantiate their theological proposals in the experience for two possible answers, (1) open the revelation of God, leaving behind the canon inherited and (2) bring a

new revelation, leaving behind the tradition or memory. Both answers, of course, endeavour to ensure that Christianity ceases to be ‘the religion of the Book’ to make it the religion of experience, feeling and emotion. The *sola scriptura* is being replaced with ‘sola experience’.

Attitude to Scripture and valid hermeneutics

In the Gnostic Nag Hamadi scrolls, dreams and visions are given the same or more authority than the Bible (Attridge & Pagels 1996:75–76).

Oepke (1964:436) proved that by and large, the religious evaluation of dreams is only on the margin of New Testament piety. The essential point of revelation is not to be found in dreams, but it lies in the historical self-demonstration of God, → ἀποκαλύπτω. ‘The dreams of Gnostics are something totally different and dangerous and morally suspect delusions’ (Jude 8).

Several authors have pointed out that the hermeneutics of the PT leave much to be desired. In painting the Latin American picture of PT’s use of the Bible, Salinas (2014) puts it this way:

In postmodern hermeneutics the reader has control over meaning, that is, any text can mean whatever the reader decides. Until recently, finding the author’s intention has been the hermeneutical key for biblical interpretation. The idea used to be that you came to the Bible to find what God wanted to tell us, since God is the author of the Bible. However, PT has brought into today’s hermeneutical tendencies. What we hear in their preaching is an imposed meaning over the text, a meaning that supports the preacher’s ideas and agendas. People go to church thirsty for God’s words only to receive lies. (p. 4)

Sarles (1986) wrote about the Hermeneutics of PT teachers:

Prosperity hermeneutics also leaves much to be desired. The method of interpreting the biblical text is highly subjective and arbitrary. Bible verses are quoted in abundance without attention to grammatical indicators, semantic nuances, or literary and historical context. The result is a set of ideas and principles based on distortion of textual meaning. (p. 339)

The fact that the biblical author’s original intent would have been plain to his original audience to whom the words were originally addressed in their context is seldom considered in PT preachers’ sermons and teachings. The PT preachers read their suburbanised culture of the late 20th-century setting back into the text.

A survey of the volumes of literature produced by the PT teachers yields numerous examples of such misinterpretations (Jones 1998:81). An analysis of all such examples of misinterpreted texts would fall beyond the limitations of this chapter.

■ Proposal for some reformational antidotes from the theology of Martin Luther

■ The sovereignty and providence of God

In the light of the prevailing ideas of Gnosticism and PT that man is a little god, and that God can be manipulated with chanting and repetition of words as pointed out above, it may be helpful to reconsider the predominant views of God of Martin Luther and prominent 16th-century Reformers.

At the heart of Martin Luther's theology was his understanding of God. Henriksen (2016) summarises:

Luther's understanding of God saturates his oeuvre, and in turn, this understanding is saturated by his doctrine of the justification of the sinner. God is the sovereign source and origin of all that is, and Luther develops his understanding of God in a manner that tries to safeguard this position in such a way that the personal relationship to God becomes the focus point for all he says. (n.p.)

The main traits in his understanding of God become apparent in two of his 'classic' texts on the matter, the *Large Catechism* (Luther 1530a) and *On the bondage of the will* (1984) (Latin: *De Servo Arbitrio*, literally, 'On Un-free Will'), that was his reply to Desiderius Erasmus's *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* or *On free will* (Luther 1984).

Luther knew that Erasmus, more than any other opponent, had put his finger on the deepest issue at stake, namely '*whether human beings are so sinful that God's sovereign grace must create and decisively fulfil every human inclination to believe and obey God*' (Piper 2016:n.p.).

The sovereign omnipotence of God is a central tenet of Luther's and Reformed religion. For Luther and 16th-century Reformers after him, the assertion of God's absolute sovereignty over creation, and in providence and grace is basic to biblical belief and biblical praise.

The sovereignty of God indicates the supremacy of God, the kingship of God, the godhood of God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that God is God. To say that God is sovereign is to declare that he does according to his will amongst the host of heaven and amongst the inhabitants of the earth. Luther (2001) translated Daniel 4:35 as:

[G]egen welchen alle, so auf Erden wohnen, als nichts zu rechnen sind. Er macht's, wie er will, mit den Kräften im Himmel und mit denen, so auf Erden wohnen; und niemand kann seiner Hand wehren noch zu ihm sagen: Was machst du? (n.p.)

Luther often states in his many publications that God works all in all. He is the sovereign source of reality, of goodness, and to God alone all honour is due. In his comment on Psalm 112:2 Luther praises the vast majesty of God and that Christians in their prayers should constantly glorify and praise the Lord for everything he has created, and still maintains through his sovereign omnipotent providence (Luther 1530b).

He often made it clear that God can be God only if he is the only source of goodness. In explaining the 2nd and 3rd Commandments he (Luther 1530a) wrote:

Thus you can easily understand what and how much this commandment requires, namely, that man's entire heart and all his confidence be placed in God alone, and in no one else. For to have God, you can easily perceive, is not to lay hold of Him with our hands or to put Him in a bag [*as money*], or to lock Him in a chest [*as silver vessels*]. But to apprehend Him means when the heart lays hold of Him and clings to Him. But to cling to Him with the heart is nothing else than to trust in Him entirely. For this reason He wishes to turn us away from everything else that exists outside of Him, and to draw us to Himself, namely, because He is the only eternal good. As though He would say: Whatever you have heretofore sought of the saints, or for whatever [*things*] you have trusted in Mammon or anything else, expect it all of Me. (n.p.)

This fundamental conviction lasts through all controversies with and about Luther: He lays emphasis on the free, absolute sovereignty of God and his merciful acts of grace toward creatures who are full of sin and separated from him (Henriksen 2016).

To say that God is sovereign is to declare that he is the Almighty, the possessor of all power in heaven and on earth, so that none can defeat his counsels, thwart his purpose, or resist his will (Ps 115:3). To say that God is sovereign is to declare that he is '[t]he Governor among the nations' (Henriksen 2016), setting up kingdoms, overthrowing empires, and determining the course of dynasties as it pleases him best.

Luther's (2001) translation of Psalm 22 brings it out clearly:

Es werden gedenken und sich zum HERRN bekehren aller Welt Enden und vor ihm anbeten alle Geschlechter der Heiden. Denn des HERRN ist das Reich, und er herrscht unter den Heiden. (v. 28)

Luther constantly expressed in explicit terms that the Lord reigns as king, exercising dominion over great and tiny things alike. God's dominion is total: He wills as he chooses and carries out all that he wills, and none can stay his hand or thwart his plans. With regard to Romans 8:28 he explains that God even uses the sins of his children to work out the best for them as instruments in the coming of his kingdom. To prove his point he explains it from the history of the sins of the brothers of Joseph, who sold him and that through the seduction of an adulterous woman he even ended up in prison. Joseph saw God's sovereign providential plan in all when he confessed, '*Ihr gedachtet's böse mit mir zu*

machen; aber Gott gedachte es gut zu machen, daß er täte, wie es jetzt am Tage ist, zu erhalten viel Volks [As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today]' (Luther 1535).

To acknowledge and confess the sovereignty of God gave Luther peace that no matter what happened to him, God is in control because he has even counted the hair on my head. What minute knowledge is this! In a sermon on Exodus 15:2 Luther (2015) said:

If God is my Strength and Power, who or what can do harm to me? Grief or tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword (Ro 8:35). Then I may confess, even if I am only a little worm, the power of God is with me. (p. 55; Ps 22:7; Is 41:14)³⁰

To confess that he is sovereign with regard to health and sickness and life and death, is to confess with the words of Deuteronomy 32:39 that he alone is God and there is no god beside him, he kills and he makes alive; he wounds and he heals; and there is none that can deliver out of his hand.

Luther's (2001) translation reads:

Seht ihr nun, daß ich's allein bin und ist kein Gott neben Mir! Ich kann töten und lebendig machen, ich kann schlagen und heilen, und ist niemand, der aus meiner Hand errette. (n.p.)

None lives and none dies but by God's sovereign decree.

Ultimately God controls the ability of people to hear or see, as he says to Moses at the burning bush, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?' (Ex 4:11; see also 2 Cor 12:7-9).

Effects of the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in our lives

In Luther's understanding, true godliness is described as a child-like fear of God, (*timor filialis*) which must be distinguished from the fear a slave has for his master (*timor servilis*). It is a combination of holy respect and glowing love (Exalto 1993:152). To fear God is to have a heart that is sensitive to both his godliness and his graciousness. It means to experience simultaneously great awe and a deep joy and it produces peace in the heart of a child in the presence of a strong and loving father when you begin to understand who God really is and what he has done for us.

It is a feeling of deep awe and respect about his magnitude. It gives the child of God a deep inner peace and calm.

³⁰. My translation from the Dutch translation of selected Luther (2015) quotes organised according to the structure of the Heidelberg Catechism.

To fear God is to completely surrender one's life to God and lose it, in order to regain it from God. It is fear that is at the same time confidence, surrender, as well as enthusiasm and boundless trust in God's presence and leading in your life.

In a sermon from Matthew 5:6, Luther made it clear that a real pious person who lives a godly life, is often not wealthy and does not serve God merely for the sake of receiving personal benefits and blessings. But those who use wrong means and go along with lies and fraud often become extremely wealthy. He (Luther 1544) said:

In the sermon on the mount God warns us not to be misled by the examples of the world. Maintain true piety and fear God and don't be disturbed by the progress in wealth of others in the world. You will receive God's blessings in this life and have abundance in eternity. (n.p.)

The results of true godliness are described as including transformed minds and hearts, words and actions, prayerfulness, and a life that continually grows into the image of Christ.

The importance of Luther's theology of the Cross

At the Heidelberg disputation in 1518, Luther offered some important theses which encapsulate not only the heart of Luther's theology but also marked his piety (quoted by Trueman 2005):

19. That a person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened (Rm 1:20).
20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the Cross.
21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the Cross calls the thing what it actually is.
22. That wisdom which sees the invisible things of God in works as perceived by man is completely puffed up, blinded, and hardened. (n.p.)

Luther sees God's supreme revelation of himself through the humiliation, suffering and death on the Cross, as axiomatic to all theology and all of life. God's divine power is revealed in the weakness of the Cross, for it is in his apparent defeat at the hands of evil powers and corrupt earthly authorities that Jesus shows his divine power in the conquest of death and of all the powers of evil. When most people think about power, they think of achievement, getting things done, being successful and being acknowledged. Luther makes it clear that if you think of God's power in this way, you actually remake God in your own image. But divine power is to be conceived of in terms of the Cross – power hidden in the form of weakness.

God's supreme wisdom is seen on the Cross. The Cross is not only the way God atones for our sins, but a revelation of the way God deals with the people he loves. The Cross is the way that God works through everybody he loves, not just through the life of Jesus. The ultimate triumph of good over evil is that when evil happens, God uses it for good. That was what the Cross was all about. Luther reveals that God allows bad things to happen to good people because he blesses them through it. In a sermon from John 15:1 where Jesus said, 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser' Luther exclaimed, '[a]nd you Devil, is just the dung' and then explained how God uses the evil of the Devil to work out the good in those who look to the Cross of Christ in faith (Luther 1544).

A revitalisation and rekindling of this kind of piety may fill one of the greatest gaps in PT, namely the peace of God that transcends all understanding and is not dependent on health, wealth and happiness as promoted by PT preachers.

Main trends in Luther's hermeneutics

In considering the way that the Bible is used and interpreted in PT circles, it is important to stress the supreme and final authority and the sufficiency of Scriptures as the primary way the will of God for the lives of Christians is revealed.

Luther clearly had a burning desire in his heart to get the Word of God into the hands of the people. He not only translated the Bible into the language of the people, but laid down key principles concerning its interpretation (Dockery 1983:190). Realising that there was no unanimity among the Church Fathers except in the most basic doctrines, Luther preferred the Scriptures in contrast to the early writings of the Fathers.

Although Luther in the early years of his ministry was still functioning within the constraints of the medieval fourfold method, applying it more 'intensively' and more 'on principle' than other exegetes of his time, the conviction was that the historical and literal sense of Scriptures alone is the essence of faith and Christian theology. He observed that heresies and errors originated not from the simple words of Scripture but primarily from the neglect of those words. He eventually fundamentally shifted the ground of the fourfold approach by arguing that the literal sense is already a Christological sense (Leithart 2007).

The 'I' of the Psalms – even the penitential Psalms – is Christ, and from this Christological-literal sense, Luther developed the other senses so that they uncover a theology of the Cross embedded in the text.

Farrar (as quoted by Dockery 1983) summarises Luther's basic rules for valid interpretation as follows:

He insisted (1) on the necessity for grammatical knowledge; (2) on the importance of taking into consideration times, circumstances, and conditions; (3) on the observance of the context; (4) on the need of faith and spiritual illumination; (5) on keeping what he called 'the proportion of faith'; and (6) on the reference of all Scripture to Christ. (p. 191)

In order to stop unbridled, speculative and fanciful interpretations of Scripture, the Reformers set forth the fundamental axiom that should govern all biblical interpretation. It is called the *analogy of faith*, which basically means that Holy Scripture is its own interpreter (Johnson 1988:79)

This principle of interpretation implies that clearer passages of Scripture should be used to interpret more obscure or difficult passages. Thus, the analogy of faith is the harmonious relationship between the overall teachings of Scripture brought to bear on the exegesis of particular passages. For Luther, Christ is the analogy of faith, so that Scripture needs always to be interpreted as testifying to Christ.

When it is accepted that the Bible is the Word of God, Luther and the Reformers expected the entire Bible to be coherent, intelligible and unified. On this basis, the reformation principle, *Sacra Scriptura sui interpres* [Scripture is its own interpreter] developed.

■ Conclusion

Some of the 'unpaid debts' that may have prepared a seedbed for PT are the following:

Firstly, a lack of a theology of the Cross in the footsteps of Luther lead to a 'theology of glory' focusing on human effort intended to earn God's favour and blessings, and exalted human achievement. Lutheran theologian Gerhard Forde (as quoted by Tchividjian 2012) puts it as follows:

A theology of glory [...] operates on the assumption that what we need is optimistic encouragement, some flattery, some positive thinking, some support to build our self-esteem. Theologically speaking it operates on the assumption that we are not seriously addicted to sin, and that our improvement is both necessary and possible. We need a little boost in our desire to do good works [...]. But the hallmark of a theology of glory is that it will always consider grace as something of a supplement to whatever is left of human will and power.

Trueman (2005:n.p.) says with regard to the implications of Luther's theology of the Cross, that as, 'an antidote to sentimentality, prosperity doctrine, and an excessively worldly eschatology, this is theological gold dust.'


Secondly, a lack of genuine submission to the sovereignty of God and humble trust in his omnipotent providence, also in the midst of suffering, opens a wide door for acceptance of PT's pursuit of health, wealth and happiness.

Revisiting Luther's basic rules for valid interpretation may provide an antidote for the widespread drift into Gnosticism or new Gnosticism, and mere emotional, experienced-based applications that bypass or twist the truth of Scripture.

■ Summary: Chapter 6

Prosperity gospel theology has become one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world. Several international consultations in the last decade have dealt with it and provided constructive critique to understand it and offer correctives. However, a more in-depth study into the Gnostic and mystic world view that influenced the development of prosperity gospel theology may be helpful to offer some antidotes for the challenges that prosperity theology has raised. In the light of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this chapter endeavours to consider the view of God, the doctrine of the providence of God and its implications for the processing of suffering in the life of a believer, and the hermeneutics of key prosperity gospel theology preachers. Their underlying theology and world view are then compared with some of the key theological principles that emerged in the theology of Martin Luther.

Towards a pastoral care for Africa: Some practical theological considerations for a contextual approach

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■ Introduction

This chapter focuses on on the field of practical theology, pastoral care and the African context. Commemorating 500 years of Reformed theology not only calls for celebration, but also for a reappraisal of how Reformed theology is applied in different contexts. As such, this contribution is located within the discourse on the contextualisation of pastoral care and counselling within the African context from a Reformed perspective. As a traditional Western approach to theology is increasingly criticised as unfit for the African context, the design of an authentic African practical theology and pastoral care is currently one of the very relevant discourses within practical theology (cf. Dames 2014).

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The urgency for such a design was already highlighted more than two decades ago by veteran South African pastoral theologian De Jongh van Arkel (1995:189), who suggested that the pastoral care and counselling movement in South Africa is a Western-dominated enterprise which is to the detriment of Africans. It is an argument built on the notion of John. S. Pobee (1989:2) that 'Africa is in some form of North Atlantic captivity – one consequence of the colonial history of most African peoples.'

In a country where 80%, of the nearly 55 million inhabitants, are black Africans (Mudzuli 2015) a Western stronghold on pastoral theory poses obvious challenges. How appropriate can theology, developed in the Western world, really be when issues like family, illness and death – which carry a different weight in Africa – are involved? How can theological training from typical Western frameworks prepare African clergy for attending to the pastoral needs of rapidly expanding African flocks? It cannot, because Western approaches to theological training negate the particularities of African beliefs, thinking and practices (Brunsdon & Knoetze 2014:268). Consequently, the matter of a contextual approach to pastoral care and counselling for the African context demands ongoing reflection from all stakeholders to serve the diverse populace of Southern Africa.

■ Rationale, research question, aim and objectives

As the title of this contribution suggests, this research is interested in the journey towards a pastoral care for Africa. Its purpose, therefore, is not to design a pastoral approach to a particular problem typical of the African context nor does it have a specific African country in mind. A number of researchers have already addressed prevalent African phenomena with certain countries in mind. Several authors like Brown and Hendriks (2004), Buffel (2006), Magezi (2007), Magezi and Myambo (2011) as well as Motsi and Masango (2012) engaged issues such as the HIV and AIDS pandemic, poverty, trauma and even avenging spirits encountered in Southern Africa. Instead, the study focuses on some of the practical theological considerations that precede the design of pastoral approaches aimed at the broader African context. Quite often, it seems that attempts at designing pastoral approaches to African issues end up in 'either-or' scenarios, where either the Christian tradition or African context overpowers the other.

The work of Mwiti and Dueck (2007) serves as an appropriate example in this regard. In their quest for a contextualised pastoral approach they opted for an 'African Indigenous Christian Counselling Model' (Mwiti & Dueck 2007:68). They describe this approach as 'an eclectic model of counseling and psychotherapy that integrates indigenous cultural sensitivity, biblical grounding, and carefully selected non-African biological, social, and psychological insights' (Mwiti & Dueck 2007:68). In explicating 'biblical grounding' further, they call God 'our creator, sustainer, and redeemer' (Mwiti & Dueck 2007:69) and also that 'it is in the light of Christ that we Christians find the standards for behavior in culture', adding that 'our confession also serves as the basis of interpreting and assessing indigenous

cultures' (Mwiti & Dueck 2007:69). Although theologically sound, it is not clear *how* the Christian paradigm engages indigenous cultures. Consequently, it creates the impression that Christian theology assumes a normative position, which inevitably steers the pastoral process into an 'either-or' activity where indigenous beliefs are simply replaced with Christian beliefs and practices. While this might not be problematic within a Christian paradigm, it could well be incomprehensible within an African context and casting suspicion on Christian approaches as theology that assumes a paternalistic position. In this regard Berinyuu (1988) remarks that:

Christian pastoral theology is not simply a matter of applying principles of pastoral care taken from another situation, or just applying some Biblical or Christian doctrines to the African situation. (p. 91)

This emphasises the need for greater clarity on how practical theology should engage the African context, culture and world view to develop a pastoral care suited for Africa.

Hence, the main question this chapter seeks to address is *what* does practical theology need to consider in the quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa? Embedded in this question is the assumption that practical theology serves as the scientific 'engine room' for pastoral care. Given that this engine can be driven by different fuels (epistemologies), careful consideration should be given to which would be best suited to engage contexts other than the Western.

The main aim of this research would subsequently be to identify and discuss some of the pivotal considerations or prequestions that should precede pastoral care aimed at the African context.

To this end, the set objectives are:

- To clarify the concepts of pastoral care and the African context.
- To engage in a critical discussion of different approaches (voices) discernible in the quest to produce a pastoral care approach for Africa: indigenisation, Africanisation, an intercultural approach, postcolonisation, a contextual transformative approach and a contextual approach.
- To critically assess a recent example of an attempt at authentic African pastoral care to consider three possible epistemologies for a contextual approach: diaconology, practical theology and a postfoundationalist notion of practical theology.
- To articulate the practical theological considerations necessary in the quest for a contextual approach to pastoral care suited for Africa (synthesis).

■ Whence pastoral care and whither Africa?

Clarity on pastoral care and the African context is imperative in the quest for a pastoral care for Africa. What is pastoral care conceived to be and what is meant by the African context within the framework of this research?

Pastoral care is used here, in the generic sense of the word, as an umbrella term denoting all pastoral actions within a Christian framework on both a formal and an informal level. Heeding the classic Latin terms *Pastorem* [shepherd] and *cura animarum* [care of souls], pastoral care inevitably points to care within the faith community towards one another. Whether pastoral care is an exclusive Christian action depends on who is performing such action and why. Generally speaking, any care for a fellow person can be described as a pastoral action, although historically pastoral care is closely associated with the Christian tradition (Gerkin 1997:23). This is mainly due to the shepherd motif, found in both the Old and New Testament (cf. Ps 23; Jn 10:10), which associates God and his Son – and later their followers – with the qualities of compassion and caring. In this sense, pastoral care is particular to the Christian tradition (McClure 2012:269).

Within the Christian tradition the motive for pastoral care towards another is found in God's love for his Creation. In the classic Reformed summation of pastoral care, De Klerk (1978:2) states that God chose to reveal himself in the Old Testament as shepherd based on his covenant love for the weak and vulnerable. Jesus Christ personified this metaphor in the New Testament. It is indeed this metaphor that became the model according to which Christians initially took care of one another.

Since pastoral care has never occurred in a vacuum, societal development necessitates critical thinking about its effectiveness. Questions about who should be offering pastoral care, who should receive care and how it should be performed occupied the minds of early church figures like Chrysostom, Augustine and Gregory the Great alike (cf. Gerkin 1997:33–39). Advances in scientific thinking brought about even greater impetus for theorising about pastoral care, as seen in the contributions of Richard Baxter (1656) and John Watson (1896) (in McClure 2012:271). This already suggested that although pastoral care is driven by God's love, it is also concerned with both context and method.

Where early developments in pastoral care were predominantly steered theologically, 20th-century developments brought about a fusion with developments in the field of psychology changing the course of pastoral care to this day. The contribution of Anton Boisen in his seminal work *The exploration of the inner world*, published in 1971, testifies to the cross insemination between psychology and pastoral care. While it is outside of the scope of this chapter to engage in an extensive discussion of the influence of other disciplines on pastoral care, it has to be noted that since the dawn of the 20th century pastoral care has drawn much on the labours of other disciplines like psychology, lending it some flavour of the human and social sciences and robbing it from any claims to be 'pure theology'. Brunson (2014:2 of 9) refers to this as the 'innate tension' of pastoral care, given that pastoral care is deployed within the tension field between revelation and experience and forever seeking to strike a balance that honours both the biblical and the human text.

Currently, pastoral care has many faces and many applications. The fourfold distinction of De Jongh van Arkel (1995:197) still serves the multifaceted character of this

craft well in claiming that pastoral care can be expressed as mutual care, pastoral care, pastoral counselling and pastoral therapy. Pastoral care can thus be spontaneous and informal, but also organised and highly formal or professional. It can have as only prerequisite the Christian love for thy neighbour or it can require years of formal training at an institution of higher learning. The Western world especially opted for the latter approach as it is apparent in the history of pastoral care and how it developed within Western thinking, namely as a specialised approach to human problems, cognisant of political, economic and social contexts (Lartey 1997:26).

When deconstructed, however, pastoral care denotes a unique approach to helping, in that it involves both informal and specialised care towards the other based upon the love of God, aimed at building faith which empowers the fellow human being to conquer challenges and embrace a life abundant (cf. Jn 10:10). This research is interested in how this form of care can be appropriated within the African context.

If it is accepted that pastoral care is some form of cultural captivity and needs to go beyond the Western world, clarity about these other contexts is paramount. In the case of this research, the African context deserves such clarification.

Publications pertaining to the so-called African context have become abundant. Phenomena such as the African Renaissance (cf. Villa-Vicencio, Doxtader & Moosa 2015) and the current expanse of the Christian church on the African continent (Clarke 2014:1) have brought the African context into the scope of many recent social and theological studies. More often than not it seems that the African context is used in a generic sense, suggesting that the African context refers to a single place or a homogenous group of people.

Owing to the vastness of the African continent and the diversity of people and ethnic groups represented in each country, a generic use of the concept is highly contestable. The classic book of Mbiti (1970), *Concepts of God in Africa*, features the questioning of more than 270 different groups of Africans on their views of God as reminder of the plurality within Africa in terms of faith, beliefs and understanding. Even in the same country, Africans themselves do not represent a homogenous group in terms of ethnicity and expression of cultural practices and beliefs. Current factors like globalisation and urbanisation are instrumental in further diversifying the value systems of Africans, contributing to the fluidity of the notion of a uniform African context. In light of this, the quest for a pastoral care model for Africa inevitably needs to be careful of a generic approach to the African context and always attempt to be specific about which context is at stake.

In turn, this does not imply that no similarities among Africans exist and that no generalisations can be made when thinking and writing about the African context. It is, for example, possible to talk about aspects of an African world view and African culture

which many Africans share, irrespective of their specific contexts. Some of these include sociality and the view of time and ancestors (Van der Walt 2008:172–175). Still, caution needs to be taken to always respect the uniqueness of specific peoples and their self-understanding.

Subsequently, it is contended here that the African context must be understood as any location with a concentration of African people, thus creating a specific context. An African context thus not only exists in Ghana, Kenya or any other African country, but also in a multicultural country like South Africa. It is significant that Mudzuli (2015) indicates that:

[The] black African population remained in the majority at 44.23 million, or 80 percent of the total population, with whites estimated at 4.53 million, coloureds 4.83 million and Indians/Asians at 1.365 million. (n.p.)

Contemporary South Africa can therefore essentially be deemed 'African', as it translates to a predominantly 'African context'. It would, however, be wrong to assume that South Africa represents a uniform African context. Instead it is home to the proverbial rainbow nation, comprising a range of ethnic groups within the more than 44 million Africans.

This underscores the fact that all so-called African contexts will necessitate thorough analysis of their specific ethnic and cultural uniqueness and that this should be the starting point of the journey towards pastoral care in Africa, rendering each project of contextualisation unique and specific.

■ Different voices in the quest for a contextual approach

As suggested earlier, the search for a pastoral care approach for Africa is not a new-found endeavour. Consensus about the necessity to appropriate the tenets of Christian theology, within African contexts, has been around for some time. It would thus be of benefit to consider some of the different voices (methods) that have arisen in this quest.

■ Indigenisation³¹

Indigenisation is mainly aimed at stripping a Christian theology from all Western cultural adornments, according to Turaki (1999:17), whereby 'the indigenisation principle deals mainly with cultural contextualisation' of Western theology (Turaki 1999:18).

31. In this section the spelling of the featured authors is followed for terms like 'indigenisation' and 'Africanisation'. When it is used by the author in the rest of this chapter, United Kingdom spelling is used.

A critical evaluation of theology in general, and pastoral care in particular always reveals a great deal of cultural saturation. This is especially true of pastoral theology which has come of age in the Western world. Heavily influenced during its early history by questions emanating from the Western world and focusing on problems unique to the then First World, led pastoral theology to become heavily laden with concepts that are in fact unique to the Western experience and culture. This, of course, rendered any attempts of an uncritical use of Western approaches within African contexts untenable.

Recognising the deep Western influence on pastoral care creates concern about the question whether cultural contextualisation is sufficient to appropriate pastoral care within African contexts.

Africanisation

Closely related to indigenisation, but aimed at putting Africans in ‘charge and control’ (Turaki 1999:19) as well as devise theology themselves, is the notion of Africanisation. Carrying with it the political yearning to be independent from the Western (missionary) yoke, Africanisation is ‘a conscious and deliberate assertion of the right to be an African’ and argues that only Africans can document and communicate the African experience, as experience is not transferable, but only communicable (Ramose 1998:vii).

Turaki points out how the Africanisation approach did not entirely succeed to come up with a truly indigenous African theology, given that Africanisation was more focused on gaining control of the administrative or external functions of the church itself – rather than on the development of a truly indigenous theology (cf. Turaki 1999:19), thereby disqualifying itself as a way to pursue an authentic African theology.

An intercultural approach

Not solely focusing on the African culture, Lartey suggests an intercultural approach to pastoral theology. This approach values the diversity of cultures, but is wary of dominant cultures that ‘deliberately or unwittingly seek to impose their culture and perspective upon all others’ (Lartey 1997:10). Instead theology must at least take seriously the context and world view of the people it serves, recognising that multiple perspectives exist and engage with the cultures of others in an authentic way. It points to a true faith in and understanding of the foreign culture on both a cognitive and affective level. Above all, an intercultural approach is opposed ‘to *reductionism* and *stereotyping* in any form’ (Lartey 1997:11).

While the notion of an intercultural approach has much potential, it may prove difficult to achieve in practice. It is especially Lartey's strict opposition to any form of reductionism or stereotyping that prohibits the 'categorising' of any group or person, thereby attributing certain characteristics to a group or individual that creates some serious challenges. For one, the negative stance towards understanding a group of people in terms of their culture becomes a problem when in fact no group of people can ever be viewed as acultural as all groups of people clearly exhibit certain traits, beliefs and practices.

■ Postcolonisation

Nearly two decades after Lartey's suggestions about an intercultural approach (1997), he published *Postcolonializing God: An African practical theology* (2013), which is a bold attempt at a true 'African practical theology.' In doing so, Lartey articulated some of the meaning of the postcolonial discourse in search of a practical theology suited to the African context. As Beyers (2016:6 of 10) however suggested, the notion of postcolonialism should not be used in an unqualified way. Remarking on Lartey's contribution thus also calls for some qualification. In following Sugirtharajah (2006:8) the hyphenated form 'post-colonial' denotes the historical period where previously colonised societies regained freedom from colonial rule while the unhyphenated form refers to a dialogical response to knowledge systems imposed during the colonial period. According to Glück (2008:1) the 'basic idea of this process is the deconstruction of old-fashioned perceptions and attitudes of power and oppression that were adopted during the time of colonialism'.

In this framework Lartey's attempt at *Postcolonializing God* can be regarded as a dialogical response to practical theological thought imposed on Africa. Lartey himself refers to postcolonisation as a form of criticism which is 'life enhancing [...] opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse, its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom' (Lartey 2013:x).

In theological terms then, it seems like postcolonisation essentially seeks to restore theology (faith) to what it was before colonisers colonised the minds of their subjects (irrespective of who the colonisers and subjects might have been) in order to restore some kind of tabula rasa theology for the African context.

In the process space is created for 'constructive critique of received theologies' (Lartey 2013:11) and a reappraisal of the 'African religious heritage' (Lartey 2013:25), which includes aspects such as 'mystical connectivity through communal ritual' (Lartey 2013:28) and 'pragmatic spirituality' (Lartey 2013:30).

What transpires, as evident in this approach of Lartey, is the use of postcolonisation as hermeneutic key for practical theology and pastoral care aimed at Africans – as if

colonisation is the only challenge for Africa. Unfortunately, this creates the possibility of a reductionist and exclusive approach to pastoral care. Viewed from a Reformed perspective, hermeneutic keys for practical theology and pastoral care are traditionally sought in the inclusive attributes of God rather than in the exclusive political motives of man.

A contextual transformative approach

A more recent and local voice, became discernible in the approach of Dames (2014) who suggests a contextual transformative approach to practical theology in the South African context. On the necessity of such an approach Dames (2014:13) refers to Botman (2000:201), who states, 'Practical theology should arise out of a *status confessionis* and a prophetic theology with a liberation emphasis located in the experience of the poor black people.'

Dames shares the sentiment of Buffel (2006) in this regard, who seriously questions pastoral theology that is neither contextual nor liberating. This contextual transformative approach is clear in terms of its agenda, not seeking a general contextualisation of pastoral care, but focused on addressing issues pertinent to the South African context including pathological socioeconomic conditions, HIV and AIDS, intercultural theological training and moral formation (Dames 2014:99, 113, 122, 145).

Dames's focus on the role of mission (Dames 2014:78) and the possibilities of a transversal model of a cross-disciplinary approach marks his contribution as an approach that warrants further exploration in the quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa.

A contextual approach (contextualisation)

The last voice explored is contextualisation. This approach is not, in the first place, concerned with culture or the eradication of some form of political-historical deficit, but with making theology itself relevant within a certain context.

According to Turaki (1999:19), the 'overriding goal [*of contextualisation*] is that of making theology relevant and meaningful in its application within context'. As such, contextualisation goes beyond indigenisation and Africanisation and is interested in theological relevance. Hence, Turaki (1999:20) states, '[c]ontextualisation as a tool of doing theology in Africa focuses principally on making the essence of Christianity relevant and understood within context'. This way both revelation (the Word of God) and experience (context) are deemed non-negotiable variables in the search for a pastoral care approach for Africa.

From a Reformed perspective contextualisation holds much potential for addressing the issue of pastoral care in Africa, given its focus on making theology relevant within a certain context.

■ A critical assessment of a recent attempt at authentic pastoral care for Africa

The previous sections set out to address some of the prequestions deemed important in the quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa. It showed that such an endeavour should at least have a clear definition of pastoral care in mind; respect the contextual uniqueness of all African contexts; and apply a method that serves both context and revelation. In the following section, the focus now shifts to a critical assessment of a recent example of a pastoral approach aimed at the African context in order to identify issues practical theology should explore further in terms of contextualised pastoral care.

■ Pastoral theology in African contexts

After considering typical Western notions of pastoral care, including those of Clebsch and Jaekle as well as Clinebell (Masango 2013:744–745), Masango contends that pastoral care among Africans begins with a mother and members of a village nurturing a child that the child may become ‘a good person among other villagers’ (Masango 2013:745).

This way Masango broadens the individualised Western concept of pastoral care to an approach that is community based and ‘cares for life instead of problems’ (Masango 2013:746). At the very core of this community-based approach lies the African notion of ubuntu, which Masango explains in the words of Mbiti (1986:85), ‘I am because you are [...] You are because I am.’

In terms of the African people (as caregivers) Masango distinguishes between the village and villagers with rural Africans in mind and those in urban areas who became caught up in modern Western systems, influencing their own understanding of ubuntu. Following Mucherera (2009), Masango recognises that Africans are currently caught between ‘worlds and cultural systems which challenge old patterns of life’ (Masango 2013:747).

Irrespective of this ambiguity, Masango (2013:750) maintains the opinion that Africans honour ubuntu in as much as they honour the elders among them as well as the memories of those who passed on (good ancestors). Here the notion of honouring the dead and communicating with them comes to the fore, as Masango highlights the African

belief that those who had led a good life are with the Lord and respecting their memory aids communication with God (Masango 2013:750).

This line of thought is also carried forth by the African imperative to nurture communal life. 'Therefore, when we care for each other, we are caring for God, who lives within us' (Masango 2013:750).

This communal character of an African pastoral care approach directly opposes and challenges the Western notion of individuality. 'African scholars are of the view that the western world rotates around being self-centred, the right to privacy and respect of personal space in their lives' (Masango 2013:751). Opposing this, the African notion of pastoral care seeks to nurture ubuntu by handing the African values down to the young by drawing on 'music, folk stories, proverbs and idioms' and at the same time 'engage the monster of globalization' which is the greatest threat to the African way of pastoral care (Masango 2013:753).

Reviewing Masango's work on the pastoral framework described earlier on in this contribution, leads to at least the following conclusions.

It seems like Masango's notion of African pastoral care relies heavily on the romantic ideal of the 'village' and the purpose of such pastoral care is upholding mutual respect for the living and the dead, grounded on the principles of ubuntu.

One of the most pressing questions, which arises from a critical engagement with this approach, concerns the sufficiency of such an approach for current African contexts. Are the majority of African people today still part of the 'village' and is nurturing traditional African values still adequate to care for Africans confronted with new contexts and new challenges? Davis (2014) reminds that urbanisation is on the rise and the 'village' is shrinking as 'too many people are moving to South African cities'. Seen within the bigger context of the African continent itself, South African urbanisation patterns merely echo the trends across Africa. 'At present, the African continent is 40 percent urbanised' and 'according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) [...] Africa will be 50 percent urban by 2030 and 60 percent urban by 2050' (Van der Merwe 2014).

Especially in the light of Masango's own observation that urban and rural Africans do not share the same value system any more, this should signal that a paradigm shift or shifts are on the cards for African pastoral theology. Just as urbanisation is responsible for Africans contracting typical 'Western' illnesses (cf. Puoane & Tsolekile 2008), so will urbanisation create new spiritual and emotional challenges in the long term that will not necessarily be addressed by the notion of African pastoral care as conveyed by Masango.

Other themes that will beg the attention of a contextualised approach from a practical theological perspective are the concept of 'good ancestors' and the absence of Christian texts as epistemological basis for an African pastoral care. While the inclusion of ancestors

within an African pastoral framework and the role of care for the community, ubuntu, music, folklore and such are all true to the African context, it is foreign to the Christian character and paradigm of pastoral care as previously suggested. Seen within the framework of this study then, it implies that from a practical theological vantage point, more should be done in order to devise a theologically anchored approach to a pastoral care for Africa.

This requires exploring a number of epistemologies that could possibly aid the integration of the African context into the development of a pastoral care approach for Africa.

■ Three possible epistemologies for a contextual approach: Diaconiology, practical theology and a postfoundational notion of practical theology

■ Diaconiology

This epistemology undergirded early pastoral theorising in Southern Africa. Derived from the Greek *diakonia* [service] and *logos* [word] and anchored in the theological tradition of Abraham Kuyper (Heyns & Jonker 1977:297), diaconiology deduced principles from the Word of God regarding the practical service of the church in the world, including pastoral care. Given the strong focus on the Bible as point of departure, diaconiology may even be called true to the reformational *sola scriptura*. Janse van Rensburg (2000:77) remarks that this epistemology acknowledges the objective truth of the Bible thereby providing a strong normative or ethical basis for theological theory.

In terms of pastoral care based on a diaconiological epistemology, a metaphor like that of the shepherd (Ps 23; Jn 10:10) plays a pivotal role in that it provides clear guidelines for the pastoral work of the church (cf. De Klerk 1978). Although a diaconiological epistemology considers both biblical principles and in fact the findings of the human sciences as well, Janse van Rensburg (2000:78) points out, it would still be fair to conclude that a diaconiological epistemology proceeds from the Word to praxis (context) in order to determine, in this case, the scope and method of pastoral care. In this equation, the Word of God thus carries more weight than the context.

The greatest challenge in using a diaconiological epistemology to engage the African context would, therefore, be to avoid a mere ethical evaluation of cultural aspects foreign to Scripture (Mwiti & Dueck 2007). Such a pastoral care would most probably not be true to the spirit of honest contextualisation, as it would be disqualifying all African beliefs

and values that are foreign to the Scriptures and only apply Christian principles within the African context.

Practical theology

Whereas the diaconological epistemology takes the Bible as point of departure, the subsequent practical theological epistemology, championed by inter alia Friedrich Schleiermacher and Jürgen Habermas (Janse van Rensburg 2000:80), centres on the context. If a diaconological epistemology causes a division between nature and grace, practical theology seeks to bring nature into the scope of theological investigation to thereby move from context to Scripture and from Scripture back to the context, creating a practical theological circle. This is evident in several of the definitions of practical theology that have become known in the field, of which the following are but two. Heyns and Pieterse (1990:6) state that ‘practical theology is one of the fields of theological study. It focuses on people’s religious actions, with the accent on the word “actions” – these represent the object of study’. Swinton and Mowat (2006) argue that practical theology is:

[C]ritical, theological reflection on the practices of the Church as they interact with the practices of the world with a view to ensuring faithful participation in the continuing mission of the Triune God. (p. 25)

The claim in both instances that practical theology represents *theological* study and reflection emphasises the circular movement between context, Scripture and context.

In terms of both pastoral care and the context, a practical theological epistemology provides more assurance that the context receives careful attention, in fact, that both Scripture and context are considered. For the purposes of a contextualised pastoral care for Africa then, it seems that much potential resides in this epistemology. If Lartey’s (1997:11) conception of ‘authentic participation’ in terms of intercultural engagement is taken seriously, however, the question remains if it will be able to critically reflect on contexts like the African in a truly unbiased way. Given this concern, a postfoundational view of practical theology is worth considering.

Postfoundational practical theology

Postfoundational practical theology attempts to transcend the challenges presented by diaconiology and practical theology in terms of their bias towards ‘foundations’, presented by both revelation and context, as well as the school of thought that suggests that *no* foundations exist, thus being anti- or nonfoundational.

Müller (2011:2) suggests that practical theology follows the route of a postfoundational notion of practical theology that ‘consists of an effort to move beyond both foundationalist

and nonfoundationalist claims' (Müller 2011:2 of 5). Also referred to as 'transversal rationality', it offers a 'responsible and workable interface between disciplines' (Müller 2011:3 of 5) and, therefore, contexts. In this regard Müller (2011:3 of 5) explicitly states, '[c]ontextuality is a key concept in the postfoundationalist approach'.

According to Van Huyssteen (1997), a postfoundationalist approach to practical theology endows the theologian with the responsibility to look beyond his or her own discipline and culture in search of a true interdisciplinary dialogue.

In terms of the search for a pastoral care for Africa with a true, contextualised theology as the outcome, a postfoundational view to practical theology presents the possibility for engaging the African context *transversally* rather than *conversationally*. Apart from creating space for a true authentic participation with the 'other', it will most probably facilitate greater potential for an *authentic* understanding of the 'other'. Müller (2011) points out that a postfoundationalist approach implies:

- *Real* concern about a real person. Concerns in this paradigm are never theoretical, but always local and embodied.
- A *not-knowing* approach, but at the same time an approach of active engagement.
- *Holistic* in the sense of being fully committed to the real contextual story, but also committed to the exploring of traditions of interpretation.
- A *social-constructionist* approach where a person is part of the development of a preferred reality that makes sense to him or her. Such an approach creates both the most profound and the most fragile moment, a moment of true pastoral concern. (p. 3 of 5)

From a Reformed perspective, concerns regarding the normativity of Scripture in a postfoundationalist approach are obvious. Van Huyssteen (2007), however, raises the so-called 'degrees of transversality', which safeguard interdisciplinary or intercontextual dialogue against transgressing the own discipline's or context's natural boundaries. This means that even a postfoundational approach will ultimately heed the boundaries of its own chosen method, while at the same time creating what Müller (2011:4 of 5) refers to as an 'ecotone' where interdisciplinary dialogue may take place to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Synthesis

This chapter sets out to engage practical theology, pastoral care and the African context on the grounds that a need to appropriate pastoral care in the African context exists. The focus centres on the prequestions for practical theology, that is, what the most basic issues are that practical theology should consider in the quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa.

This focus gives rise to the imperative of establishing a clear definition of pastoral care so that practical theological theorising may be clear on what it intends to appropriate within the African context. Pastoral care represents a unique means of support to the

Christian paradigm in its aim to build faith that empowers fellow humans to conquer challenges and embrace a life abundant.

Research into the quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa also warns against a generic use of the African context. Although it is recognised that some similarities between African people exist, in terms of culture and world view, the African context represents a diverse phenomenon. An African context comprises any concentration of Africans and yet the diverse nature of the African people requires careful exegesis of specific contexts, rendering every African study unique. This would imply that a generic African pastoral care model would be difficult to attain and that pastoral studies within African contexts should be specific and unique to a certain context.

As attempts to appropriate pastoral theology within African contexts are not new, the chapter also considers different approaches like indigenisation and Africanisation. Owing to the political inclination of most of such approaches, contextualisation is indicated as method of choice from a Reformed perspective in that it is concerned with making theology itself relevant within a certain context. Given that pastoral care is representative of a Christian (theological) approach, contextualisation makes provision for sustaining the theological character of pastoral care within different contexts.

In the light of these considerations, a recent attempt at a pastoral care approach for Africa was critically assessed and found to rely heavily on typical African concepts such as ubuntu and the welfare of the 'village'. The biggest difference between a Reformed and African approach seems to be on the theological nature of pastoral care, since no biblical base could be identified in the latter approach. Another point of concern is the applicability of this approach to current African contexts, where notable shifts in terms of world views and the influence of phenomena like urbanisation are taking place.

On these grounds it is suggested that the quest for a pastoral care for Africa would indeed benefit from further practical theological investigation and hence the description of three different epistemologies for further practical theological study. Cognisant of a diaconological, practical theological and a postfoundational conception of practical theology, it is concluded that practical theology can be utilised as a means to engage African contexts theologically in the quest for a pastoral care for Africa.

■ Summary: Chapter 7

This chapter is located within the discourse on the contextualisation of pastoral care and counselling within the African context from a Reformed perspective. It is based on the notion that Western approaches to pastoral care cannot uncritically be applied within African contexts. Assuming that practical theology serves as the theoretical engine room

for pastoral care, this study is interested in the practical theological questions preceding pastoral care aimed at Africa. It attempts to clarify basic concepts such as pastoral care, the African context and some of the approaches previously applied in the appropriation of pastoral theology in African contexts, like indigenisation, Africanisation, contextualisation and such. Having opted for the contextualisation of pastoral care within the African milieu, it critically assesses a recent example of an African pastoral care approach. In light of several theological concerns, the research suggests that the quest for a pastoral care for Africa can indeed benefit from further practical theological investigation. To this end, three different epistemologies for further practical theological investigation are described. Cognisant of a diaconological, practical theological and postfoundational notion of practical theology, it is concluded that practical theology has the means to engage African contexts in an unbiased way, in the continuing quest for a pastoral care approach for Africa.

Xenophobia and social prejudice through the lens of Calvin: From ‘iron philosophy’ to *homo sympatheticus* in a practical theology of home within the global dilemma of displaced refugees

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■ Introduction

On the question, posed by a friend from the Netherlands, '[h]ow is it to live in South Africa?' the poet Louis Esterhuizen, answered: alarming and frightening, terrible and frightening, estranging and dividing (*Kwart voor skrikwekkend in dié land*).³²

The former president F.W. de Klerk (2014:2), commenting on 20 years of democracy is convinced that South Africa is heading for a bright future if we stick to the basic ethos of our constitution. However, the so-called rainbow nation and dream of peace based on a constitutional dispensation for transformation in South Africa, is becoming a paranoid nightmare. New forms of racist #MustFall campaigns fuelled by fear of the other (xenophobia) are deepening existing cultural and social divisions. Neo-racism is surfacing on the horizon of the 'rainbow nation'.

Since the second half of the 20th century the African continent has been exposed to the rapid rise and tsunami of liberation and democratisation.³³ The so-called 'rainbow nation' (South Africa) is still struggling with the rapidity of radical social transformation in the light of the apartheid legacy. Rather than unity, division is becoming a characteristic of politics in South Africa. The schism of social divisions and systemic poverty ruin the dream of political stability and the idea of economic hegemony.³⁴

In a publication on the huge gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa, the social and economic analyst Prof. Sampie Terreblanche (2014) points to the division factor in the South African civil society. Owing to unbridled market freedom and deregulation (market fundamentalism as linked to the 'gospel of trade, not aid'), division and schism, rather than development and sharing, are bringing the South African society to the brink of social chaos and possible, eventual economic destruction. Structural inequality and corporative greed (to grab for oneself and to ignore the principle of mutual sharing) contribute to social instability.

On a metalevel of values, virtues and moral frameworks, conflicting needs, expectations and world views are contributing to social and political confusion and relational conflicts. Schisms and social tensions point to the deeper meta-realm of conflicting and inappropriate paradigms (patterns of thinking) that contribute to enmity and hatred rather than to understanding and embracement.

32. See the article on Esterhuizen's latest publication by Van Niekerk (2014:9).

33. *'Die wêreld word al hoe kleiner en al hoe vinniger. En hier aan die Suidpunt van Afrika ontkom ons nie aan die maalkalk nie'* (Van der Walt 1983:2).

34. De Villiers (2014:9) refers to the fact that, according to Terreblanche, we lost the chance and opportunity in 1994 to transfer South Africa into a more equal and just society.

Within the past history of the interplay between paradigms and religious thinking in the establishment of the apartheid policy, the notion of Calvinism often surfaces (De Gruchy 2009). Within reformed thinking, Calvinism was inter alia an attempt to explain in theological terminology the fact of cultural diversity in creation and the interplay between the will of God and cosmic plurality.

According to Coetzee (2008:157), ‘Calvinism’ provided an ideological framework for the theological justification of discriminatory social practices – the so-called apartheid policy. Calvinism in South Africa has become something of a swear word, especially among the more liberal. According to John De Gruchy, ‘Calvinism had to do with the Dutch Reformed Church, with the defence of apartheid, with narrowness of mind and purpose, with censorship and Afrikaner nationalism’ (De Gruchy 2009:15).

De Gruchy (2005:8–11), in his historical overview on the role of the churches within the political framework of apartheid, points out that the theological and religious justification of the Nationalist policy of separate development was not so much determined by Calvin’s thinking as such (De Gruchy 2005:10), but by the ideology of Calvinism, namely, the ideology that the reign of God can be used to explain on a rational basis cultural diversity and social differentiation.³⁵ Diversity in the cosmos and creation has become a divine principle and providential, God-willed ordination.

The fact is that Calvinism was often viewed as an abstract set of dogmatic principles and rational framework of prescriptive rules (Coetzee 2008:157). However, when one reads Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1949), it strikes one how he starts the *Institutes* with a reflection on the splendid glory of God as exposed by Creation and embodied within the cosmic realm of life. One can call this approach a sanctifying aesthetic approach, rather than a rational explanatory approach. Calvinistic thinking implies therefore more than justification in terms of judicial categories. Justification, the indicative of salvation, implies also the imperative of a sanctifying ethos and caring approach to human life and the preservation of the cosmos. Sanctification points to the very fact that every aspect of life is a domain for the exhibition of God’s doxa by means of a compassionate caregiving mode, rather than a dominating exploiting mode. One should rather heal and help than divide and hate.

Xenophobia can be viewed as a very subtle form of discriminatory enmity and schismatic form of social hatred. On the other hand, the Christian ethos of sacrificial love, preaches a gospel of unconditional love. Thus, the intriguing research question: What are the implications of a Christian understanding of *xenophilia* for social contexts that have to

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 35. According to De Gruchy (2005:9–10), Dutch Calvinism at the Cape was profoundly influenced by the neo-Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper, ‘Kuyper’s idea of separate spheres of sovereignty embedded in creation corresponded well with the Lutheran doctrine of the “orders of creation” as expounded by German missionary science and embodied in NGK policy.’

deal with schismatic ideas and violent activism based on social stereotyping and stigmatising perceptions? Very specifically the victimisation and stigmatisation of the other as the intruding and threatening ‘cultural stranger’?

How should the pastoral ministry respond to the crisis of xenophobia, especially within the framework of the refugee dilemma and the global migrant crisis?

■ Xenophobia: The threat of the ‘cultural other’ and ‘intruding stranger’

Xenophobia is about the existential fear and even hatred of the other (the stranger) due to negative practices of discrimination and stigmatising perceptions.

Erving Goffman (1990:11–12), links the establishment of stigma to social settings. The routines of social intercourse in established settings and first appearances, enable us to anticipate ‘social identity’. We easily transform these anticipations into normative expectations and presented demands. The demands we make ‘in effect’ and the character we impute to a person can be seen as an imputation made in potential retrospect. When this identity is assessed as negative, bad, dangerous, weak, even sinful, we reduce the difference to wrong or evil. In our mind we reduce the person to a tainted, discounted individual. Such an attribute becomes a stigma, especially when its discrediting effect is very extensive. Sometimes it is called a failing, a shortcoming, a handicap. It constitutes a special discrepancy between virtual and actual social identity.

Xenophobic paranoia is built upon three issues, (1) national exclusivism, (2) negative social stigmatisation and (3) prejudice and existential resistance fed by the power play of politics, gender exploitation and racial or tribal discrimination. In Africa, xenophobia is closely related to economic discrepancies, racial and tribal issues due to the history of colonial expansionism, and the tension between intruding ‘outsiders’ and native ‘insiders’.

In current postcolonialisation campaigns in South Africa it is becoming evident that the interplay between fear for the other and resistance are causing social tension. It even plays a role in current #MustFall campaigns in South Africa and the upheaval of new forms of racism in many modes of activism. Mamphela Ramphele refers to the fact that the neglect and undermining of African languages unfortunately exacerbates the pain of humiliation that African people suffered over the decades of racist oppression (Ramphele 2012:38).³⁶

36. Nadine Gordimer [1974:41] refers to one of the most painful outcomes of colonialism: racism. Racism not as accidental detail, but a consubstantial part of colonialism, the highest expression of colonialism. ‘In fact, racism is built into the system: the colony sells produce and raw material cheaply, and purchases manufactured goods at very high prices from the mother country. This singular trade is profitable to both parties only if the natives work for little or nothing.’ (Sartre 1974:19)

Jean-Paul Sartre (1974:24) captures the inhumane reality of colonisation as follows (Sartre 1974):

[T]he natives are atomized – and colonist society cannot integrate them without destroying itself. The bleak and desperate situation of the colonised boils down to the following: ‘And when a people has received from its oppressors only the gift of despair, what does it have to lose?’ (p. 25).

Colonisation is thus built on an ontological predicament, namely oppression, and oppression means then first of all, the *oppressor’s hatred for the oppressed* (Sartre 1974:23). And this hatred leads to the fact that the coloniser starts to deny human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance – a subhuman condition (Sartre 1974:20).

The migrant crisis is underlining anew the tension between fear for the other and reactionary measurements of exclusion and separatism. In fact, the global migrant crisis puts the notion of foreclosure (*Abschottung*) (Bauman 2016) on the agenda of national states, global policy makers and ecclesial structures.

■ The refugee dilemma within the global migrant crisis: Between integration (welcoming) and separation (resistance)

According to Polak (2014:1), *homo sapiens* is in essence a *homo migrans*. Throughout history people were on the move. One can even say that migration is a social phenomenon and part of human existence (Castels & Miller 2009:299). However, what is currently happening is that migration has become a feature of our being human in the so-called global village. Migration is about a new mode of defining identity, diversification within mass pluralisation.³⁷ It is challenging our understanding of notions like national states, ‘civil society’, ‘democracy’ and ‘human dignity’.

Amann (2015:28) argues that the refugee dilemma is about the welcoming of the refugees and the setting of limitations (closing of borders), between tolerance

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37. Migration has become a global, in fact, it has become a trans-national concern. Even the notion of ‘home’ is not anymore a national entity: ‘Die “Super-Diversifizierung” globaler Migration führt zu einem nicht mehr überschaubaren Ausmaß an Pluralisierung und Mobilität. Zeitgenössische Mobilitäts- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten fördern “transnationale Migration” und lassen Mehrfachzugehörigkeiten entstehen, die nicht mehr in die klassischen Formate von “Heimat” und “Fremde” passen. Rund um den Globus findet eine “transnationale Revolution” statt, die Gesellschaften und Politiken neu formt’ (Polak 2014:3).

and resistance.³⁸ Thus the alarming reality: We oscillate between resistance and accommodation.³⁹

The discovery of a possible attack on vulnerable human beings (tourists) at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin (February 2016) brings about a lot of negative reactions. According to Stephan-Andreas von Casdorff (2016:1), these kinds of events are questioning the current 'Willkommenskultur' in Germany and fuel radical reactions and aggressive attitudes (*Sorgen bereiten Aggressivität*).⁴⁰

The refugee crisis has become a crisis of spiritual intoxication, that is, a crisis of negative perceptions and dehumanising prejudice.⁴¹

On a political level the dilemma and burning question is the following: Multiculturality and multi-nationality (plural interconnectedness) or national self-protection (demarcation and local boarder setting)? On a spiritual level: welcoming and hospitality or resistance and suspicion?

It is the conviction of social analyst and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (2016:125) that the refugee dilemma boils down to suspicion and distrust. People do not trust one another. We are becoming enemies for another within a global rat race of competition and exploitation. We are living in a global world,⁴² shaped by achievement, enmity and

38. With reference to Austrian politics, Shuster (2016:26–29) asserts that Heinz-Christian Strache in his campaign to become mayor of Vienna, based his approach on the destructive emotion of fear and hostility. Instead of the previous focus on anti-Semitism, the focus shifted towards Islamophobia. Strache 'focused his party's hostility on a different minority group: Muslims' (Shuster 2016:26). Different political slogans were created. 'On immigration: Send them back! On Muslims: Keep them out! On the media: full of lies! On the Establishment: Crooked! On the elections: Rigged! Even their tactics seem to run in parallel, especially when it comes to the politics of fear' (Shuster 2016:29).

39. *'Noch nie so viel Hass, noch nie so viel Hilfsbereitschaft, auf diese Formel lässt sich das neue Deutschland bringen. Und dazwischen eine schweigende Mehrheit. Es braucht vor allem zweierlei: Grenzen und Ehrlichkeit'* (Amann 2015:28–29).

40. The whole process of democratisation and the demand to employ a policy of well-coming are becoming radical with an undertone of aggression: *'Auf der politisch-gesellschaftlichen Ebene geht es zunehmend lauter, aggressiver und radikaler zu – in der Tendenz demokratiegefährdend'* (Von Casdorff 2016:1).

41. Owing to stereotyping and radicalisation, the refugee crisis is endangering the notion of human dignity: *'Gefährlich wird es, wenn, bei einigen radikalen Gruppen, die Stereotypisierung menschliches Verhalten dominiert; wenn diese Ideen sogar instinktive Empathie und historisch gewachsene Humanität dem Fremden, dem Flüchtling gegenüber, überlagert. Dann beginnen verrückte Geister, Brandsätze auf Notunterkünfte zu werfen'* (Kizilhan 2016:15).

42. 'Global village' is a phrase coined by Marshall McLuhan. In the early 1960s, McLuhan wrote that the visual, individualistic print culture would soon be brought to an end by what he called 'electronic interdependence': when *electronic media* replace *visual culture* with aural and oral culture. In this new age, humankind will move from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity, with a 'tribal base'. McLuhan's coinage for this new social organisation is the *global village* (Wikipedia 2015).

brutal violence. People feel threatened in the global village. This phenomenon of threat has become stereotyped in the presence and person of the illegal migrant – ‘[in] der Gestalt des illegalen Einwanderers. Er ist der ideale Phantomgegner’ (Bauman 2016:125).

According to Bauman (2016:122), the connection between fear and panic, is the reason why politicians respond in terms of a subjective paranoia rather than from the standpoint of an open and objective critical realism. The current paranoia and its connection to Islamophobia, creates a kind of politically explosive confusion on the emotional level. The emotional turmoil causes a political helplessness that oscillates between two incompatible polarities: foreclosure (*Abschottung*) and integration. The current setting is indeed ambivalent and has the capacity to end in a moral debacle – a kind of sinful indifferentism regarding the tragedy and the desperate cry of suffering, vulnerable people.

Eventually the crisis is running the danger of becoming a dehumanised threat to our being human; it is objectified without any connection to compassion and solidarity.⁴³ How should the Christian community respond to the challenge of solidarity within the existential reality of xenophobia and the quest for human dignity?

■ The migrant crisis and the quest for human dignity

Questions about God are becoming intertwined with questions about human identity, thus the plight for human rights and human dignity. The concept dignity (*dignitas*) as a social category related to that of honour (*honour*) (Huber 1996:115), becomes associated with the notion of the *imago Dei* (created in the image of God). *Humanitas* and *dignitas* are dictating the agenda of public theology (Meeks 1984):

Dignitas became closely associated with *humanitas* as to be construed as a synonym. To be able to say what dignity is would be to describe the fundamental meaning of being human. (p. ix)

Dignity means to be human. ‘For this reason, dignity has become the key concept in the worldwide struggle for human rights’ (Meeks 1984:ix). For Rombach (1987:379), dignity then describes the humane human being (*Den menschlichen Mensch*); the human being shaped by the social processes of identity and meaningful space (*Identität* = a spiritual networking of meaning as the whole which gives significance to every particular part).

With reference to Kant (in Ackermann 2013:58), one can argue that dignity refers to autonomy or freedom. Thus, the hypothesis of Ackermann (2013:85) is that dignity connects with concepts such as equality and non-discrimination. In this regard human worth (dignity) becomes a kind of criterion in order to detect respect, non-discrimination and equality.

43. This is the reason why Bauman [2016:122] emphatically states that the only option in the crisis is to focus on ‘solidarity’: ‘Es gibt keinen anderen Ausweg aus der Krise, in der die Menschheit sich befindet, als Solidarität.’

If the church still wants to maintain an approach of public civil engagement,⁴⁴ what kind of change is necessary on the paradigmatic level of theologising? The fact is: It seems to me impossible for the church to hide behind principle matters. Twenty-first century ecclesiology is about a public and civil ecclesiology, thus the emphasis in practical theology on the praxis principle of solidarity and compassionate engagement.

Within theology, the refugee crisis puts a question mark behind an exclusive ecclesiology, denominational demarcations and a selective morality, thus, my focus on an operative ecclesiology⁴⁵ (Congar in Bergson 2015). The ecclesial and ministerial challenge is to see the migrant crisis as a sign of our time and the place and space for contextualising our practical theological reflection and ministerial engagement with the complexities of life (Kessler 2014), that is, doing theology from and within the vibrant context of burning daily life issues.

How did Calvin respond to the ‘fear for the stranger’ and the displacement dilemma of refugees in Geneva?

■ The plea for solidarity: A theological dilemma and pastoral challenge within the context of Geneva

According to John De Gruchy, Calvin’s approach was based on a kind of ‘Christian humanism’. Instead of a rational ideology and system of true, pure, correct principles, Calvin opted for an ‘ethos of Christian humanism’ (De Gruchy 2009:19). Thus, this is the reason why De Gruchy wants to introduce Calvin as an important ally in the attempt to link a humanist face of God to the inhumane practices of social oppression and inhumane structures of political exploitation. De Gruchy wants to promote John Calvin as both a ‘Christian humanist’ and an ‘evangelical Reformer’, Calvin as the thinker of the compassionate heart (*sapientia*) rather than the thinker of a rational system (abstract *theoria*).⁴⁶

44. Keane [2003:8] refers to the fact that the construct civil society is not a static *fait accompli*. It is an unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and the hub-and-spoke clusters of socio-economic institutions and actors who organise themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways.’ Seligman, in his research on *The Idea of civil society* (1992:200–204), differentiates between three basic descriptive functions, namely political, socio-scientific and philosophical-prescriptive functions.

45. By operative ecclesiology is meant performative actions of being the church within concrete contexts. It reflects on ecclesial matters not merely from the viewpoint of denominational traditions and dogmatic confessions, but within communal life systems. Ecclesiology may be studied inductively and can thus draw support from various other disciplines, such as political science, history and sociology (see Bergson 2015).

46. Ludwig Feuerbach in his book on the essence of the Christian faith (1904), did the same as Calvin: He attacked a Christendom that projected an abstract God ideology; a God without passion and a heart.

It is the conviction of Alister McGrath (1993:79), that one should understand the thinking of Calvin within the context of civil society, namely his actions within the context of the Geneva city and municipality. This Geneva context is often ignored or marginalised by many of Calvin's biographers (McGrath 1993):

To understand Calvin as a man of action, rather than a builder of ahistorical cathedrals of the mind, it is necessary to come to terms with the city which occasioned and modified much of his thought. (p. 79)

Calvin was minister to French refugees in Strasbourg (1538–1541). During his time in Strasbourg, Calvin was not attached to one particular church, but held his office successively in the Saint-Nicolas Church, the Sainte-Madeleine Church and the former Dominican Church, renamed the Temple Neuf. Back in Geneva (1541–1549), reformed actions lead to the *Ordonnances ecclésiastiques* [ecclesiastical ordinances] on 20 November 1541. The ordinances defined four orders of ministerial function: pastors to preach and to administer the sacraments; doctors to instruct believers in the faith; elders to provide discipline; and deacons to care for the poor and needy. They also called for the creation of the *Consistoire* [consistory], an ecclesiastical court composed of the lay elders and the ministers.⁴⁷ One can call this model of an inclusive social-focused and civil directed ecclesiology: a community based on a diaconic model on grass roots level.

To a certain extent, one can view Calvin's fourth order of ministry (the diaconate) as stipulated by the *Ordonnances*, as corresponding with aspects of the Lutheran Reformation that created an urban sense of community (McGrath 1993):

By adopting the Lutheran Reformation, Moeller suggested, such cities were able to restore a sense of community identity, including the notion of a common religious community in a shared religious life binding inhabitants together. (p. 81)

Calvin's incentives to restructure social life in Geneva, can be viewed as a kind of very early mode of public theology within the framework civil societal issues. The way in which he linked the diaconate with *cura pauperum*, the apostolic responsibility of caring for the poor (McGrath 1993:80), lay the foundation for a grass roots and community-based ecclesiology.

One cannot ignore the fact that the number of refugees, flooding into Geneva, created a huge challenge to the pastoral ministry of the church. Eberhard Busch (2007:74) points out that one of the big miseries that disturbed living together and put social solidarity to a severe test, was the relation of residents to foreigners, which became a problem among the people of Geneva very rapidly (Busch 2007):

Previously it was the rule that each town had to look after its own needy residents. But now there arrived in Geneva crowds of French refugees who had been expelled from their own

47. John Calvin, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin#Minister_in_Strasbourg_.281538.E2.80.931541.29

country. In a few years the number of inhabitants in Geneva nearly doubled, and because the space in the city narrowed and the question of livelihood became urgent, it became a highly practical question whether the strangers are our neighbours. (p. 74)

Slowly Geneva opened the door for others from Italy and England. Help was even given to a Turk and a Jew. In a sermon on Deuteronomy, Calvin addresses the issue of being a stranger (Busch 2007:74). According to Calvin (in Busch 2007:74), 'we must live together in a family of brothers and sisters which Christ has founded in his blood; and with every hostility he gives the opportunity to resist hostility'.

Fundamentally, in his view on the equal value of human beings, Calvin (1854) operated from the perspective of 'neighbourly love' as the sound principal for an inclusive approach to social and human issues:

The word neighbour includes all men living; for we are linked together by a common nature [...] The image of God ought to be particularly regarded as a sacred bond of union, but, for that very reason, no distinction is here made between friend and foe, nor can the wickedness of men set aside the right of nature. (p. 116)

In his sermon on Galatians 6:9–11, it is evident that the outsider, stranger and other, function as a kind of mirror and looking glass for a community-based church (Busch 2007):

We cannot but behold our own face as it were in a glass in the person that is poor and despised [...] though he were the furthest stranger in the world. Let a Moor or a barbarian come among us, and yet inasmuch as he is a human, he brings with him a looking glass wherein we may see that he is our brother and our neighbour. (p. 75)

According to Busch (2007:75), this concrete spiritual insight of Calvin is the source of his interest in social and economic affairs. The command for neighbourliness is the thrust of Calvin's 'spiritual humanism' [*author's interpretation*].

In his book on John Calvin, De Gruchy (2009:206) refers to Calvin's 'social humanism'. With reference to the research of André Biéler on the social dimension in Calvin's thinking, it is argued that Calvin's theology was all about the restoration of humanity within the framework of a just society, and that meant a society in which equity and economic justice were paramount (Biéler in De Gruchy 2009:207). Calvin was therefore sensitive to the notion of social reform, thus, his institution of the diaconate as an agent of social service (De Gruchy 2009:207) and critique on disproportion between the poor and the rich. Calvin understood poverty as an unbearable scandal (Busch 2007:74), '[s]ocial injustice and the tears of the social victims wound God, too' (Busch 2007:74–75).

When one probes deeper into the paradigmatic background of Calvin's thinking, it becomes evident that his theology was shaped by a deep sense of compassion. Calvin distanced himself from 'being a stone', that is, to respond like the Stoics as if one is not

affected by anything (*Inst.* 3.18.21). His thinking was driven by deep empathy and compassion:

But we have nothing to do with that iron philosophy which our Lord and Master condemned – not only in word, but also in example. For he both grieved and shed tears for his own and other’s woes. (*Inst.* 3.18.21–22)

Even on his reflection on the omnipotence of God, Calvin is very cautious to portray God’s interventions in a causative manner: a mechanistic cause-and-effect approach. Omnipotence is not like ‘ordering a stream to keep within the channel once prescribed to it, but one which is intent on individual and special movements’ (*Inst.* 1.16.174). God is not in a philosophic fashion like a primary agent, the cause of all movement (*Inst.* 1.16.174).

These remarks of Calvin point in the direction of what one can call in theopaschitic terminology: the *passio Dei*.

■ The practical theological challenge: From the impassibility of ‘iron philosophy’ (Stoic extirpation of passion: *Homo apatheticus*) to the praxis of theopaschitic theology: *Homo sympatheticus*

For Calvin the core issue on the level of Christian and theological hermeneutics, was the fundamental difference between Stoic impassibility (iron philosophy) and Christian theology: *passio Dei*.

Early in Greek philosophy, passion, suffering and pain were from a lower order than reason and eventually wisdom. The nourishing of reason helps the soul to gain control over the pleasure principle, the appetite and the bodily inflictions. Thus, Plato’s (1946) conviction:

And so we call an individual brave in virtue of his spirited part of his nature, when, in spite of pain or pleasure, it holds fast to the injunctions of the reason about what he ought of not to be afraid of. (p. 137)

The notion that reason should govern the whole of life and should control passion, formed the basic point of departure of Stoic thinking. The divine in life operates thus as a rational element so that one should say, ‘God is absolute reason’ (Stace 1960:347). While Aristotle acknowledged the place of passions and appetite in the human organism, the Stoics looked upon the passions as essentially irrational, and demanded complete extirpation (Stace 1960:350). As an ethical

doctrine, the goal of Stoicism is freedom from passion (in the ancient sense of ‘anguish’ or ‘suffering’) through the pursuit of ‘reason’ and ‘apatheia’. The implication of ‘apatheia’ as ethical principle implies a rational form of objectivity, to be unemotional and having clear judgment. It teaches indifference and a ‘passive’ reaction to life’s events as external to the inner realm of the human soul. The notion of *apatheia* leads to a view that impassibility can be linked to rational control and the dominium of power.

Translated into theological language, impassibility (from Latin in ‘not’, *passibilis* – ‘able to suffer, experience emotion’) describes the doctrinal conviction that God does not experience pain or pleasure from the actions of another being. And it is against this very rationalistic and even positivistic explanation of the essence of God’s being that Calvin (*Inst.* 3.18.21–22) responded:

But we have nothing to do with that iron philosophy which our Lord and Master condemned – not only in word, but also in example. For he both grieved and shed tears for his own and other’s woes.

Although Calvin wanted to maintain the sovereignty of God,⁴⁸ he argues not in static and apathetic categories like the Stoics. He does not want to promote the *impassibilitas Dei* or an iron immutability, but the image of a compassionate Father:

[B]ut what I wish to impress upon my readers in this way is, that the first step in piety is to acknowledge that God is a Father, to defend, govern, and cherish his us, until he brings us to the eternal inheritance of his kingdom. (*Inst.* 2.7.297)

With reference to Psalm 115:3, for Calvin (*Inst.* 1.16.174) it is actually:

[I]nspid to interpret the Psalmist’s words in philosophic fashion,⁴⁹ to mean that God is the primary agent. [...] This rather is the solace of the faithful, in their adversity, that everything which they endure is by the ordination and command of God, that they are under his hand.

The Sizoo translation (Dutch) uses ‘in’ rather than ‘under’: ‘omdat ze in zijn hand zijn’ (Calvijn 1931:192).

One can say that Calvin’s plea for a ‘compassionate Father’ rather than a Stoic reason, concurs with the basic intention in theopaschitic theology. Moltmann (1972:10) emphatically stated in his book *Der gekreuzigte Gott*, without the recognition of the pain and suffering of the negative, the Christian principle of hope cannot be realistic and help

.....
48. ‘God is deemed omnipotent, not because he can act though he may cease or be idle, or because by a general instinct, he continues the order of nature previously appointed; but because, governing heaven and earth by his providence, he so overrules all things that nothing happens without his counsel’ (*Inst.* 1.16.174).

49. For the impact of philosophy on the thinking of Calvin [see Van der Merwe 1982:69–84].

believers to live as free human beings. Christian hope is human sensitive and connected to passion. It is not connected to a stoic *apatheia* that renders emotions as an obstacle to true knowledge. ‘So the passions (*pathē*) must be overcome in order that the ideal of “dispassionateness” (*apatheia*) may be attained’ (Gärtner 1978:719).

God is not an apathetic and stoic God. ‘The OT therefore leaves practically no room for suffering that is fortuitous’ (Gärtner 1978:720). The connection suffering, guilt and providence have nothing in common with a pessimistic belief as found in Greek tragedy. A mechanical, deterministic and direct causative explanatory model of theodicy does not suffice and fit into the schema of a theopaschitic *passio Dei*.

Moltmann (1972) breaks away from Aristotle’s metaphysical and theistic view of God as being immovable, apathetic and unchanging. A theology of the Cross means a radical change in Western Christianity’s concept of God. The God concept inspired by the Greeks is one of apathy, with immutability as a static-ontic category. In contrast, a theology of the Cross is a ‘pathetic theology’ in which God’s *pathos*, not his *apatheia*,⁵⁰ is emphasised. It is in *pathos* that God reveals himself in such a way that he becomes involved in loving solidarity with human suffering.

One can conclude and say: An apathetic God moulds a human being into a *homo apatheticus*; a pathetic God moulds a human being into a *homo sympatheticus*.

Considering the two trends in Calvin’s thinking, namely that events are ‘in’ God’s hand, and God is rendered as a caring and compassionate Father, how should one further reflect on the concept God from the perspective and context of homeless and displaced human beings?

■ Towards a practical theology and ecclesiology of home (*xenodochia*): From ‘Syria’ back to ‘Geneva’

Xenophobia and the migrant crisis emphasises the importance of the anthropological factor in the migrant crisis: The how of human responses to paradoxical life events and crises of human suffering. Therefore, the emphasis in the article on *homo sympatheticus*; on the ‘how’ of habitus in civil engagement and societal intervention. This perspective has been substantiated by a recent publication in *Der Spiegel* (Brinkbäumer 2015). The front cover page put it in a nutshell: ‘*Es liegt an uns, wie wir leben werden*’ [Our attitude determines the how of our life].

50. Moltmann (1972:256), opts for the notion of ‘pathos’ instead of the Greek connection: perfection - apathy. ‘Seit Plato und Aristoteles wird die metaphysische und ethische Vollkommenheit Gottes mit *apatheia* beschrieben.’

Instead of *xenophobia*, the metaphors of host and hospitality in pastoral caregiving, exchange fear for the stranger into *philoxenia*: the mutuality of 'brotherly' love. The praxis of hope presupposes the 'office of deacon' and the virtue of hospitality in order to establish caregiving as an exponent, of *diakonia*. Christian hospitality counteracts the social stratification of the larger society by providing an alternative based on the principle of equality; everyone is welcome regardless of background, status, gender or race. Within the intercultural framework of community care, the challenge to the pastoral ministry is to provide 'hospitals' (*xenodochia*), safe havens (monasteries of hope, places of refuge) where threatened people can become whole again. 'To be moral is to be hospitable to the stranger' (Ogletree 1985:1).

The metaphor of the host communicates sharing, welcoming, embracement, inclusive communality (the church as the *hospitium* of God).

A compassionate community is about the challenge to provide 'hospitals' (*xenodochia*), safe havens (monasteries of hope, places of refuge) where threatened people can become whole again. Hospitality is actually about a public virtue: *hospitium publicum* and the integrity of *homo sympatheticus*.

Integrity in an ecclesiology of home means that even 'Syrians' should be welcomed in the *koinonia* of 'Geneva', 'we must live together in a family of brothers and sisters which Christ has founded in his blood; and with very hostility he gives the opportunity to resist hostility' (Calvin in Busch 2007:74).

To resist hostility *homo sympatheticus* should display Christian compassion as founded and determined by the *passio Dei*. In a practical theological approach to paranoid xenophobia, pastoral caregiving is actually a kind of humane *perichoresis* – the display of mercy within the in-between of xenophobia and *xenodochia*.

The Christian poet Lactantius (in Davies 2001:235), who lived from the 3rd to the 4th century, linked the concept of compassion, *misericordia*, to the notion of *humanitas*. He viewed compassion as a corporate strength granted by God (*hunc pietatis adfectum*) in order that humankind can show kindness to others, love them and cherish them, protecting them from all dangers and coming to their aid (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35). Compassion thus creates a bond in human society and displays human dignity. '*Humanitas* is to be displayed to those who are "suitable" and "unsuitable" alike, and "this is done humanely (*humane*) when it is done without hope on reward"' (Lactantius in Davies 2001:35).

The notion of *humanitas* in the notion of *homo sympatheticus* is an anthropological explication of the theological paradigm of *oiktirmos*.

For the rabbis in the Jewish tradition the compassion and creativity of God were modalities of the divine presence in the world (Davies 2001:243). Compassion displayed an active and historical presence with and for Israel, serving in the formation of a holy

fellowship of people who would be mindful of the covenant and reverently honour his name and faithful promises (Davies 2001):

As the signifier of a divine quality which can apply also to human relationships, the root *rhm* has much in common with the noun *hesed*, which denotes the fundamental orientation of God towards his people that grounds his compassion action. As 'loving-kindness' which is 'active, social and enduring', *hesed* is Israel's assurance of God's unfailing benevolence. (p. 243)

Conclusion

Within the context of the refugee crisis in Geneva, I have referred to Calvin's remarkable statement: 'Let a Moor or a barbarian come among us' (in Busch 2007:75). This very bold statement redefined the ecclesial structures of being the church within the civil societal dynamics of Geneva. Calvin installed the office of *diakonia* in order to reach out to the displacement crisis of refugees.

The praxis principle of *diakonia* should thus penetrate all forms of unjust societal structures. His thinking was steered by two fundamental and basic pillars for ecclesial thinking, namely, (1) the spirituality of unconditional neighbourly love and (2) the theological notion of God as a compassionate father. Instead of 'iron philosophy' he applied a 'compassionate theology'. The ecclesiology in Geneva was an ecclesiology of 'welcoming strangers'. Instead of stereotyping the refugee, they should be personified again. The refugee should be treated as a unique human being and not as representative of a cultural category, race or religion (Bauman 2016:125). The church should thus, be a safe haven, a home, for displaced strangers.

An ecclesiology of *xenodochia* is about the impact of the *passio Dei* on the structures of the fellowship of believers (*koinonia*). The *passio Dei*, in its connection to the praxis of God, defines 'practice' in pastoral and practical theology as compassionate 'being with'. The *passio Dei* expresses the being quality of God as connected to human vulnerability and suffering (Esser 1976:598). The verb *splanchnizomai* is used to make the unbounded mercy of God visible by means of the unqualified praxis of hospitality and *diakonia*.


When interpreting the refugee dilemma through the lens of Calvin, the passion and mercy of God, overrules all forms of cultural prejudice and paranoiac fear. Deeper than our fear (*xenophobia*) are the theological principles which mean to be gracious to all. One can say that *xenophilia* overcomes resistance and prejudice. The inclusivity of grace alone reforms and transforms all forms of exclusive, fearful paranoia: it should serve as the motivating factor in civil societal engagements. Processes of democratisation should thus be supplemented by the theological and praxis principle in an ecclesiology of home, namely *perichoresis* [to make room] for. An ecclesiology of home is in fact a variant of

perichoresis, translated as 'rotation' or 'a going around'. An ecclesiology of *perichoresis* refers to the omnipresence of God as he 'intersects' with all creation and with all human beings. *Perichoresis* is to my mind the theological justification for a 'spiritual humanism' that embodies the inhabitable presence of the Spirit enfolded as human dignity by means of a hospitable *habitus* of unconditional love.

■ Summary: Chapter 8

The displacement crisis of refugees and migrants all over the globe brought about a crisis of home and place, as well as a stigmatising crisis of paranoiac fear: The fear of the other – the other as threatening intruder and cultural stranger (xenophobia). It opens anew the debate on the interplay between ideological thinking and praxis engagement. In this regard, the notion of Calvinism is critically assessed. Xenophobia challenges ideas regarding human dignity and human rights. It also challenges practical theological thinking to revisit ecclesial practices. It is argued that Calvin's emphasis on passion in wisdom thinking and the Christian virtue of indiscriminating neighbourly love, as well as his emphasis on civil, diakonic actions for the Geneva refugee dilemma, could help practical theological thinking to move from impassibility (iron thinking) to passion thinking (compassionate 'being with'); thus, the theological focus on a theopaschitic approach. With reference to the refugee dilemma (hospitable welcoming or isolating resistance) an ecclesial approach of *xenodochia* is proposed. In this regard, 'Christian humanism' should inform wisdom thinking in a practical theology of home within the migrant dilemma of displacement.

Hermeneutics and ethics. The quest for a ‘biblical ethic’

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Introduction

The concept ‘biblical ethic’ has become a highly contentious issue in current theological discourse due to the vast array of new hermeneutical theories that emerged over the past two centuries and especially over the past five decades. Hermeneutics, in the words of Thiselton (2009:1), ‘explores how we read, understand, and handle texts, especially those written in another time or context of life different from our own’. Hermeneutical research since Schleiermacher and Heidegger, the higher criticism of the various schools of thought in the 19th century with its rationalist and positivist approach, and Bultmann’s influential model to ‘demythologize’ Scripture all stimulated new hermeneutical approaches in the understanding of Scripture (see Bultmann 1967; Dunn 2003:65; Thiselton 2009:124ff; Van der Walt 1962). These approaches have manifested in the emergence of historical criticism

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(see Barton 1998:9), literary criticism (see Jasper 1999:21); form criticism (Bultmann 1967), the radical liberal 'theology of secularism and the death of God' (Altizer 1966; Cox 1965; Hamilton 1966; Vahanian 1961); the contextualism of liberation theologies (Fierro 1977); and the contemporary postmodernist paradigm (post-structuralism) (see Carrol 1999:50; Thiselton 2009:185–305). Late 20th century philosophers such as Gadamer (1976) Ricoeur (1981) and Derrida (1997; 2004) debated, from different angles, communication theory and the quest for deconstruction of language, the function of context in the interpretation of texts and the role of subjectivity and prejudgement in understanding. Influential nowadays is the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', a phrase coined by Ricoeur (1981:6–8, 34) in his notorious discussions of the challenges posed by the science of interpretation and the role of ideology (see also Herholdt 1998:451; Stewart 1989:296). The various theories of interpretation in the development of hermeneutics are accepted by many contemporary theologians and can be seen in their questioning the plausibility of the classic Reformed notion of the divine authority and inspiration of Scripture, as well as the Barthian idea of a biblical theology based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ (Barth 1932:114).⁵¹ Owing to their philosophical understandings of the preconditions for interpretations of Scripture and their strong emphasis on decontextualising the text, they question the feasibility of a 'biblical ethic' for a modern society (see Desilet 2009:152; Knight 2003:311).

This investigation does not enter into an explanation of these theories. However, it is fair to state that some of the contemporary theories of interpretation that emanated from the discourses mentioned are exceptionally critical of the notion, as confessed in many Christian ecclesiastical traditions, that Scripture is a holy divine text inspired by the Holy Spirit. As a result, these theories also question the relevance of a 'biblical ethic' applicable to all times and societies and the notion that Scripture provides authoritative ethical norms for modern-day ethical questions. Supporters of these theories regard the notion of an 'ethic of the Bible' as outdated because 'biblical norms' are deemed as timebound and embedded in cultural, religious and philosophical contexts. 'Biblical ethic' can only be relevant if it is reduced to morality of the pre-Easter historical Jesus as he expressed ethical codes in the Sermon on the Mount and in his own lifestyle of love, humaneness and altruism. The movement that defined itself as the 'New Reformation' in South Africa is a vocal exponent of this idea of Christian morality (see Muller 2002; Van Wyk 2003). Other scholars regard the idea of marriage as a biblical tradition from the premise of a 'hermeneutic of suspicion'. Marriage has been conventionally seen as an institution of God, but these scholars regard it as invalid because in their view marriage is merely a social construct, determined by culture and context (see Dreyer 2008). The view of marriage as a creational institution of God and a monogamous

51. The variety of hermeneutical approaches in doing theology also become clear in the survey by Hays [1996:207] where he describes and discusses the hermeneutic approaches of Niebuhr, Barth, Yoder, Hauerwas and Schüssler Fiorenza. Even among these eminent ethicists the theories of biblical interpretation differ although they are doing theology in well-known theological and ecclesiastical traditions.

heterosexual union, was according to this viewpoint, feasible in certain times in history, but can no longer be considered as a model for marriage today. According to this approach, alternative forms of a marital relation, such as cohabitation and civil unions between gay couples, are ethically acceptable as long as they are not destructive or harmful in nature.

The same line of thought can also be observed in the ethical debate approaches pertaining to pro-choice and the legal termination of pregnancies, the propagation of active euthanasia on request and the need for moral limitations on stem cell research and genetic manipulation. Instead of relying on biblical ethical norms, ethical guidelines are drawn from secular philosophical ethics such as the views expressed by various scholars in the publication by Gruen, Grabel and Singer (2007), as well as modern-day interpretations of constitutional bills of human rights. Furthermore, broader theological topics such as the kingship of Christ, believers' sanctification by the Holy Spirit, the concept of original sin and the total depravity of humankind, the judgement of God and his renewal of all things, are under scrutiny in liberal theology. These criticisms have a direct impact on the biblical ethical discourse as well. It must be conceded that among the parameters of traditional Christianity and postmodernism lie a broad range of ideas and not all of them result in the same extreme criticisms of a 'biblical ethic'. However, it is clear that the theory of 'biblical ethic' is under immense pressure in theology today due to the emerging hermeneutics of suspicion.

The question in Christian ethics today is therefore in the words of Hays (1996:207): What interpretive strategies should we adopt to allow these ancient texts to continue speaking 19 hundred years after their composition? Furthermore, the scholar in ethics can ask: Can the Christian ethicist still speak of a 'biblical ethic' that is relevant for and applicable to contemporary life with its wide variety of macro-ethical problems? This chapter attempts to argue the case for a relevant biblical ethic in light of the abovementioned criticism of the concept due to the hermeneutics of suspicion. The central theoretical argument is that the idea of a 'biblical ethic' is plausible and intelligible and that such an ethic can provide valuable norms that can be applied effectively to the moral development of society. The assumption of this study is the confession of the divine authority of Scripture as expressed in the various creeds formulated in the classic Reformed tradition and which were advocated by prominent Reformed theologians such as Barth (1932), Bavinck (1895), Berkhouwer (1967) and Van den Brink and Van der Kooi (2012). This suggestion does, on the one hand, not resort to a fundamentalist or literalist interpretation of Scripture, and on the other hand refrains from devaluating Scripture to a mere historical text without any divine authority. This research aims to defend a hermeneutical model that holds the idea of 'biblical ethic' in high esteem and that can be utilised to develop a biblical ethic for modern-day society to deal effectively and convincingly with the challenges of this time and age. This model can be termed 'hermeneutics of trust'.

Although the approach of this research is from a classic Reformed perspective, various moral teachings of other Christian traditions are also taken into consideration. The starting

point is the question of whether and how the human being can know God and the answers given to this fundamental question by Augustine, Aquinas and Calvin. These exponents claimed that God revealed himself to human beings and this revelation is discernible in his works of Creation and in his written Word. For Augustine, it was work and Word, for Aquinas it was natural law, tradition and Word and for Calvin it was the book of nature and the written Word. The chapter revisits the distinction made by Calvin with the aim to reaffirm and apply the classic Reformed confession of the authority of Scripture as the basis for acceptable and suitable hermeneutics for biblical ethic today.

■ The 'book of nature'

The idea of humankind's ability to know God is distinctly expressed in various Reformed confessions. One of these expressions can be found in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession, which reads (Beeke & Ferguson 1999):

We know him by two means: first, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely, his power and divinity, as the apostle Paul saith, Romans 1:20. All which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse. Secondly, he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by his holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to his glory and our salvation. (p. 8)

This formulation is based on Calvin's view of the general revelation of God. God reveals himself to humankind in the book of nature (*Inst.* 3.1.9). According to Calvin, God expressed this knowledge in his common goodness to all people by giving all people certain creational gifts, such as a moral sense and a religious inclination (*semen religiones*). He did not use the term 'creational gifts', but the term is a distinct summary of his position on the knowledge of God gained from his general revelation. He entertained this idea with many expressions. According to Witte (2007:59), Calvin used a variety of terms to describe this moral law, such as 'the voice of nature'; 'the engraven law'; 'the law of nature'; 'the natural law'; 'the inner mind'; 'the rule of equity'; 'the natural sense'; 'the sense of divine judgement'; 'the testimony of the heart'; 'the inner voice'; amongst other terms. To prove his point, Calvin referred to the profane authors and contends that the manner in which they explored the truth proves that they too were recipients of the abundant blessings God extended to depraved humankind (*Inst.* 2.2.15). All people therefore receive creational gifts as a result of the common goodness of God (see also Leith 1989:184).

With the term 'natural law' Calvin did not refer to a law outside the grace of God that can bestow on humans the light of reason or a moral law situated in the human mind independent of God. He simply intended to state that humans can see the works of God in Creation and that they possess a natural moral sense of right and wrong. Natural law,

as he entertained the idea, should not be confused with the modern notion of natural theology, which entails that humans can develop a theology based on the natural order of things. Barth reminds us that such a conclusion would be an erroneous interpretation of Calvin's view (Brunner & Barth 1946). Welker (2014) also contends that morality cannot flow from a natural law, because all morals come from God and nature in itself is flawed due to the influence of sin (see also Douma 1973).

In Reformed theology nowadays, the classic Reformed concept of natural law as a source knowledge of God and of ethical decision-making has been revisited and commended by many scholars despite Barth's rejection of the concept in response to the natural theology of the Reichskirche in Nazi Germany. In this respect, the new appreciation of the concept in the works of Grabill (2006), VanDrunen (2010, 2014) and Witte (2007) can be mentioned. Concerning this new interest, Arner (2016) comments:

Paul Ramsey proposes to *renew, reshape* and *redirect* the natural law, while Ian Ramsey aspires to *rehabilitate* it, Frederick Carney to *revive* it, John Macquire to *rethink* it, Arthur Holmes to *reform* it, Nigel Biggar to *reapproach* it; John Bowlin to *reinterpret* it, Carl Braaten to *reclaim* it, J. Daryl Charles and Alister McGrath to *retrieve* it, various Lutherans to *reappraise* it; several evangelicals to *reconsider* it, and David VanDrunen to *recover* and to *reform* it. (p. 2)

This quotation underscores the current popularity of the concept 'natural theology' in Reformed and evangelical theological circles.

Natural law, as the concept is used in current Reformed theological discourse as described above, is embedded in the concept of general revelation. God's general revelation to all people provides a way of acquiring knowledge of God, although this knowledge is insufficient for redemption in Christ. Various Reformed scholars have explained the idea of general revelation and its relation with common grace (see Bavinck 1908; Berkhof 1958, 1986; Berkhouwer 1951; Van den Brink & Van der Kooi 2012). Natural law entails that God revealed himself to all humankind in such a way as to enable them to have a sense of religion and morality. All people receive creational gifts from God in order to keep society from falling into total chaos. Non-believers are also talented and can make good laws and bring forward noble and just principles and beautiful works of art. However, they cannot use the creational gifts of general revelation, common grace and natural law to earn or claim the redemptive grace of God. The way to redemption can only be found in God's particular revelation in the gospel. Knowledge of redemption can only be acquired by God's revelation in his written Word, which is the gospel of Christ.

General revelation makes it possible for natural scientists to study God's works of Creation in nature. Astrology, physics, chemistry, archaeology and all other sciences enable humans to discover the beauty of God's work in Creation and can empower scientists to make new discoveries for the benefit of human life and the care for the environment. In Creation, in the development of culture, in art, in scientific achievements, in human endeavours to bring forward the noble, the just, the truth and the beauty,

people can see God and know him as the Almighty, the provider and the keeper of all Creation. From the moral law, flowing from God's general revelation, as a set of morals coming from God, people can define moral norms to live a life of stability and order. In this respect the light of reason, tradition and experience can be recognised as a source for ethical decision-making (see Greggs 2013:202; Hays 1996:209). That is the reason why all people can uphold morality. General revelation as a source of morality is the foundation for the moral development of humanity.

The 'book of nature' has to be re-established as a hermeneutical tool in Reformed ethics. Hermeneutics that fail to excavate this rich concept will be incapable of learning from and being enriched by the findings of natural sciences and arts and will deprive Christian ethics from a rich source of moral directives in the modern world.

■ The 'written Word'

The written Word of God is, according to the Belgic Confession, the Scripture that has been given to people to be their light and power to convince and convert sinners, to comfort and build up believers unto salvation (Ac 18:28, 20:32; Heb 4:12; Jas 1:18; Ps 19:7-9; Rm 15:4) (Larger Westminster Catechism in Beeke & Ferguson 1999:11).⁵² But how should one view Scripture? The answer to this question is important, because how Scripture is viewed determines the Christian ethical theory, and subsequently also the norms for moral conduct one can use in the world today. The view of Scripture determines the theory of interpretation (hermeneutics) and the theory of interpretation determines the Christian morality. In the classic Reformed tradition, Scripture is seen as a record and explanation of divine revelation, which is both complete (*sufficiency*) and comprehensible (*perspicuous*). In other words, Scripture as a whole contains all one needs to know in this world to be guided in the way of salvation, service and moral conduct. Since then certain deviations from this traditional point have occurred as has been explained earlier in this chapter. On the one hand, higher criticism introduced a dynamic theory of inspiration, which entails that Scripture can be seen as a masterful historical document – high on the list of the world's great sacred literature (see Spykman 1992:122; Wilkens & Padgett 2000:87). But Scripture is, according to this view, not a document with divine authority. It remains a human product written by many authors over many centuries, living in different historical and cultural contexts with different and often conflicting purposes and elevated to a divine text by the early church. To come to the

52. See also in the same volume the interpretations of this view in the 'Shorter Westminster Confession' [1647], Q 2-3; the 'Westminster Confession of Faith' [1647], art., 1-10; the 'Canons of Dordt' [1619], head I, art. 3, head II, art. 5, head III and IV, art. 8 17 and head V, art. 14; the 'Second Helvetic Confession' [1566] art., 1-5; the 'Heidelberg Catechism' [1566], Q 19-22, 98; and the 'Belgic Confession' [1561], art. 3-7.

deeper meaning of Scripture this school of thought proposes a reduction of the biblical teachings to a set of core values for Christian life according to the life of the pre-Easter historical Jesus. These values are seen as the ideals outlined especially in the 'Sermon on the Mount' and other moral teachings of Jesus. This view of Scripture is still very influential and resulted in various different movements in Christian ethics such as, for example, solar ethics (Cupitt 1999:225), postmodern ethics and situation ethics (see Thiselton 2009:124).

The divine authority of Scripture cannot be proven scientifically in the positivistic sense of the word. The acceptance of the Scripture as the Word of God, is a step in faith just as many axioms in evolutionary biology and physics, such as the acceptance of the notion of 'by chance' in evolutionary development. The acknowledgement of the divine authority of Scripture as the foundation of doing theology and ethics cannot be regarded as invalid, as claimed by the modernist view on science and scientific methodologies. In his lengthy survey of hermeneutical theories over the centuries Thiselton (2009:350) concludes that God inspired Scripture in his way through the Holy Spirit. The postmodern epistemology since Kuhn (1970) and Lyotard (1991; 2004) provides credence for a position of faith as a paradigm and an angle of approach in doing science. Gill (1997:17) reminds us that the notion of secular, purely rational progress implicit in much of the Enlightenment tradition has become increasingly implausible. The self-evidence of Scripture has subsequently become an important argument in proclaiming its divine authority. The concept 'hermeneutics of trust' has become a valid point of departure as a result of the post-structuralist view of science.

Scripture itself proclaims to be the written Word of God (1 Tm 3:16). In view of this biblical passage and others Leith (1993:272) and Stott (1995:88) describe Scripture as God's self-disclosure and as a divine autobiography. They explain that in Scripture the subject and object are identical, for in it God is speaking about God. He made himself known progressively in the rich variety of his being, such as creator, sustainer, the Covenant God of Abraham, the gracious God and the righteous God. In the New Testament, he reveals himself as the Father of Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit, as the God of the new covenant community, namely the church, and as the God of the final victory of his kingdom. With reference to Calvin, Leith (1993:272) also defends the Reformed view by claiming that Scripture is self-authenticating. Scripture exhibits fully as clear evidence of its own truth as white and black things do of their colour, or sweet or bitter things do of their taste.

The inspiration of Scripture is not a dynamic process as higher criticism proclaims, but is organic. The idea of the organic inspiration of Scripture was defined by the Dutch systematic theologian Bavinck (1895) in his criticism against the higher criticism of the 19th century. Since then the concept was further developed by Berkhouwer and his school of thought (see Berkhouwer 1967; Berkhouwer & Van der Woude 1969; Van den

Brink & Van der Kooi 2012). The organic inspiration theory entails that God used humans to write down the words of Scripture. In this process he made use of the languages of antiquity, various cultural backgrounds and social conditions. Biblical material must thus be used and applied as it emerges from its specific historical context (Thiselton 2015:12). The biblical writers wrote in the metaphors of their time and age, which traverses many centuries, using the literary contributions of their legal, social and religious structures and customs (see Vanhoozer 2013:30). This reality necessitates that the modern-day exegete has to understand the cultural, social and linguistic issues of the scriptural message. This does not mean a complete 'demythologising' as Bultmann and his school proposed, but a thorough grammatical historical reading of the text with a clear excavation of the literary forms, grammatical structures and meaning from the social and cultural historic influences. By way of such a grammatical historic process the ethical norms given by God to humans can be excavated and formulated for the moral development of humankind. These norms, when thoroughly extracted from Scripture, are then not time bound, but applicable to all cultural and historical situations.

The belief in the organic inspiration of Scripture must be distinguished from what can be defined as a mechanical inspiration of Scripture, which is evident in Christian fundamentalist movements. This distinction between 'organic' and 'mechanic' inspiration may have certain limitations, but remains useful in the identification of the view of divine inspiration that is used in the classic Reformed theories of interpretation. As explained above, the theory of 'organic inspiration' acknowledges the role of humans and their cultural historical context in the evolution of the biblical text. God used humans with their skills, cultural environment, own personalities, questions and spiritual inclinations to write down the divine revelation in such a way that the message reveals the redemptive plan of God. Therefore, in the process of understanding the biblical text, the modern-day exegete must take note of this human element of the written Word of God.

The theory of mechanical inspiration, on the contrary, disregards this human element and proclaims that God used people as instruments without the contribution of their human circumstances. Therefore, Scripture is verbally inspired, inerrant and in toto the source of principles and norms applicable to modern-day life. On account of this theory, conservative fundamentalists, as this movement is defined by Barr (1981, 2001; Marsden 1991), usually limit their hermeneutical principles to the 'verbal inspiration' and 'inerrancy' of Scripture. Their point of departure is a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture and they appreciate the divine inspiration as a verbal inspiration that entails the inspiration of every detail of the original text (Fretheim 2001:715). They utilise this mechanical inspiration theory that rejects the human element in the recording of the written text. They disregard the cultural and historical background as well as the importance of the genre of the text and the relevance of the unfolding revelation history on the text. They use the biblical text in a 'proof-text' manner and believe that every text has a bearing on modern-day life as a 'divine command'.

An expression more often used to describe this mean of biblical interpretation is 'biblicism'. According to Ritschl (1999:255), this term is commonly used to denote a particular way of dealing with the Bible, especially the expectation that Scripture can be transposed directly into modern thought and forms or lifestyles. In his thorough study on the ethical meaning of the Ten Commandments in modern society, Douma (1996:363) also warns against the dangers of biblicism for the understanding and application of Christian ethics. By biblicism he understands that appeal to Scripture which uses the biblical texts in an atomistic (isolated) way by lifting them out of their immediate contexts or out of the whole context of Scripture. Biblicism is characterised by its neglect of the difference in circumstances between then (the time in which the texts being cited were written) and now. It may be a more suitable term to use in the description of the 'mechanic inspiration' theory than the concept fundamentalism, because fundamentalism is used in a positive and negative sense in diverse ecclesiastical traditions.

Many examples of biblicist interpretation can be mentioned, such as:

- The belief that the cosmos was created in 6 days of 24 h and that history is calculable according to the time frames provided in the Old Testament. This view disregards the results of paleontological and other scientific research completely.
- The belief that any form of international political or economic alliances run against the kingdom of God. This belief was eminent in the biblicist's rejection of the League of Nations, which is seen as a sign of the anti-Christian world empire as described in the prophesies of the book of Revelation (Ruotsila 2003:594).
- The justification of capital punishment with an appeal to Genesis 9:5–6 (see Vorster 2004:129).
- The belief that women should be submissive in church and society.
- The instruction to women to wear a veil during worship services on account of 1 Corinthians 11:5 and the exclusion of women from the ecclesiastical offices on account of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 and 1 Timothy 2:11 and 12 as signs of their submissiveness to men.
- The rejection of the legality of nationalising land with an appeal to Ahab's stealing of Naboth's vineyard (1 Ki 21).
- The justification of a policy of land restitution according to the Jubilee in the Old Testament (Vorster 2006:690).
- The justification of the use of violence in political liberation with an appeal to the exodus in the Old Testament.
- The establishment of an ethic for Sundays on account of the Sabbath in the Old Testament.

Many more examples of biblicist interpretation that became sacred ethical principles for many Christians and influenced their lifestyles and conduct deeply can be mentioned. Biblicist interpretations have also been exploited by politics to 'sacralise' a certain political

position or policy, such as the approval of slavery in the past and the application of apartheid in South Africa.

Just as the hermeneutics of suspicion lead to a surge in secularist thought, resurging religious extremism due to biblicism is also evident in certain movements in Christianity. This extremism feeds on the theory of mechanical inspiration. The classic Reformed theory of interpretation should refrain from both the dynamic and the mechanic views of the inspiration of Scripture. The organic idea of inspiration produces a theory of interpretation that takes the text of Scripture seriously, but will recognise the importance of the social, cultural and linguistic context of the biblical revelation and the need to take them into account in the process of exegesis. The theory of 'organic inspiration' is extremely advantageous in the development of a biblical ethics.

■ The history of revelation

The classic Reformed view of Scripture does not view Scripture as an inconsistent compendium of independent narratives that took place in various periods and situations. Irrespective of chronological and historical differences in the dating of biblical texts and contrasting historical facts, there is still a 'consent of the parts'. This consent lies not in chronology or a logic sequence of explanation and events, but in a theological unity. Scripture contains the continuing unfolding of the revelation of God, irrespective of chronology and the dating of the various books in Scripture. Therefore, the full range of canonical witnesses must be listened to when formulating biblical moral codes (see Hays 1996:310). The unfolding revelation is enriched by the different genres of material such as historical material, prophecies, wisdom literature and the books of the laws. This theological unity has been described by various scholars with different names such as *'Heilsgeschichte'* [salvation history], biblical theology and revelation history (see Barth 1961:136; Ciampa 2007:254; Cullmann 1948:147; Reuman 2005:833). This chapter uses the concept of revelation history because this idea explains the way in which God educates his people about his reign and the way of the renewal of his creation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Biblical revelation in the Old Testament reiterates by way of the meanings of feasts, sacrifices, holy actions and holy places, psalms, wisdom literature, ceremonial laws and historical events the promise of the coming of the Messiah who will establish the renewed relation of God with his people and his creation (see Vriezen 1966). The point of departure is therefore the unity of revelation in Scripture irrespective of the diversity in histories and narratives as these are explained by Goldingay (2006:170). This approach relates to what Van den Brink and Van der Kooi (2012:501) define as the 'theological interpretation of Scripture' – a theory of interpretation that is, in their view, growing to a productive movement in contemporary hermeneutics.

The history of revelation can be both historic and thematic. In the continuous unfolding of the revelation of God, various topics (themes) are developed. Bright (1980:7) is of the opinion that the whole revelation flows into the overarching theme of the kingdom of God. His view is worthwhile to entertain. It is clear that the kingdom was the essence of the preaching of Christ (Lk 4:43) and he instructed his disciples to preach the kingdom (Lk 9:6). The phrase 'kingdom of God' does not occur in the Old Testament, but the substance to which it refers is clearly visible. It becomes visible in the continuous preaching of the reign of God and in his intention to renew creation through redemption in Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Vriezen 1966:146; Welker 2013:211). The idea of the constant reign of God in communion with people constitutes the unity of the theology of the Old Testament. The idea of the reign of God is also a basic message of the New Testament (Van der Walt 1962:37). In the New Testament, several different expressions can be found describing the kingdom of God. These are: Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 2; 3; 4:17, 5:19, 18:1, 18:4); Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33; Lk 12:31; Mk 1:14); Kingdom of Christ (Lk 22:30; Col 1:13); Kingdom of God and of Christ (Eph 5:5); Kingdom (1 Cor 15:24; Jes 2:5; Rv 1:9) and Kingdom of the Father (Mt 13:43; 26:29; Lk 12:32).

All of these expressions are attempts to explain the reign of the triune God. Therefore one can conclude that the concept 'reign of God' can be looked upon as the first and foremost characteristic of the biblical idea of the kingdom of God. This kingdom is revealed by way of the history of the people of God. As said earlier, the Old Testament proclaims the reality of the reign of God over the whole of Creation (Vriezen 1966). The New Testament proclaims the reign of God as it becomes manifest in the coming of Christ and the formation of the people of God (Beasley-Murray 1987:20; Guthrie 1981:419; Ridderbos 1950:47; Van der Walt 1962:32). The reign of God is both a present and a future reality. Küng (1992:56) calls this a futurist-presentist eschatology (see also the discussion of Ladd 1961:25 and Welker 2013:209). This reign has already been manifested in principle in the coming, life, suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, but it will only be revealed in its completeness in the new heaven and earth. The whole biblical history of the covenant is an indication of the historical reality of the kingdom. Some of the teachings of Jesus point to the kingdom as a present reality, and others to the kingdom as a future reality. However, these expressions are not contradictory. Conzelman (1976:114) argues persuasively that the two have the same significance for human existence.

The term futurist-presentist eschatology was actually used by Küng as a description of the reign of God, which erupts into the present, takes on power in the present and is fulfilled and completed in Jesus. Moltmann (1965:22) did not use this terminology, but he entertained the same idea. He maintains that Christianity stands and falls with the reality of Jesus' resurrection from the dead by God and his vindication over the powers of this earth. With this event the kingdom of God came near as a new reality in world history, but it will reach its completeness in the future. It is at the same time a reality and a promise.

It is here (present), but will reach its fulfilment with the end of human history (see also Ridderbos 1950). Moltmann (2012:37) argues that eschatology should therefore be defined as a transformative eschatology and that the present reign of God cuts deep into the ills of society. He contends that salvation of the kingdom, because of the presentist reign of God, takes effect in the struggle for economic justice, human dignity, solidarity against the alienation of human beings and the struggle for hope against despair in individual life.

The reign of God as a present reality finds concrete expression in the coming and teaching of Christ. Welker (2013:209) deals with this issue in depth in his recent publication. He indicates that through Jesus Christ and the power of the divine Spirit, God's reign reveals the loving, preserving, salvific and uplifting activity of the Creator and the triune God. Over and against the notion of understanding God's revelation in Christ in the power of the Spirit from the perspective of 'Creation' and 'Creator', he posits that the resurrected and exalted Christ is not present apart from the Holy Spirit and that it is through the divine Spirit that he includes his witness in his post-Easter life. The reign of Christ is executed in his threefold office or the threefold 'gestalt' of the reign of Christ.⁵³ This threefold gestalt of the reign of Christ generates the power of the Spirit, the formation of the church and Christian action in public life. The threefold office of Christ therefore constitutes the organic relationship between his reign in concrete realistic terms in the public sphere (Welker 2013:247).⁵⁴ Moltmann (2012) and Welker (2013) indicate how the constant revelation of the reign of God determines modern-day Christian ethical thinking.

But within the overarching character of the kingdom of God and the centrality of the reign of God in Christ and the Holy Spirit, other topics (themes) are also uncovered in the continuous revelation history, irrespective of chronological historical inconsistencies and the different genres of biblical material. The following themes can be mentioned: Creation, the Fall and redemption; election and the liberation of the people of God; regeneration; the covenant and its continuous renewal; promise and fulfilment; life out of death; judgement and forgiveness; destruction and construction; God's providence and human responsibility; sin; redemption and gratitude; the calling of the church; human relations; vulnerability, compassion to the poor and the destitute; the spiritual gifts and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. All these ideas, and others, are however, embedded in the reign of God and his dynamic rule over Creation and specifically over his people and the eventual triumph of Christ in and through the cosmic work of the Holy Spirit.

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53. Welker [2013] prefers to speak of the 'threefold office' rather than the 'three offices of Christ' because the offices interpenetrate each other and are thus perichoretically connected.

54. Welker [2013:247] notes, 'Christ's royal office or the royal gestalt of God's reign both inside and outside of churches exhibits an unstoppable dynamic; a grand current of what individually are often quite inconspicuous deeds of free, creative self-withdrawal, love, acceptance, loving concern, and forgiveness sets into motion enormous emergent processes and developments.'

The Christian ethical discourse must take account of this continuous and thematic revelation of God within the framework of his reign as it is manifested in the above-mentioned themes in order to formulate ethical norms. Scriptural passages must always be interpreted in the light of the totality of the revelation as Kaiser and Da Silva (1994:193) contend. Scripture as a whole must speak. In such a way, the critique of liberal theology on the concept 'biblical ethic' and the implausible proof-text methods of biblicism can be avoided and replaced with a biblical ethic based on a theological interpretation of Scripture that can stand the test of time and can address the current challenges of macro-ethical questions.

The hermeneutics of revelation theology open up other possibilities in that the ethicist should distinguish between higher and lower principles and between the relevance of descriptive and prescriptive biblical material.

■ Higher principles

In spite of the consistent biblical revelation of the reign of God as it manifests in all the other topics that have been mentioned, the biblical ethicist should also distinguish between essential and non-essential ethical norms, or as Dreyer and Van Aarde (2007:641) indicate: higher and lower principles. They contend that the love of Christ should be seen as the highest principle and the canon behind the canon. Jesus himself summarised the Decalogue in the Great Commandment and this teaching resonates in the Apostles, especially in the writings of John. The ethic of the kingdom of God is in essence, an ethic of love. From this point of departure Jesus taught his followers to love the enemy; to accommodate the outcasts; to take care of the aliens; to forgive the sinners; to take special care of children; and to promote reconciliation. This principle overarches other norms regarding labour relations, marriage and divorce and social life. A norm finds its fulfilment and rich application when it ultimately answers to the commandment of love.

Other higher principles can also be named. One is the honour of God. Human action is moral only when it honours God. Justice that is not executed to honour God is injustice. Therefore, Christian ethics should always take a stand against human oppression, structures that impoverish people, corruption, unrighteousness, dishonesty, infidelity and blasphemy. Furthermore, human dignity founded in humankind's creation in the image of God can be regarded as a higher principle in the arrangement of human relations (see Vorster 2007:3). The principle of human dignity abolishes all forms of patriarchy and androcracy in marriage, the church and social institutions. Although Scripture does not explicitly reject slavery, the higher principle of human dignity clearly implies that slavery cannot be tolerated. The same is true of inequality, discrimination, child abuse, and all other forms of inhuman conduct and treatment.

Other higher principles that can be identified are, amongst others, reconciliation, holiness, sexual morality, forgiveness, humaneness, self-discipline, responsibility and accountability, sharing, humility, self-restraint, self-denial, altruism and servanthood. Issues such as capital punishment, corporal punishment, retribution, restoration, divorce and remarriage, land restitution, racial relations, education of children and family relations should be evaluated in view of these, and other, higher principles and not solved on the basis of selected proof texts that may seem to address these issues on the basis of a mere literal reading of Scripture.

Related to this principle of biblical interpretation in the field of ethics is the distinction that should be made between descriptive and prescriptive material.

■ Descriptive and prescriptive material

The reader of Scripture in search of moral norms should clearly distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive material in the ongoing revelation of God. What is described in Scripture, such as historical events, social structures (such as slavery and polygamy), customs and ordinary actions of people, should not be perceived as moral instructions. The invasion of the Promised Land, although on the instruction of God, is not a blueprint for colonialism. The portrayal of the widespread practice of slavery cannot be regarded as a justification of slavery, nor can the action of Phineas as described in Numbers 25:1–18 be understood as a model of religious terrorism as Cliteur (2010b:107) invalidly argues in his criticism of biblical morality regarding religious extremism (see also Cliteur 2010a:235). The same is true of the various descriptions of violent acts by God's children in the name of religion or truth. The description of polygamy and the many descriptions concerning the wives of the husband and his treatment of women slaves is not a justification of adultery or of polygamy as it still occurs in certain African cultures. The same is true of the Old Testament instructions dealing with a healthy lifestyle and practices or worship.

The conduct of the first Christian churches are, in Reformed circles, often hailed as models for liturgy and church polity. In this respect also, the ethicist should distinguish between what the narrative in Scripture describes and what is prescribed. What is prescribed is the matter of worship and evangelism, what is described is how this was done in a certain situation. The prescription should be embedded in a modern form of conduct applicable to modern standards. Here again the morals derived from the history of revelation and the various topics under the overarching message of the reign of God provide the tools that can be used to design a 'biblical ethic' for today. Prescriptions are found in the synecdoche character of the Decalogue in view of the ethic of love as revealed by the reign of God. These prescriptions must be validated by the themes in Scripture and not by narratives and 'proof texts' alone.

Lastly, the focus moves to ethical theory. Deontological ethics and virtue ethics are considered.

■ Deontological and virtue ethics

A biblical ethic is deontological in nature because it is derived from a religious text that can be studied and applied. Christians do not have to adhere to a moral law settled in the reason of humans. God revealed himself to humans and his will for the people of his kingdom is discernible in his revelation in the book of nature and his written Word. Biblical morality flows from the prescriptions of Scripture as these can be excavated by the hermeneutical tools as described above with the ongoing revelation at the heart of the process of understanding. The theory of consequentialism is applicable in emergency situations when the moral agent has to choose between two immoral options. I have dealt with this issue extensively in another publication (see Vorster 2004:142). But in normal situations Christians have the responsibility to adhere to the 'rule of conduct' entertained in 'biblical ethic'. A biblical ethic as an ethic of the kingdom of God is therefore essentially deontological ethics.

However, at the same time Christians should take note of the recent growing interest in virtue ethics in contemporary ethics (Statman 1997:2). Secular ethics today are concerned with the development of character and even with the contribution of spiritualities in this respect. Swanton (2003:19) is a modern exponent of the current interest in virtue ethics and she defines a virtue as, 'a good quality of character, more specifically a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge, items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way'.

Arguing from a pneumatological perspective, the biblical scholar can support the emerging interest in the idea of virtue ethics. Hauerwas paves the way for a responsible Christian virtue ethics with his discussion of 'ethics of character'. He contends that, '[t]o be a Christian is to have one's character determined in accordance with God's action in Jesus Christ' (Hauerwas 2009:227). He also defines the church as a 'community of character' (Hauerwas 1981). This point of view entails that justification in Christ is enriched by the sanctification by the Spirit of God. The people living under the reign of God are indeed filled with gifts from the Spirit of God (1 Cor 12). Owing to Pentecost, they also bear the fruits of the Spirit (Gl 5). They are moral agents with a sanctified character and should live according to what they are. For this purpose, praying for the continuous fulfilment by the Spirit of God is crucial. The ethic of the kingdom as an ethic of love can rightly also be seen as an ethic of virtue based on the presence and dynamic work of the Spirit of God.

■ Conclusion

In a growing secular age the concept 'biblical ethic' is questioned. Postmodern theology endeavours to design and define new contemporary ethics which are solely founded in the presumed innate moral law of the human being and are also permeated with the vestiges of philosophical ethics over the centuries. The conclusion and new contribution of this research is that within this new postmodernist paradigm a 'biblical ethic' is still valid. The validity of a 'biblical ethic' can be founded in hermeneutics of trust which entails that Scripture is first of all perceived as the unfolding revelation of God, especially the revelation of his reign and consequences thereof for people today. The revelation, historic and thematic, presents higher ethical principles that can be applied in contemporary cultures. Moreover, Christian moral agents still have clear rules to follow and live according to their new character as people bestowed with the fruits of the spirit of God. These essentials which can be described as deontological and virtue ethics are the main ingredients of such a relevant 'biblical ethic' – also in the current postmodernist paradigm. Such an ethic can address the modern crisis in marital relations by emphasising the covenantal character of marriage. This ethic can address the ecological crisis by indicating humankind's role as servanthood regarding the protection of the integrity of creation. A biblical ethic has a direct impact on social relations and can deal with the persistent pockets of racism, xenophobia and sexism in many societies by applying the comprehensive and all-encompassing effect of the reconciliation in Christ and God's calling to respect and nurture the human dignity of all people – especially the deprived and the oppressed.

■ Summary: Chapter 9

The concept 'biblical ethic' has become a highly contentious issue in current theological discourse as a result of the vast array of modern theories of interpretation that have influenced the interpretation of Scripture. This chapter attempts to argue the case for a relevant biblical ethic against the background of the above-mentioned criticism of the concept due to the hermeneutics of suspicion. The central-theoretical argument is that the idea of 'biblical ethic' is still valid and this ethic can provide valuable norms that can be applied effectively in the moral development of modern society. In order to pursue this argument, the idea of God's revelation in the 'book of nature' and the 'written Word' is revisited. The chapter concludes that the ongoing revelation of the reign of God and the many issues included in this topic are the foundation of a relevant and applicable 'biblical ethic'. This ethic as an ethic of the kingdom of God is deontological in nature, but seen from a pneumatological perspective, also a virtue ethic. Christian moral agents today therefore still have biblical moral norms to adhere to and to live according to their new character as people bestowed with the fruits of the spirit of God.

From psalter to hymnal. Recent developments in the Reformed Churches in South Africa in the light of the principles and practices of the Reformation

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■ Introduction

In the last two decades, different synods of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) have taken important decisions with regard to singing in the church. Three decisions are far-reaching in this regard. Until 1997, the psalter of the RCSA consisted of

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versifications of the 150 canonical psalms, 48 Bible songs⁵⁵ and two hymns for use at home. In 1985, the Synod decided that new Bible songs might be added to the 48 of Prof. J.D. du Toit (Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika [GKSA] 1985:603–604). Synods since 1997 have accepted a number of new Bible songs. In 2003, the Synod decided to accept a new versification of the 150 psalms (GKSA 2003:643). In 2012, the Synod decided to amend Article 69 of the Church Order of the RCSA to allow not only psalms and Bible songs, but also hymns of which the contents are in agreement with the Bible (GKSA 2012:384). The aim of this contribution is to evaluate the developments in the official decisions of synods of the RCSA in this regard in the light of the views of the three Reformers, Zwingli, Luther and Calvin. Attention will not be given to what is sung in the churches. It is too soon to carry out a survey such as the one conducted after the acceptance of the 2001 metrical version of the psalms (cf. Van Rooy 2011).

Smelik (1997:187) describes the time of the Reformation as the period when congregations started singing again. The vernacular was introduced into worship services throughout Europe (Jasper & Bradshaw 1986:449). Obedience to the Word of God (*sola scriptura*) was one of the most important principles of the Reformation; this was especially important for the development of church music and the hymns used in the church (Boendermaker, Jansen & Mudde 2001:165). Mehrrens (1982:56) describes Luther in this regard as the singer, Calvin as the organiser and Zwingli as the instrumentalist. It is noteworthy that these three Reformers used the same Bible, but developed radically different views of church music and congregational singing (Mehrrens 1982:68).

This contribution will present a brief description of the views of these three Reformers,⁵⁶ followed by a discussion of the developments in the RCSA as approved by different synods, and an evaluation of these developments in the light of the views of Zwingli, Luther and Calvin.

■ Zwingli

Zwingli (1484–1531) was a gifted musician who used music in his own personal life, in his personal worship of God and in the education of children, but he did not allow it in public worship. His attitude can probably be related to his disapproval of the liberal use of polyphonic music in the Roman Catholic Mass (Sanchez 2012:137). Arnold (2011:221) states that Zwingli was highly regarded as a singer, lutenist, poet and composer (cf. also Den Besten 1977:75–76). Leaver (1995:155) refers to three hymns written and composed

55. In the Afrikaans psalter used by the RCSA these are known as '*Skrifberyminge*'.

56. It is not necessary for the purposes of this contribution to present biographical information on the three reformers. Recent brief discussions of their life and work can be found in Spitz 2001:69–111, 140–154 and 193–210 and, more briefly, in Kleyn and Beeke 2009:25–39, 54–59, 118–127.

by Zwingli, a so-called Plague Song, a metric version of Psalm 69 and a *Kappeler Lied*. To Zwingli, music was something to be enjoyed with friends and children, not meant for a worship service (Kurzschcnkel 1971:22).

While he was studying in Vienna, he also studied music. From 1513, he added Greek to his studies, especially Greek literature and also studied Hebrew (Ulback 1936:457, 462). According to Hambrick-Stowe (1984:338), Zwingli can be regarded as an example of Christian political engagement, which in his case eventually led to his death. He did not hesitate to take up the weapon to defend his home and his freedom (Ulback 1936:457). He also learnt about the liturgy of Ambrose, and this caused him to begin asking questions about the practices in the Catholic Church (Ulback 1936:464).

After he had joined the Reformation, Zwingli became opposed to singing in the church (Den Besten 1977:75–76). Den Besten is of the opinion that Zwingli's attitude could be the result of the resistance he experienced from others because of his interest in music (1977:79). It could also be that he did not really have a high regard for the singing of the people in the church (Kurzschcnkel 1971:196; Mehrtens 1982:65).

According to Potter (1976:105), Zwingli stated that the love of God excluded from worship services such things as processions, noisy hymns, meaningless repetitions, paintings on the walls and all kinds of ornamentation in the church. The noisy hymns can be ascribed to the primitive organs that were used in the 15th and 16th centuries and the male voices that were not well trained. To Zwingli, this kind of unedifying church music was disastrous. However, he was in favour of children singing in school (Fourie 2000:172; Leaver 1995:155). In the music school of Johannes Vogler, children sang while being instructed in the catechism.

Zwingli's views of music in the church can be dated especially to 1523, the year of many struggles in his ministry. He was convinced that even the music of the evangelical churches and the Lutheran hymns did not fit into the liturgy of services. He was opposed to the choir music and the songs of the priests in the Catholic Church. He did not express himself explicitly about the Lutheran church music from 1524 onwards (Kurzschcnkel 1971:193). It is probable that his views of music in the church were not final by the time of his premature death (Kurzschcnkel 1971:194). In this regard, Locher (1981:61) refers to a remark in Zwingli's lectures on the psalms that if a hymn is clear and easily understandable, it is indeed good and commendable.

Leaver (1995:155) wants to relate Zwingli's opposition to singing in the church to his view on the character of worship. He emphasised the internal character of worship and was not in favour of any kind of window dressing. Internal worship was to him the essence of one's faith; external rites and gesticulations concealed true worship. Kurzschcnkel (1971:196) relates Zwingli's view to a lack of insight in the importance of symbols in the cult, probably in agreement with the view of the Reformer's mentor, Erasmus.

Zwingli was of the opinion that singing in the church had to take place in the heart. He based his views on Colossians 3:16. The congregation had to be silent during prayer and to humiliate themselves in silence during services. Music could cause the attention of the congregation to deviate from the worship of God during a service (Kurzschinkel 1971:195). Preaching the Word of God was at the heart of worship services (Ulback 1936:471). Because of this point of departure, he was opposed to practices such as fasting, the celibate, the authority of the Pope, icons and all kinds of rituals. He was also opposed to the use of prescribed lectionaries (Ulback 1936:472). Nothing was allowed to distract the congregation from the focus on the Word of God. Some of his followers removed statues, images, candles and suchlike from the churches (Hambrick-Stowe 1984:337).

Arnold (2011:221) indicates that Zwingli referred to Amos 5:23, Matthew 6:6 and John 4:24 to support his view that the Word had to be proclaimed in silence. In Amos 5:23, the prophet makes it clear that the Lord does not want to listen to the noise of the people's singing and that they must put their harps away. One must remember, however, that those words were directed against the illegitimate temple services of the Northern Kingdom. Matthew 6:6 is related to private prayer. John 4:24 refers to worshipping the Lord in spirit and truth. Zwingli could not find any support in the Bible for church music and congregational singing. The congregation had to be silent and listen to the Word, with no external factors to cause their attention to stray (Arnold 2011:221; cf. also Potter 1976:121). However, he did permit antiphonal recitation of liturgical texts during services (Mehrtens 1982:55; Wit 1977:55). Not long after the time of Zwingli, congregational singing was introduced into the churches of his area (Fourie 2000:172). By the end of that century, a new hymnbook was introduced in those churches, with unison music and without accompaniment (Arnold 2011:222).⁵⁷

Leaver (1995:155) refers to the *Second Helvetic Confession* of 1566, which was written by Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich. Article 23 has a section on singing (Bullinger 1566):

SINGING. Likewise moderation is to be exercised where singing is used in a meeting for worship. That song which they call the Gregorian Chant has many foolish things in it; hence it is rightly rejected by many of our churches. If there are churches which have a true and proper sermon but no singing, they ought not to be condemned. For all churches do not have the advantage of singing. And it is well known from testimonies of antiquity that the custom of singing is very old in the Eastern Churches whereas it was late when it was at length accepted in the West. (n.p.)

Leaver (1995:155) says that this statement in the *Second Helvetic Confession* became necessary because the Genevan Psalter had a growing influence on the churches in Zurich with singing during services becoming the rule rather than the exception.

57. This was probably the *Psalter des Königlichen Propheten David* a German translation of the Genevan Psalter by Ambrosius Lobwasser, published in Leipzig in 1573. [cf. *Evangelisches Gesangbuch* 1994:957]

Zwingli was opposed to singing in the church, but this view did not prevail in the churches of the Reformation on account of the influence of Luther and Calvin.

■ Luther (1483–1546)

Luther's view on singing in the church was diametrically opposed to that of Zwingli. In a letter of 04 October 1430 (Luther 1969:639) he mentions the value of music. Music can serve as a vehicle to express one's emotions. He placed music just below theology as a beautiful gift from God. His own hymns were written in a language that the ordinary German of his time could understand. The contemporary popular ballads served as a model for his texts, while the melodies were related to the popular German folk songs of his time. He was not so much interested in the origin of these melodies, but rather in their possibility to transmit the truth of the gospel (cf. Miller 1994:84–85). Luther received a basic training in music at school and had a good knowledge of music theory. He was not afraid that music would distract the attention from the preaching of the Word during services (Boendermaker et al. 2001:166–168; cf. also Van Andel 1982:58). Hymns during services could be used to praise God and to formulate the prayers of a congregation (Van't Spijker 1999:19).

Luther was in favour of metrical versions of the psalms, but also in favour of hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture (Wit 1977:50). He wrote 37 Bible songs. He tried to remain true to the biblical text, but he also allowed his own existential questions and answers to influence the versification of the biblical text. His version of Psalm 130 is a good example of his practice (Van Andel 1982:64). For this discussion, the version of this Psalm in the *Evangelischen Gesangbuch* (1994:299) must suffice. The first strophe of the hymn follows the first three verses of the biblical Psalm closely:

Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir,
Herr Gott, erhöre mein Rufen.
Dein gnädig Ohren kehre zu mir
und meiner Bitt sie öffne;
denn so du willst das sehen an,
was Sünd und Unrecht ist getan,
wer kann, Herr, vor dir bleiben?

However, in the following strophes, some lines cannot be seen as based on the Psalm, but rather on aspects of Lutheran theology. Examples are the following:

Strophe 2, line 5:

Vor dir niemand sich rühmen kann ...

Strophe 3 line 1 and 2:

Darum auf Gott will hoffen ich,
auf mein Verdienst nicht bauen ...

Strophe 5:

Ob bei uns ist der Sünden viel,
bei Gott ist viel mehr Gnade;
sein Hand zu helfen hat kein Ziel,
wie gross auch sei der Schade.
Er ist allein der Gute Hirt,
der Israel erlösen wird
aus seinen Sünden allen.

In these lines, Luther's notion of salvation through grace and the demerit of human works are clearly stated. He applies the Psalm to himself and his contemporaries at the beginning of the final strophe. One can hear the voice of St. Paul in this version, according to Van Anel (1982:64). In his hymn, Luther wanted to testify to the great deeds of God in Christ (Van Anel 1982:71).

Three genres can be distinguished among Luther's hymns, namely metrical versions of psalms, the translation of Latin texts known from the Roman Mass and 37 free hymns (cf. Smelik 1997:187; Van der Leeuw & Bernet Kempers 1939:134; Wit 1977:50). In this regard, Luther was an example followed by many during his lifetime and afterwards (Van Anel 1982:64).

He was poet and composer at the same time. The relationship between text and melody is very good in his hymns. In this regard, he can be regarded as a trailblazer. His theology and his hymns reflect the tension between God and man, the temporary and eternal, light and darkness, heaven and earth (Boendermaker et al. 2001:173).

Rupprecht (1983:133–135) refers to the following psalms as good examples of how Luther went about in his metrical versions of psalms: Psalm 46, 12, 14, 67, 124 and 130. Luther wanted to produce lyrical hymns that could be sung easily, especially when combined with a melody that would support the words. He expressed this by saying, '*Die Noten machen den Text lebendig*' (Luther 1967:2545b).

He regarded music as a gift from God that could benefit the church. Music was an important instrument to express one's faith. Preaching was not the only way to proclaim the gospel in the church; through music, the congregation could also be involved in the proclamation of the gospel (cf. Kloppers 2003:12). The congregation was not just a spectator in the service, but also a participant, especially through congregational singing (Van Anel 1982:61). Carney (1999:16) regards the way in which Luther

brought popular music to the people as one of his most important contributions to the Reformation.

His best-known hymn is probably ‘A mighty fortress is our Lord’ (*Ein feste Burg*). When this hymn is compared to Psalm 46, there are not many similarities. It is not really a metrical version of the original Psalm. Luther derived the theme of his hymn from the final line of the Psalm, and developed his hymn from that starting point. His hymn testifies to trust in God in a time of danger and controversy. It was published in 1529 (Van AnDEL 1982:65–66) and remained popular through the ages (cf. Baudler 2003). One can regard this hymn as almost a sermon on this Psalm. His Christological approach is clear from his answer to a question in the second strophe. He asks who the man is that can defeat the enemy, as we cannot do it through our own power: ‘*Fragst du, wer der ist? Er heisst Jesus Christ*’ [‘Do you ask who he is? His name is Jesus Christ’] (Kloppenburger 2002:117).

One of his last hymns is ‘*Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort*’ [‘Keep us, Lord, through your Word’]. According to a note by Luther, the hymn was composed with the two biggest enemies of the church in mind, the Pope and the Turks. It was published in 1543 for the first time, but was probably composed a number of years earlier. It is a good example of how Luther expressed his own situation in his hymns. The first strophe is the following, as quoted by Van AnDEL (1982):

Erhalt uns, Herr, bei deinem Wort
 Und steur’ des Papsts und Türken Mord,
 Die Jesum Christum, deinen Sohn,
 Wollten stürzen von deinem Thron. (p. 72)⁵⁸

It is interesting to note that the second line is different in the *Evangelischen Gesangbuch* (1994:193), namely: ‘*und steure deiner Feinde Mord*’. The reference to the Turks and the Pope is changed to refer in general to enemies.

Luther also used other poets, such as the teacher Nikolas Hermann, especially to reach the children (Boendermaker et al. 2001:184). In his promotion of hymns in the church, Luther looked at the education of the youth as well, especially outside the cities. That is why he wrote the text of the hymns in the vernacular and set it to polyphonic music (that is, music arranged in parts for several voices; cf. Fourie 2000:161–162; Van’t Spijker 1999:18). Through his hymns, adults could be better acquainted with the message of the gospel, while the children were exposed to better music than the contemporary street music (Van AnDEL 1982:58).

58. [Keep us, o Lord, through your Word and send death to the Pope and the Turks, who want to push your Son, Jesus Christ, from his throne].

As far as Luther's music is concerned, Van der Leeuw and Bernet Kempers (1939:129) identified a number of characteristics. They are the following:

1. Gregorian melodies and rhythms for Latin texts derived from the early church
2. polyphonic music, which necessitated a trained choir
3. new choral songs, which were monophonic and frequently didactic in the style of folk songs, especially with the youth in mind.

Luther played an important role in introducing congregational singing into the churches of the Reformation. To him it was an indispensable part of the liturgy. The singing was also in the language of the ordinary people. He linked up with the tradition in some respects, preserving Latin hymns from the past in translation. He introduced metrical versions of the psalms as well as other hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture. In his version of the psalms, the New Testament as well as his own experiences influenced his interpretations. In the other hymns, his own circumstances also played a role, with the negative result that these hymns could easily become dated.

■ Calvin

Calvin had a lasting influence on the development of church music and congregational singing in the Reformed tradition. In the ministry of Calvin, three phases can be distinguished, namely in Geneva (1536–1538), in Strasbourg (1538–1541) and again in Geneva (1541–1564; cf. Spitz 2001:196–201). Already during his first stay in Geneva he was in favour of congregational singing as part of the liturgy (Van der Walt 1962:14). His stay in Strasbourg was, however of great importance in this regard. He was introduced to the psalmody of Strasbourg, influenced by Wolfgang Dachstein and especially Matthias Greiter (Van der Walt 1962:14). The influence of Bucer was also very important (Spitz 2001:199–200). Like Luther, Calvin gave congregational singing a special place in the liturgy. Moreover, he was instrumental in getting metrical versions of all 150 canonical psalms to serve as the hymnbook of the church (Mathlener 1979:53). The final edition of the Genevan Psalter appeared in 1562 (*Les Psaumes mis en rime Francoise par Clement Marot & Theodor de Beze*) (for a survey of the development of the Genevan Psalter, cf. Van der Walt 1962:13–39. His first attempt in this regard was already published in Strasbourg). One of the consequences of his approach was that the Reformed churches in the Netherlands used only psalms in the congregational singing for more than two centuries (Van AnDEL 1982:82). A psalter looking like Calvin's in Dutch, but using the Genevan melodies, was used in Reformed churches in South Africa until 1937. In some churches in the Reformed tradition, other hymns were added. Because Calvin was not happy with his own attempts at metrical psalms, he used versions of Marot and Beza (Van AnDEL 1982:79, 81).

As Calvin was concerned about the message conveyed by the hymns in the church, he regarded the psalms as appropriate for use during services. Metrical versions of the psalms could help to proclaim the message of the Word and prevent human thoughts creeping into the hymns. In agreement with St. Augustine, he was also careful about the melodies used, because music had the possibility of stirring emotions and so distract the attention of the congregation (cf. *Inst.* 3.20.32; Van AnDEL 1982:80). The music had to underscore the message of the Word (Van der Leeuw & Bernet Kempers 1939:165–166).

However, Calvin was not totally opposed to the use of hymns other than the psalms, with the proviso, however, that the text of those hymns had to come from the Bible. BrienEN (1987:198–202) makes it clear that Calvin did not oppose Bible songs (*'Skrifberymings'*) as used in the Reformed tradition. The fact that he approved the singing of the Ten Commandments during services supports the view (BrienEN 1987:202–203).

Calvin permitted the use of polyphonic arrangements for use at home (KloppenBURG 1977:45). HasPER (1955:403) states that he actually promoted the use of polyphonic music outside services. He did not want to restrict the use of the psalms to services. He wanted the children to practise the singing of psalms, for example in school during the week (BrienEN 1987:210; Van AnDEL 1982:77–78). In this way, the children would be able to teach and support the congregation in their singing of the psalms (BrienEN 1987:210). Outside services, other hymns were permitted (Luth & SmELIK 2001:219).

In his view of the metrical versions of the psalms, Calvin followed an approach different from Luther. He wanted to stay as close as possible to the biblical text and steered clear of exegetical expansion and interpreting the psalms in the light of the New Testament (Van AnDEL 1982:79). The mood, character and structure of an individual Psalm played a role in the choice of rhythm and melody. The idea was to represent the Psalm reliably so that it could give a voice to the congregation in the liturgy (Brink 2005:17). Expansions were only allowed for the sake of clarity (Brink 2005:18; cf. also BrienEN 1987:65–73).

Calvin was not in favour of the use of musical instruments during services. He regarded the use of instruments in the Old Testament as a concession to the people of the Old Testament. It was best to sing uncomplicated hymns from the heart (Box 1996:86–87). Calvin was, as Luther, in favour of a strophic version of the psalms, so that the congregation would be able to sing them (Vrijlandt 1987:88). He supported adding a melody to a text, as it would enhance the efficacy of the text (Luth & SmELIK 2001:219).

According to Calvin, worship services had three important elements, namely, the preaching of the Word, the sacraments and public prayer (Van't Spijker 1999:32). Prayers could be spoken or sung, which meant hymns were part of prayer in song. He regarded prayer as the focus of a Christian life. In his *Institutes* (*Inst.* 3.14), he states that prayer is the most important part of practising one's faith, as you can participate

bountifully in prayer. To him, singing was an important part of worship services, and not just something additional. He regarded the use of music in services as a directive from God (Smelik 2005:73–75; cf. also Brienen 1987:194–196; Fourie 2000:191–193). Thus, the congregation must be able to sing the psalms to ‘singable’ melodies (Vrijlandt 1987:88). To improve congregational singing, the congregation had to practise the singing of psalms during services on Sundays and Wednesdays (Brink 2005:21–22; Smelik 2005:97).

Calvin was, like Luther, very much in favour of congregational singing in worship services. However, he allowed only the 150 psalms and a few other scriptural songs. No instruments were allowed, therefore, singing took place without accompaniment.

■ A comparison of the views of Zwingli, Luther and Calvin

Although Zwingli had an appreciation for music, he did not allow congregational singing during worship services. In this respect, he differed from Calvin and Luther, who both assigned an important role to congregational singing. As indicated above, this view of Zwingli did not endure for long after his lifetime.

Tell and Jahn (1965:39) mention some important points of difference between Zwingli, Luther and Calvin with regard to their reaction to the Roman Catholic liturgy. Calvin and Zwingli made a radical break from the Catholic missal liturgy, while Luther retained many of its elements. Luther wanted to reform the Catholic worship services. Although he disagreed with Catholic theology, he did not want to make a radical break with the historical form of the Catholic worship services. Calvin and Zwingli rejected not only the sacrificial understanding of the Catholic Mass, but also rejected the form of the Mass. To them, this form was replaced by a liturgy in which the focus was on preaching and the sacraments. Zwingli also concluded that the Lord’s Supper should only be celebrated four times a year. Zwingli’s criticism of Luther included that he did not reform the sacramental theology of the Catholic Church (Hambrick-Stowe 1984:338).

In spite of a number of important differences between the approaches of Luther and Calvin, such as the way in which they made metrical versions of the psalms and Luther’s use of hymns not based on a specific biblical text, they shared a number of important principles regarding singing in general and congregational singing in particular. Both of them regarded music almost on a par with theology and they accepted that music and theology were inextricably connected. In worship services, they regarded music as an indispensable part of the liturgy. Luther regarded the ‘language’ of music to be important in the church and he wanted all the arts, including music, to be in service of the One who created and gave it. To Calvin, music was also a gift of God to humanity (Hasper 1955:401).

However, the melody had to serve as support for the text in congregational singing (Kloppenburger 2002:115).

Mathlener (1979:54) points to three aspects on which Luther and Calvin agreed in their approaches:

1. Many of the Genevan melodies and Lutheran chorales were originally folk melodies, or adapted folk melodies.
2. Both of them wanted to promote active participation of the congregation in worship services. Congregational singing could contribute to this goal. The Reformers saw in congregational singing a useful instrument for building up the church.
3. The compilation of hymnbooks was a problem at the beginning, especially with regard to the melodies. Hymnbooks had to be prepared in a short period of time, making the use of original composition a problem. It took about 22 years before the Genevan Psalter could be published with all the psalms.

Luther made an important contribution by introducing congregational singing in the vernacular. He also emphasised the musical quality of church music. He differed from Calvin by introducing hymns that were not based on a specific biblical text. In his metrical versions of the psalms, he frequently reinterpreted the psalms in the light of the New Testament.

■ Recent developments in the Reformed Churches in South Africa

In the past 30 years, important developments have taken place in the RCSA with regard to congregational singing. Up until the Synod of 1985, the churches sang the psalms and Bible songs that were approved more than 40 years earlier. Up to that time, the hymns that were allowed to be used in the churches were specified in Article 69 of the Church Order of the RCSA (n.d.):

In the Churches only the 150 Psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the Hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses which have been approved by the synod is left to the jurisdiction of each church council. (n.p.)

The wording of this article has been changed over time, as will be shown below.

In 1985, the Synod (GKSA 1985:765–766) decided to work together with two other Afrikaans-speaking churches in creating a new metrical version of the psalms. It is noted in the acts that the Synod was approached with a request for cooperation in this regard by the Dutch Reformed Church. The Synod did not make final decisions about the way in which the version should be made, but mentioned a number of important principles

(GKSA 1985:759–761). Important in this regard was that the metrical version had to be based on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament; that it should try to represent the contents of the biblical psalm as completely as possible; and that a Psalm had to be reworked as it appears in the Bible. These principles are in agreement with the tradition of the versification of the psalms in the Reformed tradition since the time of Calvin.

The Synod of 1985 also made a decision that the number of Bible songs could be expanded (GKSA 1985:604–605). Part of the motivation was the possibility of the versification of additional passages from the New Testament.

These two decisions did not change the principles underlying Article 69 of the Church Order. In the process of evaluating the new versification of the psalms and the approval of additional Bible songs, the basic principles used for evaluating the version of the psalms and the Bible songs in the hymnbook used up to that time, were still applied. The Synod of 1991, however, decided that a study had to be done to make these principles clear, especially at that stage, for the evaluation of new Bible songs (GKSA 1991:604). A report in this regard was discussed at the Synod of 1994 (GKSA 1994:527–539). At the end, the report states a number of principles accepted by the Synod (GKSA 1994:538–539). The first of these principles states the basic point of departure (GKSA 1994:538), ‘[d]ie beryming moet die sin en inhoud van die Skrifgedeelte suiwer en korrek in ooreenstemming met die kerklike belydenis weergee’.⁵⁹

The other principles deal with ecclesiastical approval and liturgical requirements. The basic principle quoted above makes it clear that the hymns must be based on a specific passage from Scripture, that the sense and contents of that passage must be clear in the versification and it must be in agreement with the doctrine of the church. This is clearly in agreement with the principles going back to Calvin and the Genevan Psalter. Using these principles to guide decisions, Synods of the RCSA have accepted a number of Bible songs to be recommended to the churches (cf. GKSA 1997:784, 2003:665–667).

At the Synod of 1997, an overture from a provincial Synod asked for the Synod to change Article 69 of the Church Order to add hymns not based on a specific scriptural passage to the Bible songs as hymns that churches could use (GKSA 1997:807–809).⁶⁰ This was not accepted by the Synod, with as motivation that the hymns given in Scripture are sufficient and the best way to follow (GKSA 1997:809). An objection against this decision was upheld at the Synod of 2000 and referred to deputies to report to the next

59. [The versification must represent the sense and contents of the scriptural passage truly and correctly, in accordance with the ecclesiastical creeds] [GKSA 1994, [author's own translation]].

60. In Afrikaans they asked for ‘en gekeurde Skrifgetroue liederes’.

Synod (GKSA 2000:458–462). This matter was not tabled at the Synod of 2003 and referred for study and report at the next Synod (GKSA 2003:669).

At the 2003 Synod, a decision was made to accept the new version of the metrical psalms in Afrikaans (GKSA 2003:643). In the process of evaluating this new version, the deputies for liturgical matters received a number of objections against this new version. These were evaluated, but not accepted (cf. GKSA 2003:646–659).

The Synod of 2006 received a report on the possibility of expanding Article 69 of the Church Order (GKSA 2006:614–631). Because of time constraints, the Synod was unable to make a final decision in this regard, but referred the matter and related reports to deputies to report to the next Synod (GKSA 2006:626). The report of these deputies was tabled at the Synod of 2009 (GKSA 2009:724–743). The commission of the Synod dealing with this report did not recommend the proposed change to Article 69 of the Church Order (GKSA 2009:743). However, the Synod was confronted with a new situation at this Synod, the first Synod after the restructuring of the assemblies of the churches, namely, the amalgamation of the previous Synod of the RCSA and Synod Midlands, the latter comprising churches from the non-Afrikaans speaking churches. These churches did not have a metrical version or versions (in different languages) of the biblical psalms, but used hymns dating mostly from the 19th century. These hymns were not based on specific passages from Scripture. The Synod recognised this new situation and instructed the deputies for liturgical issues to look into the matter and to propose a possible new wording for Article 69 (GKSA 2009:743). Three reports related to this matter were tabled at the Synod of 2012. The first one (GKSA 2012:378–385) dealt with the possible change of Article 69 of the Church Order. This report describes the history of this issue, as well as the situation in different churches of the RCSA, with attention to the hymnbooks available in different languages. It notes that the Venda-speaking churches of the RCSA use a Lutheran hymnal (GKSA 2012:381).⁶¹ In the historical survey, it is made clear that many churches in the Reformed tradition started singing hymns that were not based on specific texts from Scripture, that is, hymns composed in the Lutheran tradition. The report submitted a proposal that the article had to be changed to reflect the situation in the RCSA, namely that all the churches did not sing only psalms and Bible songs. The following wording for the article was proposed (GKSA 2012):

In die kerke moet die 150 Psalms, die Tien Gebooie, die Onse Vader, die Twaalf Artikels van die Geloof, die Lofsange van Maria, Sagaria en Simeon gesing word. Ander Skrifberyminge

61. The report to the Synod mentions a Lutheran hymnal, but provides no more information about that hymnal. It could possibly be one of the editions of F.H. Burke's *Phalaphala ya mafhungo-madifha: zwirendo kha mudzimu*. The 19th edition was published in 1993 by the Emmanuel Press, White River.

en Skrifgetroue liedere wat die Sinode goedgekeur het, word in die vryheid van die kerke gelaat. (p. 385)⁶²

It is clear that the addition to the original article allows hymns composed in the Lutheran tradition.

The second report (GKSA 2012:386–391) dealt with the principles that had to be applied in evaluating the different kinds of hymns, namely metrical versions of psalms and other passages from Scripture, confessional hymns (such as the Apostles' Creed) and other hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture. The principles dealt in general with the liturgical use of hymns, their literary and musical quality and the composition of a hymnbook (GKSA 2012:389–390). For the metrical versions of scriptural passages, six principles were formulated, with the first one (GKSA 2012:390) the same as the one quoted earlier in this section from the 1994 Synod (GKSA 1994:538). These principles were in agreement with principles laid down by previous synods of the RCSA. Two basic principles were formulated for confessional hymns, stressing the agreement between the hymn and the specific section of the creed (GKSA 2012:390). For other hymns a set of principles was formulated (GKSA 2012:390–391) dealing with the evaluation of hymns in light of the message of Scripture.

The third report (GKSA 2012:392–408) contained recommendations with regard to the acceptance of new hymns that could be recommended for use in the Afrikaans-speaking churches. Most of these recommendations were accepted, ushering in a new phase in the congregational singing of the Afrikaans-speaking churches within the RCSA. This new phase was confirmed by the Synod of 2015. Two petitions of objections were submitted against the decision of 2012, but both objections were rejected (GKSA 2015:281–287, 288–290). The Synod accepted a number of new hymns that could be sung in the churches (GKSA 2015:342–396), most of them from the hymn book in use in Afrikaans-speaking churches (NGK 2001). The hymns were subjected to a stringent evaluation (cf. NGK 2001:9–11, 19–20). The hymns were then also evaluated by the deputies for Liturgical Music of the RCSA and approved by Synod (cf. GKSA 2015:342–387), using the principles referred to above.

62. In agreement with the wording of the article cited above, it could be rendered as follows in English: [In the churches only the 150 psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses and hymns that reflect the message of Scripture and have been approved by the Synod are left to the jurisdiction of each church].

■ Conclusion

When the recent developments in the RCSA are evaluated, the historical perspective from the time of the Reformation is very important. Historically, the RCSA followed the line of Calvin, singing only the 150 psalms, with originally only a few other hymns. The previous wording of Article 69 of the Church Order named the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon. The principle of additional Bible songs was accepted in this wording of Article 69. As regards the other Bible songs that became part of the psalter of the Reformed churches from 1940 onwards, it was left to the churches to decide whether they wanted to sing them or not. The changed wording of the article (quoted above and approved by Synod, cf. GKSA 2012:385) makes provision for other hymns that are not based on specific passages from Scripture. This change in the wording of the article is in line with the viewpoint of Luther. However, in the versification of the psalms, the practice of Luther in allowing interpretations from the New Testament and personal experiences and circumstances to influence the versification, was not accepted.

What is important, however, is that different synods accepted very specific principles (as discussed above), not only for the evaluation of versifications of passages from Scripture, including the psalms, but also for other hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture. The application of these principles should prevent hymns that are not doctrinally sound of being included in the hymnbook of the RCSA.

■ Summary: Chapter 10

In the last two decades, different synods of the RCSA have made important decisions with regard to singing in the church. In 2012, the Synod decided to amend Article 69 of the Church Order of the RCSA, to allow not only psalms and Bible songs, but also hymns of which the contents are in agreement with the Bible. This contribution aims to evaluate the developments in the official decisions of synods of the RCSA in the light of the views of the three Reformers, Zwingli, Luther and Calvin, in this regard. When evaluating the recent developments in the RCSA, the historical perspective from the time of the Reformation is very important. Historically, the RCSA followed the norm laid down by Calvin, singing only the 150 psalms and a few other hymns. The principle of additional Bible songs was accepted in the wording of Article 69. Recent changes make provision for other hymns not based on specific passages from Scripture. This is in line with the viewpoint of Luther. However, in the versification of the psalms, the method of Luther in which interpretation from the New Testament and personal experiences and

circumstances influenced the versification, has not been accepted. Different synods have accepted very specific principles for the evaluation of versifications of passages from Scripture, including the Psalms, as well as for other hymns not based on a specific passage from Scripture. The application of these principles should prevent hymns that are not doctrinally sound from being included in the hymnbook of the RCSA.

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