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The Baptist Union of South Africa's mission orientation needs transformation: A scrutiny by an insider

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This article aims to trigger a process of critical reflexive analysis relative to how colonial perspectives are played out in the contemporary mission orientation of the Baptist Union of South Africa (BUSA). It highlights the fact that the BUSA' s mission orientation, predominantly evangelism and church planting, is still embedded in the colonial perspectives influenced by the thoughts of the 19th-century missiologists Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. Hence, the key argument of this article is that the BUSA's mission orientation should be released from these colonial perspectives in order to give way to the emergence of an authentic and contextual Baptist missional agency in South Africa. A scrutiny of the BUSA reveals that it faces threefold challenges, namely, historical, philosophical and methodological challenges. Failure to address these challenges has (1) robbed the BUSA of imagination to measure up to contemporary contextual issues, (2) made it predominantly otherworldly in worldview and mainly membership-centred in focus and (3) made it embrace and practice on the ground 'missionary activist' and 'conversionist' reductionist shortcuts. To move forward, the BUSA is called to go through continuous conversions and reflexive process as a prerequisite for a deep transformation experience. This article concludes by contributing three solutions, namely, generating new mission insights befitting the South African context should involve the collective, avoid missionary reductionist shortcuts by opting for an integrated and holistic mission praxis and embrace participatory action research as a way forward for BUSA's mission agenda.

Keywords: Baptist Union of South Africa; Mission orientation; Change; Mission praxis; Transformation.

Introduction

Transformation is far more than structural change. Transformation is deep. It is this internal change from within that is needed as far as the mission orientation of the Baptist Union of South Africa[1] (BUSA) is concerned. The BUSA has gone and is still going through a number of changes in its structural outlook but what it really needs is transformation. One such change was the composition of the Baptist Union Executive, which used to be an entirely white executive committee and the 'affirmative action' process which was implemented later. Structural change is superficial and external, while transformation is deep and internal. In this article, I contend that structural change experienced in BUSA over the last three decades in its history has not necessarily brought about transformation, especially as far as the mission orientation is concerned.

Historically, according to Kairos Southern Africa (2013), South Africa in general was subjected to more than 350 years of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid (see also Terreblanche 2002:8). With reference to apartheid, Kobia (2003:55) elucidates, 'neither institutional segregation nor apartheid was a South African invention. If anything both idealized a form of rule that the British colonial dubbed "indirect rule"…' This in a way ensured, to use the words of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:331–353), 'the entrapment of [South] Africa within the global colonial matrices of power'.

This indirect rule was extended to and practised by almost all institutions including church denominations such as the BUSA and its mission arm, which from its inception had some kind of associations with the British colonial structures (Scheepers 2008). In relation to BUSA, this colonial indirect rule over the Bantu section of the church was done through the then South African Baptist Missionary Society (SABMS). The SABMS was organisationally disbanded decades ago and its

1.I am a member of the BUSA, and by God's grace I have served the denomination in various capacities since 1995.

Note: The Church in need of Change (agency), sub-edited by Erna Oliver (University of South Africa).

work was reshaped and taken over in the post-colonial era by the current Baptist mission department of BUSA.

Yet, I still contend that the mission orientation is still embedded in the colonial perspectives although in subtle ways, as I will elaborate later in this article. Thus, the central question of this article is: what challenges (past, present and future) stand in the way of transforming the Baptist Union of Southern Africa's mission orientation?

Essentially, I argue that BUSA's mission orientation should be released from these colonial perspectives in order to give way to the emergence of an authentic and contextual Baptist missional agency in South Africa. Hence, this article aims to trigger a process of critical reflexive analysis relative to how colonial perspectives are played out in the contemporary mission orientation of BUSA.

Therefore, this article (1) contributes towards a critical, academic and scholarly engagement as far as mission orientation of BUSA is concerned, (2) provides insights on contextualising South African Baptist missiology and mission praxis and (3) stimulates reflexive engagement and enhances perspectives on praxis.

A short story as a prologue: Raising and framing the issues

A 'sending off' service of a family going on a cross-border foreign mission assignment at the BUSA assembly is a very special event. All business items are set aside at that service. A good mission presentation including a 'moving' sermon, which ideally ends with a call to support mission causes, is highlighted. Together we praise and thank God for raising that family at a time such as this. We earnestly pray, pleading with God to go before and with this family and to use them in a mighty way in the mission field. This type of service has often ended with pledges of financial and prayer support, which are usually coordinated, by the support group of the sending congregation.

I have attended many of these missions 'sending off' services of the BUSA. Each one of them looked like a playback scene of a missionary 'sending off' during the colonial era that left their comfort and privileges in Europe to venture into the unknown world of the heathens. In a subtle manner, these services convey a message that mission is mainly about crossing borders the way it was done in colonial times by professional missionaries – who happened to come mostly from Europe. At these services, mission opportunities at our doorsteps relative to local socio-economic, political and religious contexts might be acknowledged in passing as if they do not really matter. They are not in the spotlight. The underlining message is that those locally involved in the mission in various ways are not in the same category and cannot expect to receive the same support as those going to cross geographical borders for a mission assignment.

The fact is that BUSA, being a multi-racial and multi-cultural denomination, has sent off through its mission department in liaison with local churches white, mixed race, Indian and black families to some countries of Africa and the world. While, the fact that men and women from the BUSA are still yielding to the call for mission service is worth celebrating, it should be of concern if the modus operandi and its orientation tend to give importance to mainly crossing-borders types of missions compared to all other causes of mission. For example, when a family is on missionary assignment abroad, these missionaries tend to receive substantial support, both monetarily and in the form of prayer, as long as they remain in those foreign mission fields although they have to work at it through their individual support groups. Strangely, when they are no longer on foreign mission fields or come back home to pursue local missions, their support dissipates or dwindles to levels which could not sustain these missionaries. There might be many reasons for this, but it is most likely associated with the colonial perspective of the mission, which prioritises a Eurocentric frontiers mission enterprise to the detriment of local interests. Local churches, especially the affluent ones, tend to discontinue their support when missionaries are no longer on foreign missions.

This short story points to the fact that BUSA's mission orientation is still embedded in colonial perspectives, mainly in terms of crossing frontiers (culture, geographical boundary, etc.) to convert the 'heathen', and it is the task of those specially called and trained as missionaries, supported by the local church and denominational base (Henry & Niemandt 2015:3).

Although I admit that for a number of years the BUSA has managed to decolonise and 'de-racialise' its structures in the post-colonial era (Scheepers 2008:51), yet I contend that this decolonising process must continue to forge ahead deeper into philosophical and ideological pillars that inform, among other things, its mission orientation. Hence, I submit that the roots of this attitude should be located in history relative to the expansion of Christianity in the 19th century.

The expansion of Christianity in the 19th century: A historical perspective

Goedhals (1994:123–149) highlighted some salient points related to this era. By 1860, permanent white settlement and government institutions derived from British models were securely established at the Cape, and Natal had been a British colony for nearly 20 years at that time. According to Goedhals (1994:125), three major issues in relation to church marked this period: (1) institutional consolidation of denominations in the more settled Cape, and missionary expansion into Natal and the African kingdoms and Boer republics to the north, (2) varying response of churches and missionary organisations to the subjugation of the African chiefdoms and (3) gulf between Christian teaching about community and service, and missionary practice. Both missionaries and

converts were forced to wrestle with the related issue of the relationships between Christian conviction and political allegiance, which confronted them in the process of the subjugation of African chiefdoms, by imperial, colonial forces in the 19th century.

Central to the subjugation of African chiefdoms and their people was the work of evangelism directed towards the conversion of black people to Christianity in South Africa in the 19th century. To many missionaries of English origin of that time, it appeared that the expansion of the British Empire was part of the divine plan for the evangelisation of the whole world, and that colonial rule was an expression of God's providence. Missionary enterprise was compromised and tainted by its closeness to colonial establishment.

Thus, Hale (2006:754–755) contends that the expanding British Empire seemed once again to provide missionary opportunity. Baptists, for example, accepted land grants from Cecil John Rhodes – grants that had been obtained by conquest from the African people of Matabeleland – as well as financial aid from the Chartered Company. 'What appears in the twentieth century to be an ethical problem was seen then by members of nineteenth century society as a glorious missionary opportunity' (Hale 2006:755).

In relation to socio-economic and political structuring of society, the conquest of the African people by the white colonialists was institutionalised across the board. Terreblanche (2002:6) explains: they did so in three ways (1) by creating political and economic power structures that put them in a privileged and entrenched position *vis-à-vis* the indigenous population groups, (2) by depriving indigenous people of land, surface water and cattle and (3) by reducing slaves and indigenous people to different forms of unfree and exploitable labour.

According to Terreblanche (2002), these three threads:

> [*H*]ave run ominously through South Africa's modern history, from the mid-17th until the late 20th century as highlighted in five systemic periods of white domination and the exploitation of black labour before 1994 (i.e. Dutch colonialism (1652 – 1800), British colonialism (-+1800 – 1890), two Boer republics (1850 – 1900), British imperialism and the political and economic hegemony of English establishment (-+1890 – 1948) and period of political hegemony of the Afrikaner establishment (1948 – 1994). (p. 6)

The white European church's missions uncritically latched onto this institutionalised white domination and exploitation of black people and saw these as opportunities for mission work, which facilitated commitment of indigenous people to the Christian faith and its ethos.

Thus, among many ministers of religion and missionaries at the Cape in the second half of the 19th century, for example, there was a strongly held belief that a high level of Christian commitment would shape social and political institutions to resemble the Christian ideal, as they understood it, which was largely in Eurocentric terms. For this purpose, a significant feature of mission work during this period was the use of the printing press, indicative of the fairly widespread level of literacy that had been achieved among African converts.

Some of these African converts were selected for an ordained ministry. Nevertheless, according to Scheepers (2008):

> Although those ordained had been carefully chosen and trained, white missionaries had not sufficiently considered the long term implications for themselves, and the ongoing need to hand over further responsibility to ordained Africans. (p. 2)

By the end of the 19th century, Christianity had already undergone remarkable expansion at the Cape: many, black and white people remained unconverted, but orderly and regular worship of God was held every Sunday, throughout the colony in churches, chapels, schoolrooms, mission stations, huts and under the sky. However, major inequalities – political, social and economic – permeated the Cape society, and the Christian churches, often insensitive to signs of injustice, even played a part in perpetuating them. Baptists from Europe arrived at South Africa in the 19th century at a time when these injustices were deeply entrenched.

Baptist beginnings in Southern Africa

According to Parnell (1980:90), 'the first Baptists [including Germans] came to South Africa with the 1820 British settlers' (see also Batts 1922:1). The first Baptist church in Southern Africa was established in the Salem or Kariega area near Grahamstown. German and English Baptists combined to form the BUSA in 1877, which, according to Scheepers (2008:2–3), mainly catered to European Baptist settlers in Southern Africa, and not to indigenous people.

Further, Parnell (1980) points out:

> The Germans, in particular, were not content to see the black people around them holding animistic beliefs so they started preaching to them. In 1892, the South African Baptist Missionary Society was formed to coordinate and direct the witness to blacks… (p. 90)

This then led to the existence of two Baptist institutions – that is, the BUSA and the SABMS – one for European settlers and the other for people of mixed race including black Africans and Indians. Mogashoa (2004) in particular has done extensive research on the history of the black Baptists. For Parnell (1980:50), the SABMS gave expression to the motto: 'every Baptist a missionary', which was adopted and made popular by Johann Oncken – a famous 19th-century German Baptist pioneer and the founder of the European Continental Baptist movement. This motto was certainly influenced by Baptists' turn towards missionary responsibility in 1792 inspired by William Carey, who, as Shurden (2011:9) put it, 'could not get Jesus' words of "Go ye into the whole world" off his heart and mind' and 'who urged (…) Baptists

to expect great things from God' and 'attempt great things for God' (cf. Parnell 1980:49–51).

In the same vein, Hudson-Reed (1977) elaborates that the pioneers of the BUSA:

> [*H*]ad ringing in the ears these [*very same*] words of William Carey and before their eyes was the example of that missionary pioneer's success in India as well as Johann Oncken's success in Germany and throughout Europe. (p. 24)

Therefore, the BUSA, through the SABMS, forged ahead carrying on foreign mission work in the southern African region, especially in countries such as Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Yet, in my opinion, the attitude that drove and still drives foreign mission work implies undermining mission causes relative to local missions. Socio-economic, political and historical conditions and the needs of the majority in South Africa, for example, did not receive much attention a few decades ago, while the SABMS made strides with mission work in the southern African region. This has led to a situation where foreign mission workers have far more financial resources, for example, than those assigned locally.

Baptist mission orientation: Challenges

The challenges faced by the BUSA in relation to its mission orientation are threefold: historical, philosophical and methodological challenges.

Historical challenges

I have hinted that the work of the BUSA including SABMS was embedded in the ideology of colonial indirect rule, which also implied that black Africans and other people of mixed race were mission fields of the white Baptist church. I contend that this ideology was influenced in many ways by the thoughts of mission thinkers and strategists of the 19th century, such as Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson (DuBose 1979:243). I will elaborate on the thoughts of Venn and Anderson in relation to the BUSA under the methodological challenges.

Generally, and historically, it is apparent that:

- Regardless of the fact that the pioneers and founders of both the BUSA and SABMS managed to conduct positive progress on the mission field, there were up until 1960 two cultural lines parallel with those of the white community dominating both the BUSA and the SABMS structures (cf. Mogashoa 2004; Scheepers 2008:24). Now, most structures have people of mixed race as the majority because of amalgamation as many congregations of people of mixed race took up membership with the union.
- Although the SABMS did a remarkable job through missions and evangelism, yet it did so with an attitude of a big mother with resources and power to control everybody. Black Baptists had no significant say on the course that the SABMS should take. Some affluent local churches sponsor missions and evangelism in areas with people of mixed race and across borders and at times with an attitude of a big mother with resources to control.

These historical challenges, still existing in subtle forms, work against the involvement of people of mixed race in the BUSA to become missionaries sent by churches and mobilisers of resources on missions. The mixed race people together make up two-thirds of the total number of congregations in the BUSA, yet they are idle. Perhaps this is so because missions in the BUSA are mostly seen in economic terms when crossing frontiers, which only white congregations can afford. The issue here is not the lack of money, but mixed race people still have to grasp the vision of *missio Dei* [the mission of God]. It appears as if the majority of these people of mixed race congregations are unable to respond to the instructions of the sending God (cf. Jn 20:21).

Furthermore, these historical challenges still rob most of these congregations of the imagination to embrace transformational development at their doorsteps as part of their mission. They were located in areas where they could imagine mission 'initiatives based on the transformation themes of salvation, the justice of God, good news to the poor, and the nature and role of Christian community' (Clarke 2006:187), but they were not able to utilise these opportunities. Given the history and context, these people of mixed race congregations should be involved in the holistic aspects of the mission, which aims to impact individuals, their community and the physical environment in which they live. The holistic nature of the mission seeks the restoration of people, structures and creation, but it seems that most of the people of mixed race congregations affiliated with the BUSA do not think missiologically in this way.

Philosophical challenges

The way a mission is thought about and understood by many congregations belonging to the BUSA is a major challenge. According to Roozen et al. (1984:87), there are four different 'mission orientations' that a religious community could have in society. They distinguish these orientations as one looks at how the worldview of a Christian community (the question whether it is this-worldly or other-worldly in orientation) combines with the boundary-making activities of that community (the question whether they are membership-centred or publicly proactive) to produce four mission orientations, which they call as *civic*,[2] *sanctuary*,[3] *activist*[4] and *evangelistic*[5] *orientation*.

2.Civic orientation affirms existing social structures, stresses civil harmony and avoidance of conflict and leaves individual members to make their own decisions on moral issues.

3.Sanctuary orientation emphasises refuge from this world and encourages its members to maintain church tradition and doctrine. It is opposed to congregational involvement in social change while promoting patriotism and adherence to civil law.

4.Activist orientation stresses justice and a critical posture for existing social structures, openness to involvement of members and congregation in social action. It is open to confrontation and conflict as far as it is defending social justice.

5.Evangelistic orientation promotes personal witnessing, seeks conversion of everyone to the 'one true faith' and promotes strong openness to the Holy Spirit.

Reflections on the general outlook of the BUSA's mission orientation using Roozen et al.'s (1984) insights suggest, with exception of few of its congregations, the following.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa is predominantly otherworldly in worldview

As stated elsewhere, BUSA did not venture into the South African society with transformation in mind. Mangayi (2014) elucidates:

> [*L*]ink between faith and social activism was blurred. This has led to the 'conformist' rather than a 'transformer' attitude toward society to largely a 'private affair'. The BUSA did not openly use [*its*] asset[*s*] to venture into the public square in many structures of the BUSA. (p. 145)

This otherworldly worldview has further produced a serious blind spot, which is manifested through failing to take the South African socio-economic, historical and political contexts seriously. Consequently, churches of the BUSA in general are not adhering to their being perceived as 'people who represent God to the world' (Wright 2010:114). Furthermore, as Mangayi (2018b:10) found out about township churches, most 'churches [of BUSA] are hesitant to step into the public community space as catalysts of change' in their mission orientation. Thus, collectively as a denomination, BUSA lacks or is unable to formulate a public contextual praxis, which could foster social justice in the face of unemployment and socio-economic injustice prevalent in their immediate contexts (Mangayi 2018b:10) as an example. This was regardless of the fact that the BUSA churches could be aware of the issues in their contexts.

Furthermore, the otherworldly worldview is like a paralysis that blocks the imagination of creative strategic ministries to the point where even some resourceful congregations of BUSA are incapable of a genuine and intentional engagement in social justice issues at their doorsteps. This is perhaps because of the lack of an in-depth contextual analysis and the failure to see communities around them theologically. Thus, this failure to see communities around them theologically has in turn made the BUSA's mission praxis to fail towards making a substantial difference in particular contexts.

Discourses mentioned above simply imply that BUSA's mission orientation is in need of change and transformation. This is possible only through a genuine collective conversion, which should include, as Mangayi's personal journey highlights, both *metamelomai* ['to be anxious, regretful'] and *metanoia* ['change of mind'] (Mangayi 2017:81). The BUSA and its churches should therefore be regretful for overemphasis of the otherworldly worldview in their mission orientation to the detriment of this-worldly worldview that has bred imbalance. Then, they should move from regret to change of mind so that an integrated Baptist mission praxis, relevant and suitable for South Africa, could be imagined and adopted.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa has mainly a membership-centred focus

This membership-centred focus is one of the major shortcomings that exist in many member churches of the BUSA. Mangayi (2014:146) highlighted elsewhere that these 'shortcomings are associated with "inward looking" thus failing to become a "transformer" of society in tangible ways outside its turf'. Furthermore, this membership-centred focus is one of the major blind spots, which make local churches limit their pastoral functions only to their members. As a result, in relation to township churches, Mangayi (2018b) elaborates:

> These churches are more comfortable with pastoral functions, which benefit their congregants but cannot position themselves to shepherd entire communities where they are located. This is so because they seem to be weak in integrating the pastoral as well as social functions [*of the church*]. As a result, these churches are unable to live in fellowship and solidarity with the poor, regardless of the fact that they are located amidst the poor. Consequently, (1) the image and identity of the church is blurred and perceived as a self-centred institution, and (2) her assets (…) do not serve to transform and liberate society. (p. 9)

The otherworldly worldview combined with membership-centred focus results in *sanctuary* and *evangelistic* mission orientations that are predominant in the BUSA circles. This predominance amounts to the entrapment of most churches of the BUSA. As a result, the BUSA thrives in evangelism and church planting locally and across borders, but is less publicly proactive in societal public issues relative to economy, social justice, ecology and the like. This could be one of the reasons why mission in the BUSA is still predominantly understood only as evangelism and church planting and makes all other mission opportunities, such as social justice, less important and less urgent in comparison to these two. This way of thinking about missions is methodologically deficient and has led the BUSA mission orientation to be less attractive towards embracing mission enterprises, which, for example, should tackle issues of gender inequality and injustice, economy, politics, ecology, racial discrimination and xenophobia, marginalisation and deprivation.

Methodological challenges and missionary shortcuts

According to DuBose (1979:243), '[b]ehind all mission endeavour is a conscious or unconscious methodology'. The BUSA and its affiliated foreign missionaries employ mission strategies, such as theological education, Bible translation, evangelism and church planting, community development and disaster relief. Yet, historically the dominant strategy remains evangelism and church planting. This strategy is still largely influenced by and grounded on the intertwined methodological insights of the 19th century missiologists Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson. Furthermore, since 2016, the BUSA mission department has launched the Acts 1:8

strategy,[6] which, in my opinion, is still embedded in Venn and Anderson's ideological frameworks focussed on evangelism and church planting.

Regarding evangelism and church planting, the BUSA subscribes to the three 'selfs' (i.e. becoming self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending) methodological model propagated by Venn (1979:243–249; see also Akins 1995:29) as steps towards helping a native church. 'Principles and Methods of Modern Missions' articulated by Anderson influenced and inspired the work of the then SABMS and the present-day mission department's work of the BUSA. DuBose (1979:251–252) elucidates, salient insights into Anderson's thoughts on Christian mission are, among other things, first the planting of local churches by the mission church (this means SABMS in the past and now it usually the affluent sending church). Secondly, 'native pastors' should lead these local churches. Thirdly, as soon as the mission church has a native pastor, the responsibilities of self-government, self-extending and self-supporting over time should be handed over to the local church (cf. Scheepers 2008:6). Furthermore, Anderson (1979) contended that:

> [*A*] foreign missionary should not be the pastor of a native church. His business is to plant churches (….) himself sustaining a common relation to all, as their ecclesiastical father and adviser (….). (p. 252)

It is apparent from the above discussion that methodological insights and principles of these two renowned (Venn and Anderson) 19th-century mission thinkers were embedded into the colonial script of the 19th century and reinforced the indirect rule that ensured the entrapment of the SABMS within the global colonial matrices of power as I have highlighted earlier. During the days of the SABMS, missionary superintendents carried out the indirect rule. Now, the mission sending church, usually an affluent suburban church, exercises that rule.

Of concern is the fact that most churches planted by missionaries among people of mixed race in the BUSA are still struggling to realise these three 'selfs' in any substantial and consistent manner. Most of them are self-governed and some do self-extend by planting daughter churches; however, most of them struggle to mobilise self-support that could give a decent stipend to their workers (Mangayi 2016:7). This could be because most of these churches are located in struggling parts of cities and in rural areas where there are grave socio-economic imbalances and deprivation. It could also be caused by a dependency syndrome or lack of teachings on generating self-support.

Nevertheless, I contend that these struggles are associated with missionary shortcuts opted for by the BUSA in general and its structures in particular when they devised their mission methods and strategies. Kritzinger (2018:147) named four missionary reductionist shortcuts to avoid in mission endeavours –: 'political activist', 'ivory tower', 'missionary activist' and 'conversionist' – so that an integrated, authentic and holistic mission praxis could be conceived.

In relation to the BUSA's mission orientation, and given the methodological mission strategies embraced and practised on the ground, 'missionary activist' and 'conversionist' reductionist shortcuts are prevalent.

The missionary activist praxis option in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa

Kritzinger (2018) explains that the missionary activist:

> Limits itself to involvement, spirituality and planning. Many Christians, with very good intentions and a huge amount of spiritual energy, ignore social analysis and theological reflection in their Christian activism, thus reducing their praxis to a spiritualising short cut. By doing so they often repeat the mistakes of earlier generations of missionaries, because they do not take the time to learn lessons from history or to think through the ideological implications of the choices they make or the methods they employ. (p. 147)

The missionary activist of the BUSA and its churches have, through evangelism, resulted in planting many churches across South Africa and neighbouring countries based on the script of Venn and Anderson without seriously considering local contexts. These new churches are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of mother churches, keep on planting other churches and start preaching following the same script. Thus, they go on repeating the mistakes of earlier generations of missionaries which consist of only spiritualising the mission orientation. They forget that human beings have souls, bodies and spirits (cf. 1 Thes 5:23) and live in concrete socio-economic and historical contexts. Conversion is the operative concept in this orientation.

The 'conversionist' option in the Baptist Union of Southern Africa

Kritzinger (2018) elucidates:

> The 'conversionist' (…) combines involvement, theological reflection (concentrated on Mt 28:16–20, Jn 14:6 and Ac 4:12), a narrow spirituality, and the planning of activities aimed exclusively at conversion. This approach has developed a confident theological apologetic and has strong financial backing, but the fact that it ignores (or seriously undervalues) the dimension of social analysis, makes it a short cut that lends itself more easily to an ethnocentric praxis, thus undermining holistic contextual praxis. (p. 147)

The conversionist option of the BUSA has borne and still bears fruit today; new churches are included as members every year at its annual assembly, which is good. This is very encouraging to witness. However, the fact that most of these churches are planted in areas facing socio-economic, political and historical, and ecological challenges suggests that any mission endeavours in this kind of context must do more than just conducting conversions. The focus on conversion

6.As part of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa's response to our Lord's Gospel mandate in Acts 1:8, the missions department assists local churches to present the Gospel of saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ to unreached people. We accomplish this by involving local churches in missions, advocating intentional and passionate engagement in missions and empowering people to 'tell their story' of saving faith in Jesus Christ (see http://baptistunion.org.za/index.php/fi/departments/missions).

only has blinded, or even worse paralysed, many local churches of the BUSA with assets such as land, building facilities and human resources to come up with mission praxis geared for holistic transformation.

Therefore, I contend these two reductionist shortcuts stand in the way of the BUSA developing an authentic and meaningful praxis of mission. I concur with Kritzinger (2018:147) that in the 21st century we 'need a full-blown and well-rounded praxis that creates a dynamic interplay between identity or involvement, social analysis, theological reflection, communal spirituality and strategic planning'. The 'missionary activist' and 'conversionist' approaches to mission prevalent in the BUSA have produced Baptist theologies of mission in Southern Africa that cannot usher in holistic transformation.

Solutions to these challenges

I contend that the BUSA has not embraced transformation, which should address the challenges highlighted in this article. Solutions to these challenges need to go beyond structural changes that the BUSA has introduced in the last three decades.

Transformation has to start by conversion. The BUSA should embrace ongoing conversions in contexts where its local congregations exist as the starting point in this transformation process. Gooren (2010:10) explains that the term 'conversion' relates to the biblical Hebrew word *shub* [to turn, to return] and the Greek words *strepho* and *epistrepho*. Two other Greek words are mentioned in the New Testament: *metamelomai* [to be anxious, regretful], which describes the state of the subject undergoing a conversion experience, and *metanoia* [change of mind], which describes the positive state or attitude of one who has undergone conversion. Usually, *metamelomai* and *metanoia* complement each other, as one leads to the other (see also Mangayi 2017:81). I suggest that the BUSA should go through *metamelomai* and *metanoia* in a continuous reflexive process as a prerequisite for a deep transformation experience.

Here are three suggestions.

Generating new mission insights befitting the South African context should involve the collective

Insights for mission praxis should not be imported but generated from the ground up. This requires putting together a committed group of people from the BUSA comprising specialist social analysts, theologians, mission directors, representatives of local churches, home missionaries engaged in evangelism and church planting, especially those working in areas plagued by socio-economic and historical challenges. The logic behind this is the fact that such specialists do not exercise their gifts in isolation, but in the context of a group that has a shared spirituality, which is sustained through sharing one another's stories and involvement in joint action. The process should promote dialogical openness and sensitivity between all forms of Christian praxes practised in various local Baptist congregations. This will ensure that 'together we can become aware of the short cuts we are taking and develop greater wholeness as we move forward together' (Kritzinger 2018:147).

Avoid missionary reductionist shortcuts by opting for an integrated and holistic mission praxis

According to Kritzinger (2018):

> If the 21st century is to be about anything in Christian mission, then it must be about wholeness, about a creative and meaningful integration of the diverse dimensions of Christian action in society. (p. 147)

Thus, the BUSA's zeal, enthusiasm and commitment towards taking part in the mission of God should inescapably integrate diverse dimensions of Christian praxis deemed biblical in their tradition so that the whole person is ministered with the gospel of Jesus in relation to his or her immediate context. The BUSA is a member of the Evangelical Alliance and of the Lausanne Movement. I therefore contend that its mission orientation has to embrace and draw inspiration from the tenets of the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission[7] and the Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement.[8]

> Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the Gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission, our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world.

The Cape Town Commitment Summary Call to Action (Part II, Clause B) on *Building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world* stipulates:

> The Church, therefore, has a responsibility to live out its reconciliation and to engage in biblical peace-making in the name of Christ. This includes bringing Christ's truth and peace to bear on racism and ethnic diversity, slavery and human trafficking, poverty, and minority groups such as people with disabilities. It also means our missional calling includes responsible stewardship of God's creation and its resources.

The BUSA will do well to draw from these wells of wisdom from the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission and the Cape Town Commitment in its mission orientation and praxis.

Participatory action research

The fact that mission has to be seen as an agent of transformation is increasingly emerging in many sectors of the church in the Global South and East. In the same vein,

7.Bradbury (2002).

8.See https://www.lausanne.org/content/summary-of-the-cape-town-commitment.

Harvey (2014:2) affirms that there is a growing biblical, theological and pragmatic appreciation of the centrality of 'mission' for a true evangelical Christianity. Transformative action is indispensable in missions in the Global South and East where economic and social injustice are prevalent. Harvey further attests that Christian leaders and missionaries in these regions have grown impatient with traditional modes of inquiry as they grapple with issues from effective evangelism to economic injustice and as agents of transformation; they are embracing new modes of research that transform their work and worlds into laboratories of holistic mission.

These modes of research are reshaping traditional mission studies that usually emphasised mission history, cultural anthropology, social sciences or missiology to begin to incorporate 'Action Research' and 'Practitioner Research' as Mangayi (2018a:43) advocates elsewhere in relation to mission encounters with the homeless people in the City of Tshwane. It is participatory action research (PAR) as it empowers local communities that is suitable for developing transformative mission praxis in the BUSA. This is so 'because PAR opens up missiology and mission practice to become intentionally transformative through their encounters with others' (Mangayi 2018a:44). A mission orientation rooted in the PAR approach is what, in my opinion, could assist the BUSA to come up with a transformative mission praxis.

Conclusion

This article has contributed towards a critical, academic and scholarly engagement as far as mission orientation of BUSA is concerned. It has provided insights into contextualising South African Baptist missiology and mission praxis, which should start by addressing historical, philosophical and methodological challenges. These insights, if applied, will pave the way for the emergence of a transformed mission praxis in the BUSA and will consequently make the BUSA and its structures become agents of holistic transformation wherever they are engaged in the mission of God. This article has further stimulated and will continue to stimulate reflexive engagement and enhance perspectives on praxis within the BUSA. Finally, the article contributes three solutions, that is, generating new mission insights befitting the South African context should involve the collective, avoid missionary reductionist shortcuts by opting for an integrated and holistic mission praxis and embrace PAR as a way forward for BUSA' s mission agenda.

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