

Prophetic dialogue: The quest for religious leaders seeking reconciliation

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Introduction

In a speech given by Father Michael Lapsley (2014)⁶ at Regina Mundi Church in Soweto during the 20 years of Freedom Celebration, he referred to a grandmother who raised a question during a visit to poor, rural KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) a number of years ago, to talk about the work of the Institute for the Healing of Memories (IHOM). She asked, 'Father, are you working with our leaders?' His response was that the IHOM had chosen to work with people mainly from the local communities of the country. To this, the grandmother replied: 'Well you should work with our leaders; they are much more

6. Fr Michael Lapsley, Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM), is the Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories at Regina Mundi Church in Soweto. The short excerpt that follows is taken from a speech he gave at the Interfaith Celebration of 20 years of Freedom, 15 August 2014.

“messed up” than we are.’ We can only speculate about the reasons for her remark. Although she probably referred to the political leaders, we would be naïve to think that being ‘messed up’ and traumatised only applies to them. Many of the religious leaders were in one way or another actively involved in the liberation struggle, and therefore, this remark is applicable to them as well as to the political leaders.

Religious and political leaders played a major role in the fight against apartheid, as well as in the transition process leading up to the first democratic election (see De Gruchy & De Gruchy 2005). The nature of this leadership was generally depicted as brave and prophetic with a firm commitment to the cause of freedom no matter what the consequences were. In many instances the price paid for dismantling apartheid and journeying towards freedom had a devastating impact on the leaders from the liberation movements. It became clear retrospectively that leaders and other role players who had to uphold the apartheid regime became disillusioned after the transition in South Africa and are in need of healing as well. It was therefore understandable that in the aftermath of apartheid safe spaces needed to be created for leaders and citizens to deal with the ensuing pain and suffering caused by the duration of the struggle for freedom. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) (1998a) was one such attempt, occurring at a particular time in our history, setting in motion the journey of truth and remembering, as well as facing the past in order to facilitate reconciliation, justice, transformation and healing.

The 1997 TRC faith hearing (see Meiring 1999) was a very specific space where the leaders of faith communities could engage with past injustices, reflect on their role during apartheid, and indicate their contribution towards reconciling and healing our traumatised nation. During this hearing submissions were received from a variety of faith communities on human rights violations during the apartheid era. Most of these submissions included firm commitments to reconcile and rebuild the nation (Thesnaar 2013:54–56). In a sense, the success of the TRC was dependent on key role players such as the religious society, government, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), et cetera, to take the responsibility to foster the reconciliation process by ensuring the implementation of the TRC’s recommendations⁷ in a post-conflict South Africa, among others. Given the number of citizens who indicated that they belong to a faith community (Wale 2013:24) as well as the fact that the faith communities are depicted as the most trustworthy of all institutions (Wale 2013:24), one could assume that the religious leaders of the faith communities were probably the most suitably placed to pick up the batten after the dismantling of the TRC. Sadly, this fundamental part of the process did not materialise. One can safely assume that the leaders at all levels of society did not have the time, space or opportunity to deal with their trauma, as they had to fulfil demanding leadership roles

7. See Doxtader (2005) on their assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s recommendations and their implementation.

in the newly liberated government and society. This was equally true of religious leaders within the post-apartheid society. Based on this premise, the Beyers Naudé Centre (at Stellenbosch University) partnered with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Foundation to set up a consultation (as another safe space) to re-enact the faith hearings of the TRC (that took place in 1997). This re-enactment consultation was held on 8 and 9 October 2014, in Stellenbosch (Thesnaar 2015).

In light of the above, this contribution seeks to critically engage with religious leadership regarding reconciliation in a post-TRC era. It is therefore structured as follows: Firstly, a brief review of the recent re-enactment of the TRC faith hearing consultation is presented, with a specific focus on the various viewpoints held by the faith community leaders on the leadership that was provided (by religious leaders) during the apartheid, post-apartheid and post-TRC eras. Secondly, some normative thoughts on prophetic dialogue are considered. Thirdly, these findings on the leadership provided during the post-TRC era are reflected on in terms of reconciliation through the hermeneutical lens of the Belgian scholar Valarie Rosoux, an expert in negotiation, reconciliation and transformation in a post-conflict context. Finally, the chapter concludes with thoughts on the kind of leadership that is needed within the current South African context to ensure that the process of reconciliation becomes a priority for all faith communities across the nation. In this regard, this chapter also strives to make a contribution to develop responsible and prophetic leadership for faith communities in order to contribute to reconciliation and national unity in the current South African context.

Re-enactment of the TRC faith hearing

It must be noted that the purpose of the re-enactment was not in any way to commemorate the TRC or the faith hearings of the TRC as such. The dangers of commemoration are well known and always open to abuse (Hutton 2004:252) by leaders who want to use such a platform for personal gain. In contrast, the purpose was to use the re-enactment of the TRC faith hearings as a vehicle for renewed engagement between past and present religious leaders concerning their role and responsibility in relation to the key issues of remembering, reconciliation and justice within the current South African context. With this purpose in mind the goals envisioned for the re-enactment were therefore as follows: Firstly, to find a way for the process of reconciliation to once again be placed on the main agenda of all the faith communities and organisations. Secondly, to focus on the current challenges facing reconciliation and national unity, and finally, to contribute to the development of responsible and realistic reconciliation strategies and to offer practical suggestions on how faith leaders can address the current challenges of reconciliation, transformation and justice in their faith communities as well as in the broader community.

■ Some general observations regarding the re-enactment

The following three observations from the re-enactment are found to be applicable for reflecting on and interpreting religious leadership within the current South African context:

Firstly, it soon became evident that the re-enactment created an empowering and dignified space for religious leaders to reflect and make a contribution. The space was conducive for religious leaders to revisit their initial submissions to the TRC (in 1997) and to recommit them anew to the process of reconciliation; it was indeed a profound experience for all those participating (see Thesnaar 2015). Furthermore, the physical space for the re-enactment was set up in a similar way as the 1997 hearings. Another parallel was that it was chaired by Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (Cuywagen 2014:3) with the assistance of commissioners Dr Yasmin Sooka, Prof. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Glenda Wildschut and Prof. Piet Meiring. Based on the memory (re-performative memory) (Cole 2007:167)⁸ of how the TRC process was set up, the presence of the Archbishop and the commissioners implicitly created the impression, especially for the religious leaders, that the re-enactment was an 'official' event. In that sense, the re-enactment was implicitly provided with the 'authority' to call the religious leaders to participate. Although it was not official and the re-enactment had no authority in any sense, the legacy and significance of the TRC process still provided that status, even though it was 15 years later. This was evident in the way the religious leaders referred to and addressed the 'commissioners' as Madam by Commissioner or commissioner (see e.g. Thesnaar 2015:14–15). This was further emphasised with the spontaneous singing (led by Rev. N. Nyobole of the Methodist Church) of an opening hymn those present, which was not planned by the organisers of the re-enactment consultation meeting. This particular hymn was sung together and marked the beginning of the hearing from the faith-based communities (FBCs) at the TRC hearings in April 1997 in East London where Rev. Nyobole served as manager of the process. It was astounding to observe that the 'power' and legacy of the TRC was still so prominent that the faith leaders were committed to participate and engage in the re-enactment with the same seriousness and vigour as they did before. In a sense, this bears witness to the need for current leaders of faith

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8. Cole (2007) writes:

I argue that scholars have barely begun analyzing what the performative nature of the South African TRC might tell us about the impact, outcomes, and daily practices of this unique model of transitional justice, a model that has been widely celebrated and replicated throughout the world. While many performance and theatre scholars have been drawn to write about South Africa's TRC, most have focused on theatrical or aesthetic representations of the commission rather than on the commission itself as performance. (p. 186; cf. Cole 2010)

communities to re-claim their space in our contemporary society, as it was during the time of the struggle.

Secondly, a profound impact was how these faith leaders used this space to communicate an almost desperateness to once again seriously engage the political, social and economic spheres of life as a collective. In some ways, this performative setting brought back many nostalgic memories of the TRC hearing itself, particularly memories of how the leaders of the faith communities worked together as a united front to end apartheid and lead the country to liberation. Many of the leaders remembered the prophetic and determinant role the South African Council of Churches (SACC), as well as specific leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Alan Boesak, Peter Story, Frank Chikane and Imam Haroon, to mention a few, played to end apartheid. Being true activists they did not hesitate to engage and challenge the current injustices of our society at all levels (Thesnaar 2015).

During the presentations by the faith leaders, it was evident that there is a large distinction between the leadership provided during the freedom struggle and the leadership provided during the post-apartheid era by the faith communities. For example, the leadership provided by the SACC during the apartheid era was nostalgically described during the re-enactment as key, prophetic and powerful⁹ in its quest to end apartheid. To succeed, the SACC had many resources that made this possible such as well-organised structures, international financial support, and extremely effective and respectable leadership.

In the same vein, the leadership provided by the SACC and some of the faith leaders during the post-apartheid period and time of the TRC was described as struggling, non-prophetic and even dead (Thesnaar 2015:17, 30). A noteworthy statement made by the Archbishop was that this consultation could play a prominent part in the rebirth of the SACC (Thesnaar 2015:75), affirming how the current role of the SACC is understood today. The SACC was viewed as powerless¹⁰ with limited structures, little support, few resources and inadequate funding. Despite having quality leaders, the religious leaders of the faith communities failed to act.

Thirdly, the conscious decision to not only invite the leaders of the faith communities who attended the initial TRC faith hearing in East London (1997) but also to invite those

9. According to the Collins English Dictionary (2011:619) the word 'powerful' is an adjective and explained as follows: firstly, to have great power or influence; secondly, to have great physical strength; and thirdly, it means to be extremely effective. Also, see the TRC re-enactment report (Thesnaar 2015:127–143).

10. According to the Collins English Dictionary (2011:619) the word 'powerfulness' is an adjective and explained as follows: firstly, to be without power or authority, and secondly, to be unable to act.

who did not or could not attend, had a profound impact. This provided an inclusive space for faith communities such as all three streams of the Lutheran Church, and representatives of two white Afrikaans churches – the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA) and the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika – to be a part of the current process of remembering, reconciliation and healing. These leaders' contributions had a significant impact on the process of the consultation, especially the contribution by Rev. Fourie from the NHKA, who demonstrated humbleness, brokenness and a deep sense of humility during his contribution. He pleaded for understanding, patience, support and assistance for their journey (Thesnaar 2015:33). The space created by the re-enactment not only allowed Rev. Fourie the safety to contribute but also evoked a reaction from the Archbishop who in turn embraced him. The audience gave him a standing ovation endorsing the space, the event itself, and more specifically, the opportunity it presented to those who were not able to, or for whatever reason could not attend the initial TRC faith hearing (1997), to be granted a space to do so during the re-enactment.

In conclusion, we need to acknowledge and understand how difficult it was for the leaders of the faith communities to (vulnerability reality of memory [Vosloo 2015]) move beyond justifying their faith community's role in the past (historic or fossil memory), so as to unlock its role in the present (developing memory [Vosloo 2015:9]), in order to create a future capacity that can provide hope (future-orientated memory)¹¹ for our coming generations. What is desperately needed within the current South African context is for leaders of religious communities to facilitate and develop an active generation-crossing memory, by means of responsible hermeneutics (Vosloo 2015:9). Responsible, mature and prophetic leadership is needed to reach this goal within our post-conflict society.

Prophetic dialogue

In his book, *Pastor en profeet*, Miskotte (1992:32) refers to the task of a biblical prophet as someone who disturbs those slumbering and sleeping. To him, biblical prophets are always alert and ready to distort the balance. Miskotte (1992:42) describes the goal of the prophet as someone who hopes to penetrate the world of the powerful in order to guide them to use their power in the service of justice. To embody disturbing and distorting the

11. According to Vosloo (2015):

A first remark in this regard links with the fact that the plea for the power and importance of an ethics or theology of memory is confronted from the very beginning with the vulnerability (and maliciousness) of memory. Our memory is vulnerable and can easily deceive us: we remember selectively and when we recall events from the past and recount them, they are often historically inaccurate and distorted. (p. 12)

balance and to challenge the world of the powerful will most certainly lead to all forms of resistance. Therefore, the challenge is to be a prophet and to deal with the resistance in a mature and responsible way. Responsible, mature and prophetic leadership that is able to facilitate an active generation crossing memory by means of a responsible hermeneutic is deeply rooted in the DNA of practical theology. The New Zealand theologian, Gerard Hall (2007:1 of 10), explores the significance and implications of ‘prophetic dialogue’ for the task of practical theology. He argues, whereas ‘prophecy’ gives priority to the Word of God in scripture and tradition, ‘dialogue’ highlights the importance of respectful human, cultural and religious encounters. For him it is clear that both components are necessary due to the fact that they stand in a dialectic relationship to one another. In his approach, he argues that whatever practical issue one is dealing with, whether it be peace, justice, reconciliation, liberation, inculturation, or interreligious encounter, the category of ‘prophetic dialogue’ is helpful for understanding and evaluating the theological task. Hall (2007:6 of 10) proposes two possible avenues for advancing practical theology as ‘prophetic dialogue,’ namely, Raimon Panikkar’s (1995:149–152) ‘cosmotheandric dialogue’¹² and the ‘triple dialogue’¹³ advocated by Asian theologians.

In short, the ‘cosmotheandric dialogue’ is in essence a dialogue with the divine, human and earthly reality, whereas the ‘triple dialogue’ is a dialogue with the poor, cultures, and religions. These dialogues are by no means simplistic but rather challenging and instructive. Hall (2007) specifically argues that:

[W]hatever practical issues one is dealing with – peace, justice, reconciliation, liberation, inculturation, interreligious encounter – the category of ‘prophetic dialogue’ is helpful for understanding and evaluating the theological task. Specific methodological approaches will be developed by others – although I see in the triple mediation of liberation theology a helpful foundation with much potential for practical theology. (10 of 10)

They remind us that analytical powers used to understand a situation only ever scratch the surface of the full earthly-human-divine reality in which we are privileged to play our part. He indicates, in no uncertain terms, that leaders should participate in society in a spirit of ‘prophetic dialogue’, which entails engaging with a listening heart, intelligent head and an articulate tongue. These attributes are deeply rooted in scripture

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12. Hall (2003) indicates that:

Panikkar develops his cosmotheandric vision of reality with reference to three major religious traditions to which he ‘belongs’: the Christian Trinity; the Vedanta Hindu *advaita*; the Buddhist *pratityasamutpada*. He claims, nonetheless, that the threefold pattern – traditionally *Theos-anthropos-cosmos* – are invariants of all religions and cultures. (p. 5)

13. The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) uses the dialogue approach that revolves around three key poles: local Church, dialogue, and the Asian peoples and their realities (Kroeger 2008:82).

and in the theology of the church as well as the community of faith. Prophetic dialogue is therefore extremely sensitive to the pain of wounded individuals and a wounded nation, and according to Bosch (1991:510), we should engage it with bold humility.

■ Interpreting the lessons from Rosoux within the post-TRC context of South Africa

The emphasis on prophetic dialogue as explicated by Hall (2007) is indeed very helpful in terms of a theological basis for how leaders of faith communities should engage with society. It is, however, of great value to further dialogue with an expert who specialises in reconciliation and negotiations in post-conflict scenarios in order to be able to understand and interpret the TRC context of South Africa. In a recent article by Valarie Rosoux¹⁴ (2013) titled: 'Is reconciliation negotiable?', she tries to determine whether there is a need for further research on the interaction between the fields of reconciliation and negotiation in post-conflict scenarios. Rosoux (2013:488) found that 'more research needs to be done to clarify the relationship of reconciliation to peace-building and to determine which aspects of peace-building are negotiable and under what circumstances.' In her research she analysed numerous case studies within a post-conflict situation, and based on her findings, she indicates at least three¹⁵ lessons to keep in mind during any post-conflict situation. Her research is particularly relevant to the South African context as it incorporates the themes of reconciliation (the choice for the TRC process) and negotiation (the transition in South Africa was based on a negotiation settlement, as was the choice for the TRC process) in a post-conflict situation. Of significance here is that she highlights that reconciliation is not a one-off event but a process.

From the beginning of the re-enactment it was clear that a different emphasis was placed on how reconciliation was understood before and during the time of the TRC, and how it was understood during the re-enactment. Before and during the time of the TRC, the impression was created that most people understood reconciliation in an idealistic and romantic way. This could be attributed to the relatively smooth transition, the emphasis of the TRC, and the symbolic role Emeritus Archbishop Tutu played in stressing reconciliation and nation-building with the notion of being a 'rainbow nation'. However, during the re-enactment it was clear from the outset that

14. Rosoux is a senior research fellow at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS) and lecturer at the University of Louvain (Belgium) where she teaches International Negotiation and Conflict Transformation.

15. This will be discussed in more detail further in this section of the chapter.

reconciliation was no longer understood as idealistic or in a romantic manner, but rather as a process that includes justice, dealing with the past, reparation, restitution and so forth. This reinforces the need to clarify the meaning and understanding of reconciliation, which is affirmed by Rosoux (2013) as a necessity within a post-conflict scenario when she indicates:

There is much at stake, since without a fundamental clarification in this regard, the notion of reconciliation may turn out to be counterproductive. Beyond a theoretical interest, this question has a direct impact for practitioners; a better understanding of the issue is actually a *sine qua non* condition for more efficient interventions. (p. 488)

However, in a bid to grapple with a responsible understanding of reconciliation, Rosoux (2013:489) warns ‘reconciliation is decidedly not something that occurs after a handful of dialogue workshops between local leaders, nor through meetings solely at the elite level.’ Rosoux (2013) rather advocates for a more modest understanding of reconciliation that could be explained with a two-stage negotiation approach:

First, a peaceful coexistence for *pragmatic* reasons (common involvement into institutional and economic frame), afterwards a potential transformation of beliefs and identities. Rather than expecting a process that entails truth, justice, and forgiveness, it is critical to adopt a reasonable opinion in terms of aims and timing. (p. 489)

Although the TRC process at the time made a significant contribution by setting in motion the process to deal with the traumatic past of the country, it is time to be completely honest about the actual impact it had on reconciling the people of this nation. Prophetic dialogue entails that leaders need to be honest about the role religious leadership played in honouring a mindset that expected too much of the outcome of the TRC and of what it achieved in terms of reconciliation. Prophetic dialogue further emphasises that religious leaders also need to acknowledge that they not only expected too much from the TRC, but that they also did not adhere to the promises made by them during the TRC faith hearing in 1997, especially in terms of their comment to actively initiate and promote reconciliation. Rosoux (2013:488–489) helps us to understand that perhaps our expectation of the TRC was too high, but also that the faith leaders neglected to timely and structurally participate and engage within the institutional and economic framework, as well as to facilitate the transformation of beliefs and identities in order to assist the process of reconciliation.

With the above reality in mind and the need for further research on reconciliation and negotiation in a post-conflict context, as well as considering the danger of making generalisations without being context specific, Rosoux (2013:488) does, however, identify at least three lessons from analysing numerous case studies that are extremely pertinent in our post-conflict context. These lessons aid in interpreting and understanding the South African post-conflict context, and assist religious leaders in their endeavour to

reconcile our nation. I will therefore make further use of these to reflect on the South African post-conflict, post-apartheid and post-TRC context.

- Firstly, within a post-conflict scenario, Rosoux (2013:488) emphasises that leadership is critical to favour a better understanding of the others' interests. This resonates with the notion that religious leaders should function from intercultural pastoral hermeneutics (Thesnaar 2014:1–8), which will provide them with the ability to understand and to interpret. Where leaders are able to understand and interpret the challenging contexts of the other, they are able to initiate a sense of trust between former adversaries. In this regard, she particularly draws our attention to the fundamental factor that trust lies in the personal past of each respective leader. Her research indicates that when a nation is in transition things will develop more smoothly if reconciliation is advocated by a leader or person who has accomplished heroic actions against the enemy and now seeks reconciliation. Then, when this leader or person asks others, or more specifically, the nation to reconcile, transform and overcome the resentment towards the former enemy he or she develops trust, as it is something the leader or the person has undergone him or herself.

Applied to the South African transitional process before and since 1994 it was evident that the leaders who negotiated the process from apartheid to a new democracy, such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, to name a few, were leaders that embodied trust as they themselves embraced reconciliation after they overcame resentment and dealt with their past. They had the moral authority to provide leadership to assist the nation to begin to change the views of the other during and in the immediate aftermath of the transition. As time elapsed after the TRC, and as these trusted prominent leaders moved out of the public sphere, the significant question that comes to the fore is: Where are the current leaders who have managed to gain trust on the grounds that they have dealt with their past and overcome resentment of the other in order to move towards building a nation, and therefore, call the current and next generations to follow suite?

Rev. Nyobole (Thesnaar 2015:5) acknowledges this challenge, albeit in one area of our existence in this country, and therefore, requests that it is time to reclaim our role in education, as we know that through these institutions we are shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

Since leadership is critical to favour a better understanding of the other, the question regarding the representation of the leaders in the process of reconciliation and transformation is raised. At the re-enactment consultation it was clear that the leaders representing the faith communities were mostly middle and old-aged men. Prof. Jerry Pillay from the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa specifically raised the essential issue of gender justice:

With regards to gender justice, I think the first critical and prophetic message is to the church itself. If you look at the church leadership – and if you look at us who are making presentations today – where are the women? It is a crucial question and we have got to own that. We have got to accept that that is a critical question to ourselves. (Thesnaar 2015:15)

Another group and voice that was visibly absent was the youth of these faith communities. In this regard, Rev. Mathe (Thesnaar 2015:19) from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA) made a strong plea that religious leadership should also actively involve the youth in building bridges.¹⁶ Similarly, this was also echoed by Rev. George Ngamlana (Thesnaar 2015:23) from the Baptist Church when he indicated that they have opened up spaces where young people can come and share their views on the Baptist policy of the separation of state and church. Based on the above, it is clear that what is needed is a concerted effort to develop mature and trusted prophetic leaders that have the ability to move beyond their own limitations, power, et cetera, and to include leaders that represent the compositional diversity of our faith communities.

- Secondly, within a post-conflict scenario, Rosoux (2013:488) indicates that the only reason why former enemies can favour a rapprochement based on a constant negotiation process is because all of them perceive the effort as useful and profitable. In this sense, former belligerents will only commit themselves to such a move if it serves their national interest. According to Rosoux (2013:488), the best way to ensure that this occurs is to establish joint projects and to set up activities where all parties have to work together to benefit and reach their goal. Robust and credible institutions allow the negotiation process to progressively affect all levels of society (Rosoux 2013:489).

In South Africa, the emphasis was initially placed on negotiations at a political level. Spaces such as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) 1 and 2 (Thesnaar 2015:12), the creation of the (new) Constitution, the Bill of Rights, processes of transformation and the TRC process were created to engage former belligerents to participate in dealing with the horrendous past of South Africa, but also to develop a new future together with the other. In this way, the process of negotiation and participation was useful and profitable, as they could develop processes to create a new nation.

At the religious level, the SACC and religious leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak and others, played a prominent role in creating a climate for the process of negotiation and transformation to take place and to mobilise their constituencies to participate in these processes. Although this is of undisputed value,

16. This was also confirmed by Dr Nadine Bowers-du Toit from the The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (Thesnaar 2015:55).

Rosoux (2013) reminds us of the importance of mobilising the population to support these leaders in their endeavour to promote reconciliation:

Their role is undoubtedly critical to give clear signals to the other party. However, without the support of the population, official discourses and public ceremonies are ineffective. This point is fundamental since the outcome of the process depends above all on popular support. Even if a rapprochement seems necessary to the representatives of each party, it cannot be imposed by decree. The authorities can create a climate that encourages private steps towards reconciliation but they cannot force individual initiatives. At the most basic level, reconciliation is all about individuals. (p. 489)

This does raise some significant questions regarding the current post-TRC process of reconciliation: Has the leadership of the religious constituency in the post-TRC era engaged with the religious population for their support to collectively and individually commit them to reconciling our nation? Have the former belligerents within the religious denominations entered into a space where they actively work together in projects to deal with the past and address the challenges of their current society?

At the re-enactment, Bishop Kevin Dowling of the Catholic Church (Thesnaar 2015) expressed that we need leadership that is independent and authentic to help us move on:

Who will take us further? ALL OF US. Leadership in the faith communities, yes, but together with all the members of faith communities. We cannot pontificate from on high. Who will take us further? An empowered, poor, disenfranchised people... through the empowerment of their spirits. This is the place where the faith communities are uniquely empowered to be: sitting in the shacks; doing theology there; enabling our people to believe in their own dignity. Enabling our people to see that, if we are going to change the situation, then WE are the ones that are going to have to change it. (p. 12)

This was echoed by Bishop Horst Müller from ELCSA who reiterated that leadership must acknowledge that things are also happening on the ground, and that the world is bigger than their own denomination and leadership. At the grassroots level, things are indeed happening (Thesnaar 2015:17). However, at the level of leadership there must be more visible and sincere engagement with the other as is the case of some congregations.

In this regard, during the re-enactment Rev. Aucamp from the Gereformeerde Kerk, emphasised that leaders need to be imperative in what they do. He mentioned that leaders need to be prophets of another way (Thesnaar 2015:38). This implies that the church will need to move in a way that the whole pack can go forward. Leaders, therefore, need to understand and interpret the context of the people in their ministry. They need to know the Bible and the socio-economic context – the preacher needs to journey with the congregation to understand and interpret the

Bible, and integrate it in their everyday lives. In this way, the people will support the leaders. However, in reality, Pillay (Thesnaar 2015) indicates that although many things have changed within the church in terms of the race composition of many congregations:

[T]he pastor has not learned the dynamics of change – how to adapt to a new context, a new community. We need training. We need education and I don't think churches are talking about these things enough. (p. 15)

- Thirdly, within a post-conflict scenario, Rosoux (2013:489) denotes the importance of timing where the objective is to change an adversarial relationship. She refers to the work of Weinrich (1999:189) who alerts us to the fact that 'some events, particularly traumatic violations of human rights, can remain unexpressed for a period of time – a period that psychoanalysts often call "latent."' Caruth (1995:8) argues that the temporal structure of trauma is linked to the repetition of the trauma, and therefore, refers to its 'timelessness' and 'placelessness'. Based on the above, it is significant that trauma can re-occur over time, manifesting in different ways, with daunting consequences for both the individual and the collective. The impact of the timelessness and placelessness of trauma is that it affects the coping ability of an individual, group, community, and even a nation to function or participate in society. In this sense, it is impossible to envisage transforming past conflicting relations within one generation with a single process such as the TRC in South Africa. It will take a few generations to deal with the past, and therefore, Valarie Rosoux (2013:489) is indeed correct when she states that such a process may not be imposed on a population that is still deeply hurt by the stigma of the past. As individual wounds often hinder any immediate rapprochement, one can possibly postulate the following proposition: The shorter the delay between the conflict and the reconciliation process, the sharper the resistance within the population. Again, this raises the question regarding the current post-TRC process of reconciliation: Were the leaders of the faith communities aware of the limitations of the TRC process and the devastating effects of timelessness on individuals and communities due to the impact of the trauma?

Conclusion

The religious leaders need to understand that the TRC and similar initiatives aimed at different levels within our society seeking to bring South Africans together to soften their hatred towards one another will not necessarily lead to reconciliation. Fanie du Toit (2014:3) indicates that (since 2003) most South Africans agree that the greatest source of division in South Africa is material inequality and not race or gender. Although the issue of race is still important and has not disappeared, it does not constitute the primary cause

of division in society. What makes this even more pronounced is that in South Africa poverty is not only a material penalty, but also a social penalty – poverty marginalises people in society. Furthermore, class inequality continues to reflect racial divisions: it is mostly black people who form the majority of the poor, while white people constitute the majority of the wealthy.

Fanie du Toit (2014:3) indicates that those in the highest income groups in South Africa more easily feel that society is reconciled (mixed marriages, mixed neighbourhoods, schools, etc.). However, the same view is not shared by lower income groups, as these groups live in almost total isolation from the other groups. Thus, it seems that reconciliation is something limited to those with careers and employment. However, when one scrutinises the statistics even further, the contact between high-income groups and other groups manifests as mere talking rather than actually socialising with them. Although a high percentage of South Africans may say one should forget about apartheid, forgive and move on, there are more marked differences of opinion regarding redress, for instance, white people especially are less keen on talking about financial and material redress. In this regard, religious leaders will need to demonstrate leadership by timeously and structurally participating in, and engaging with, the institutional and economic framework towards economic justice, as well as to facilitate the transformation of beliefs and identities in order to assist the process of reconciliation.

For religious leaders to honour this commitment and opportunity they will need to be honest about their own commitment to reconciliation. Even before they consider reconciliation programmes, leaders must ask themselves how committed they truly are to seeing this process happen. During the re-enactment, Bishop Horst Müller (ELCSA-NT) (Thesnaar 2015:18) remarked that the tragic truth is, unless the religious leaders take the responsibility and initiative to be proactive, then nothing is going to happen. He stated that religious leaders will need to humbly recognise that their work is not over. This again places an emphasis on the role of a trusted umbrella body such as the SACC to assist in closing the gap between the leadership and the people at the grassroots level, and to restore a level of trust. Prophetic dialogue entails that leaders take the initiative and lead by example, as this will re-establish trust in the religious leaders and in the process of reconciliation.

During the consultation, the leaders recognised this challenge. Bishop Mathe (Thesnaar 2015:48) indicated that it is high time that leaders set up a team to focus on what brings us together rather than on that which divides us. The Muslim cleric, Maulana Abdul Khaliq Allie,¹⁷ indicated that prophetic teaching says we have to be balanced, and therefore, religious people are indeed waiting to be led by responsible prophetic leaders, as it is their responsibility to provide guidance and directives for the

17. He is the Secretary General of the Muslim Traditional Council.

people (Thesnaar 2015:60). In this regard, the faith leaders pleaded for action to honour the legacy of religious leaders such as Emeritus Archbishop Tutu and others, and to become role models across the spectrum of our inter-faith communities. Maulana Abdul Khaliq Allie (Thesnaar 2015:60) highlighted that the visibility of religious leaders acting in solidarity in the midst of ongoing challenges is of extreme importance, as religious people want to witness how their religious leaders and members can work together within our societies. Furthermore, he explained that in Cape Town, for years, the norm in many areas has been to address the issues young people are struggling with in our communities, for instance, crime, drugs, gangsterism and alcoholism (Thesnaar 2015:60). During the final session of the re-enactment a young participant urged the leaders to understand that the consultation is indeed a Kairos moment but it calls for a different kind of theology that can underpin our actions (Thesnaar 2015:72). This was clearly a plea directed at religious leaders to listen to the theology that emerges from the grassroots where young people live and engage. It affirms the necessity for faith leaders to demonstrate a leadership style that has the ability to listen and develop from the trenches of the grassroots and that can assist the reconciliation process. Prophetic dialogue therefore implies that religious leaders can no longer proceed with business as usual, resulting in the need to take responsibility and show leadership in this regard.

The reality of the depth, multi-levelled and multifaceted past trauma affirms that the journey of healing in South Africa will take several generations. In a post-TRC context, prophetic dialogue demonstrated by religious leaders as acts of courage, wisdom, and the ability to lead by engaging with grassroots people in order for them to develop a theology together, has the ability to transform our society and lead us to reconciliation. It is above all not only the responsibility of the religious leaders but also the whole of the religious society to journey towards becoming a nation of wounded healers – gentler, kinder and more just. Prophetic dialogue is not cheap reconciliation. It is about the commitment of both leaders and members to the process of reconciliation.

Summary: Chapter 4

The TRC re-enactment consultation¹⁸ afforded the opportunity to reflect on the leadership of religious leaders during the apartheid era, and in the years that followed. This chapter is particularly interested in the prophetic leadership provided by religious leaders during apartheid, and 20 years following the transition by engaging with some normative thoughts on prophetic dialogue. The findings on the leadership provided

18. The re-enactment consultation (8–9 October 2014) on reconciliation was presented by the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University, in collaboration with the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation (see Thesnaar 2015).

during the post-TRC are reflected upon in terms of reconciliation through the hermeneutical lens of the Belgian scholar Valarie Rosoux. Hereby, this chapter sought to contribute to reconciliation and national unity in the current South African context with some strategic conclusions to ensure that the process of reconciliation becomes a priority for all faith communities across the nation.

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