

Reconciliation in South Africa in light of the *imago Dei* and *koinonia*



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It is evident that the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its consequent findings, together with the dawn of the new South Africa, has not achieved its goal of a unified 'rainbow nation'. This is because of the fact that South Africans still face racialism and segregation from most quarters of the community. The racialism and marginalising are not only white and black dichotomies, but the fissures are evident in black-on-black and white-on-white anxieties. The infighting in churches and communities represents other contributing factors. The dream of the 'rainbow' society, which is raceless, has smothered the vision of peace and harmony of a reconciled society. This smothering has had a divisive impact on the possibilities immanent in South Africa. Despair, the promotion of hatred and polarisation are common anxieties among most South Africans. The race card is used for 'one's' own greediness and personal aggrandisement and there is a need for a solution. This study seeks to establish the theology of the image of God (*imago Dei*) in relation to fellowship (*koinonia*). Then, the study highlights the causes of distress in some denominations, especially those that privilege the name of God and thereby making a comparison between the churches and TRC which was a government initiative in the restoration of peace and fellowship process. From that premise, the article argues that despite the inclusive accommodative TRC sessions, racial intolerance and deep infighting are still rife in South Africa. Then, the study concludes by proposing a mission paradigm that advances fellowship and advocates that all people are made in the image of God, thence they are equal. The article brings forth the political era post-1994 in South Africa and links that to the social setting of churches post-1994. In that way, there is a link between politics and the church and how these have influenced the present in South Africa. The question is: Did the TRC usher in a new era of *koinonia* and brotherhood from a theology of the image of God? This missiological aspect is linked to socialism and politics.

Keywords: *koinonia*; image of God; *imago Dei*; fellowship; peace; *missio Dei*.

Introduction

Post-1994 saw the transition in politics, religion and social life of all South Africans. It was the dawn of the new South Africa and the birth of a rainbow nation, which was embodied in the dream of the late president Mandela. The dream envisioned that all people were equal before the law, and South Africa belongs to all who live in it. This was ascribed to the fact that previously South Africans were marginalised and living in a racist environment. This South African yearning for the life of peace and harmony wherein all would live in fellowship has become complex. To advance the desires of the South Africans, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to bring all people together as a nation. This initiative was embraced by different denominations in advocating for a South Africa that belongs to all who live in it. Church leaders associated themselves through consultations to contribute towards forging reconciliation in South Africa in curbing the racial tensions rampant in South Africa (Kuperus 2011:278).

Despite the above contentions, racial intolerance still ravages South Africa, and fellowship among South Africans is compromised. The study shows that this social cohesion was experienced in government and churches that were propagating the abolition of racial intolerance. In verifying the notion, the study cites a few examples from both the government and churches where racial invectives have prevailed. If this situation is not resolved, then South Africa will be living in an era described as the signs of the times, the sign of violence among all citizens where fellowship and peace will be inevitable.

The above events are pronounced by Ponono (2017) in *What do we do with the stench in-the-room*, who argues that the advent of democracy in South Africa has seen social cohesion as a fantasy and the distance between races is becoming wider to the extent that studies show that communities

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are more divided into white and black. And this is evidence of resistance to being in fellowship and living together as one rainbow nation.

From the above premise, this study demonstrates how humanity was made in the image of God (*imago Dei*) and God's desire for humanity to live in fellowship (*koinonia*) with each other on earth. But that was thwarted by humanity's selfishness and pursuit for personal aggrandisement.

A theological understanding of the image of God (*imago Dei*)

According to Lemke (2008:2), the biblical material on the image of God is ambiguous, although it provides ideas about the identity of God. The Hebrew words *tselem* ('image') and *demuth* ('likeness') are used in the Old Testament to inscribe the image and likeness of God. The semantic root of *tselem* is ambiguous, but if it originates from an Arabic root meaning 'to cut', it could suggest the idea of 'a cutting' or a similitude. The etymology of *demuth* is more straightforward, meaning 'resemblance' or 'likeness'. Although some follow Irenaeus in drawing a distinction between 'image' and 'likeness', the predominant view is that these terms are used synonymously to suggest similitude.

Therefore, the image of God should be understood as one that suggests that humans, being made in the image of God (*imago Dei*), are 'persons-in-relationship' rather than disengaged and disembodied objects that exist as discrete entities (Bosch 2010:390; Hoekema 1994:47). This is what materialised during the creation of man in the Genesis narratives.

From the Holy Bible, New King James Version (2012), in Genesis 1:26–27, states:

Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to OUR likeness; [...] So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him'; male and female He created them.

From this extract, this researcher contends that *all* humanity, irrespective of colour, gender, and race, is made in God's image. Therefore, they are equal before God and among themselves: each specimen is an image of God. There is no segregation on the basis of colour, gender or race.

This equality based on the image of God is emphasised by the World Council of Churches (2012) in its theological reflection document entitled, *Towards a Just World*, wherein the distinct characteristic of marginalisation as also made in the image of God is resonated as follows, meaning the image of God is not selective, it is meant for all humanity:

Although the marginalized are too often disempowered, and some have been tragically consumed, we affirm by faith that this God, also manifested as *Sophia* (wisdom), accompanies those who struggle against the enemies of life until they ultimately prevail. This implies that those on the margins participate in the

mission of God through their lives of suffering and hope and of resistance and overcoming evil. Therefore, the mission of God arises out of the very nature of God. (p. 159)

The thrust in this amplification of God can be related to what Baloyi (2016:50) echoes on *imago Dei*. Baloyi sees the teachings of *imago Dei* as an instrument that could help those who have been wounded to accept themselves as images of God without being compared to those oppressing them. What is paramount is that in every human being there lies the dignity and Sophia that comes from the image of God.

From the submissions above, the study asserts that although segregation, patriarchy and racism divide people into categories that look down on each other, it does not take the image of God out of the other. Although people are divided by segregation and racism, they still bear the image of God. The fact remains that after the temptation and the Fall (Gn. 3), the image of God, although tarnished, is still in all people, and this creates the possibility to live in *koinonia* (fellowship) with God after reconciliation through the blood of Jesus Christ. This reconciliatory deed with God through faith, and because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, opens the possibility of reconciling with all neighbours and living in *koinonia* with God and them. God created all humanity in his image, that is why all of humanity is equal before the eyes of God and must live in *koinonia*.

Fellowship (*koinonia*) and Image of God (*imago Dei*)

Koinonia is a Greek noun which means 'fellowship' as defined by Louw and Naidé (2005:352) in the Greek-English Lexicon. It describes the state of 'association' or 'joint participation'. It is part of the family of words like *koinoneo* (fellowship). Fellowship means that the person is in a personal relationship with God. God's intention with creation was to live in *koinonia* (personal relationship) with all people, as the Triune God lives in *koinonia*. After the Fall, all who accept the atoning sacrifice of Christ through faith live in fellowship with God and therefore also in fellowship with all others that are in fellowship with God. Being in a relationship with God implies that one is in fellowship with others who are in fellowship with him (1 Jn 1:3).

August (2005:26) states that the Greek word *koinonia* describes a close fellowship and sharing of life, frequently including the sharing of resources. Greek thinkers often used words from the *koinonia* word family to discuss how far communal property should be the basis of the political, social and economic order, and how much scope should be given to private property. This concept of *koinonia* is found in the Pauline letters from which the early church also inherited this special meaning that is given to the word in the context of the Christian faith. This resulted in bearing one another's burden and reaching out to those in need.

Based on the reconciliation with God and *koinonia* with him and fellow believers, all are called to reach out to all people

and live with them in *koinonia*. The reconciliation stance is missionary and Trinitarian in value, the Triune God lives in *koinonia* in the Trinity, and calls all people to be reconciled with him and other people. This calling resulted in reconciled communities whose purpose is to glorify God in fellowship with each other. The reconciled communities in fellowship are made in the image of God; therefore, *koinonia* is embedded in *imago Dei*.

In concurring with the above, Flett (2009:14) explains *koinonia* as the fruit of *missio Dei* (mission of God), which is cascaded to the communities via the church bringing forth that all are in an *imago Dei* relationship. Meaning that life with him takes the objective form of active participation in reconciled communities in fellowship, which are made in the image of God. The life of the community, as such, is not external to the message but exists in the act of reconciliation in fellowship. Therefore, reconciliation is real as it takes place and, as it takes place, it reveals and declares itself to be true *koinonia*.

To complement the above, the study refers to the Belhar Confession which campaigns for justice, fellowship, and reconciliation as the result of oneness and acceptance of each other. According to Plaatjies Van Huffel (2013b, Belhar Confession,

It is a confession for the whole church seeking to be faithful to God, who stands in the midst of suffering of all irrespective of race, culture, and creed. It advocates for the centrality of unity, reconciliation, and justice in the church. (p. 319)

As such it promotes the adoption and the reception of unity, reconciliation and justice issues as the road map that can bring about *koinonia* as a fellowship of all believers. That results in people seeing each other as brothers and sisters in *imago Dei*, who belongs to one race called one nation, but that is opposite. The Confession of Belhar expresses the Gospel claim for justice, reconciliation and unity in a different way than the other confessions of the church. The Belhar Confession has also engendered vigorous debate about the nature of confessions and the nature of the ministry of the church on social justice issues. The confession provides a scriptural and theological foundation for churches to stand where God stands with the marginalised and in so doing to become a church that is multiethnic and multicultural. This can be summarised as the mission of the church.

The mission of the church is applicable to *all* religions and denominations. This is because of the fact that *all* are made in the image of God and *all* must serve God and bring glory to him alone through *koinonia*. According to Ritner (1967:24), glorification is applicable to all denominations irrespective of their doctrine. However, in spite of good decisions and good intentions, in practice, it is still a huge task to reconcile the community and live in *koinonia* among religious, social and political spheres in the glorification of God. There are many examples of good policies and decisions in the domains of religion, social and political, but still the problem of making glorification of God a prime issue by being an example of

good *koinonia* which portrays the *imago Dei* stares back at the feuding world which is characterised by marginalisation, racism and patriarchy especially in faith communities.

Racism, marginalisation and patriarchy in the churches

Faith communities took part or still exercise orchestration and marginalisation as well as oppression among itself as the church and among its members, women especially are at the centre of patriarchy. According to the TRC Report Volume 4, page 66, para 33 states as follows:

While only the Dutch Reformed Church spoke of giving official sanction to apartheid laws, other faith communities admitted to actions and practices that amounted to acquiescence to them. The Presbyterian Church confessed to giving 'qualified support' to the government in the 1960s. For example, it defended Bantustan policies in 1965 and the right of the state to suppress 'unlawful subversion'.

According to Van Huffel (2013a:101), despite what the Church Order directs, there is a disunion in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) along racial lines, a division that makes a travesty of the injunction inscribed in *koinonia*. This has been at the centre of numerous consultations in the DRC and eventually led to the formation of the separate mixed race church in 1881, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC), followed by the black African synods in 1910, called the NGK (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk) in Afrika (Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa). This was followed by the formation of an Indian Dutch Reformed Church (RCA) in 1951. Racial separation was acceptable then as legislated by apartheid and it meant 'One can worship God in their own space'. This acceptance of chromatic segregation meant that the church was operating from a racial spirituality which had to be enmeshed in church philosophy.

In its endeavours for unity, the DRC held the General Synod of 1994 which became the turning point of the DRC, hence it was termed the synod of reconciliation. In this synod of reconciliation, a conclusion was reached to reject apartheid on document debates; *Kerk en Samelewing/Church and Society* (Niemandt 2015:611). Furthermore, at the 1990 DRC synod held in Rustenburg, Professor Willie Jonker of the University of Stellenbosch declared that reconciliation labeled apartheid as a sin on biblical grounds and hoped to unite its congregations, across the race division according to Kritzinger (2012:11). Although it was a biblical decision and a way towards *koinonia*, the reality is that it is still a long way before all members follow this decision conscientiously.

The DRC was not the only church which faced divisions on racial lines. According to Byrness (1996), the management leaders of the Church of the Province of South Africa, the Anglican Church, spoke out in opposition to apartheid, but church members disagreed about tactics for expressing their views. Some white Anglicans vigorously opposed their church's involvement in politics, while many black Anglicans became leaders in the anti-apartheid movement.

This opposition in the Anglican Church was evident when Bishop Zulu was elected as the Bishop of Zululand. His appointment as Bishop of Zululand brought about some dilemma and confusion among many white Anglicans. According to Kumalo and Mbaya (2015):

Some saw the development as a plausible one and an indication that the Anglican Church was living up to its principles and practising what it preached. However, many whites were deeply shocked. A newspaper reporter narrated the reaction of a white Anglican housewife to the news of the election of Zulu as the first black Bishop of Zululand: 'I know it's silly. I know he is a good chap but I don't like the idea of him confirming my daughter' (*Daily News* 28/09/1966, PC 165). It is reported that some families actually refused to allow Bishop Zulu to lay his hands on their daughters' heads and that some members abandoned the Anglican Church for other churches. (p. 10)

Page 79, para 80 of Volume 4 in the TRC Report clearly outlines how the faith communities marginalised people and how patriarchy is rife:

The representatives of faith communities at the hearings were overwhelmingly male. Only four of the sixty-six persons who appeared before the Commission in East London were women, and little mention was made of the links between racial, class and gender oppression. Women and women's groups played key roles in supporting victims and opponents of human rights abuses, as witnessed by the fact that most of those who testified at the human rights violations hearings were women, and usually did so on behalf of others rather than themselves. Yet, in churches and mosques, elsewhere, they were relegated to secondary status.

Likewise, drawing from the above the study cites the example of the MCSA, not because it is an exception, Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), which has an overwhelmingly black population, adopted an openly anti-apartheid stance on many public issues, but its leaders' activism cost it support from those who feared public scrutiny on this politically sensitive issue (Bentley 2014:7). That is why there are presently different mission organisations in the MCSA, of which some are white and others black in affiliation and in structure. This division signifies lack of cohesion among the members of the same congregation because it is based on colour, and not on *koinonia* (Marumo 2016:68; MCSA Minutes of Conference 2015).

The other aspect is patriarchy in the MCSA, which is based on gender. The practice on women is equivalent to what Mkhwanazi and Kgatla (2015:182) refer to as the black women clergy in the MCSA who are perceived as inferior by their male counterparts. The majority of ordained black women in the MCSA are stationed in rural areas far from their families, under the supervision of male ministers and most of their supervisors do not show empathy for them because of their cultural backgrounds and their patriarchal worldviews. Their ordained white counterparts are stationed in cities or towns. Cognisance is taken that the family values are upheld, hence the women ministers are placed nearer the husband. This practice by the MCSA clearly shows that

women are segregated according to colour and gender, another clear indication of the disparity in a church based on Arminianism-Calvinistic theology, which sees all people as equal and made in the image of God and living together in *koinonia*. God created man in his image. The gift of God's image is present in every person. Because of this creational principle, he stressed the worthiness of the human being (Marumo 2016:67; Vorster 2010:199).

The other denomination that has a history of segregation and racialism is the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA). According to Stevenson (1961:8), the SDA has operated within the scope of two groups since 1953. Group I, consisted of 'four conferences for the European and Coloured membership, the Indian Mission and the South-West African Field'. Group II comprised 'the mission fields and institutions serving the African population'. Notably, all the major officers of the black group were white and in reality these fields had little autonomy, which meant group II was administered by a South African Union Conference (SAUC) vice-president and associate secretary general, both of whom were whites.

The above practices were operational in the SDA even before the inception of the apartheid laws in 1948. According to Crocombe (2007:6), negotiations have been held to address the racialism in the SDA and have borne some fruit. The Good Hope and Southern Conferences merged to form the Southern Hope Conference in 1997. The Cape Conference and the Southern Conference were 'realigned' in 2006 to form the Western Conference. However, a court case to determine the legality of such a process is ongoing at the time of this research and is financed and driven by disgruntled white members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Besides the fissures in the mainstream churches, patriarchy and marginalisation of women can be experienced in the African Initiated Churches (AIC), wherein there are no women in leadership positions and among men, there is an unending cycle of infighting for leadership positions which has culminated in factionalism and hatred. These fissures have been the bedrock for divisions, cliques, and factions in the church. A significant example is the recent Shembe succession court case of the Nazareth Baptist Church. After the death of the founder, Prophet Isaiah Vimbeni Shembe in 2011, the demise sparked hatred, cliques, segregation and splinter groups among the same church. What could have been amicably resolved resulted in two splinter groups, one led by Vela Shembe of the Thembezinhle church, who is the son of the church founder, and the other group led by Mduduzi Shembe of the Ebuhleni church, who is a cousin to Vela Shembe (Sosibo 2012).

The dispute culminated in a succession problem within the Shembe church and led to the church splitting asunder. This split resulted in killings among church members. The loss of lives fomented and fanned hatred among the family and the split was inevitable. Rival factions have become the norm among these professing Christians, contrary to the essence

of *koinonia*. This was experienced during the pilgrimage to the holy mountain in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal in 2012, when two pilgrims attacked each other and the police had to be called in to quell the situation (Jumo 2012). The matter was brought before the court, and during the proceedings, the atmosphere was awash with hatred between the two rival groups. At the conclusion of the case in October 2016, which took 5 years, Judge Achmat Jappie ruled in favour of Vela Shembe, who is the current leader of the Thembezinhle church.

Despite the fact that the court ruled in favour of Vela Shembe, he has a stupendous challenge to forge reconciliation and unity among the two factions of the church. The problem facing Mduduzi Shembe is that the church owes R18 million in legal fees and part of that money has to be paid by Mduduzi to Vela Shembe. He has sworn to do everything in his power to restore unity and quell hatred which is rampant in the Nazareth Baptist Church. That needs to be seen, especially in the face of the fact that Mduduzi appealed against the judgment (Mthethwa 2016).

Similar patterns are rife among other AIC, for example, the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) and International Pentecostal Christian Church (IPCC) where there are different factions especially when the leader dies and the succession debate turns into a bitter rivalry leadership battle that divides the church.

The scenarios above clearly demonstrate a lack of unity, an entrenched patriarchy and divisive fellowship in the churches, especially where the church itself proclaims to be prophetic. What is evident is hatred, factionalism, and marginalisation on the basis of gender. The lack of peace and fellowship by resorting to the courts for legal settlement of disputes clearly shows that the church, instead of promoting peace, unity, and fellowship, is fast becoming an institution that spurs and spawns hatred and racism.

From the above discourses, it is apparent that even the churches are failing to reconcile and talk fellowship. It is also patently obvious that there is a desire among some members to live in *koinonia* with each other, but marginalisation, racism, and patriarchy take their toll and the daring will not stop now. The erstwhile late president Mandela took cognisance of the prevailing situation and noticing the history of South Africa decided to establish the TRC as a vehicle that would usher in harmony and fellowship.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The TRC was headed by the now retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu as chairperson, and his deputy Dr. Alex Boraine. The commissioners entered a volatile situation, which was characterised by a deeply divided society, which produced, at the time of transition, a great deal of hostility, mistrust, and instability. Thence, a lasting peaceful and acceptable settlement could not be achieved if one side

embarked on a series of prosecutions against the other. It was thus important to develop a way of coming to terms with the past, which could neither conceal human rights abuses nor threaten to destroy South Africa's fragile democracy (Battle 2000:176).

According to TRC Report Volume 1, Chapter 4, page 48, the TRC's mandate was conceived as part of the bridge-building process designed to help lead the nation away from a deeply divided past to a future founded on the recognition of human rights and democracy. Its purpose needs to be understood in the context of a number of other instruments aimed at the promotion of democracy, such as the Land Claims Court, the Constitutional Court and the Human Rights, Gender and Youth Commissions, all institutional 'tools' in the transformation of the South African Society.

The report further states that its:

'principal purpose was to highlight intensively the truth about gross violations of human rights which was not a pleasant task to undertake. But based on its foundation for the promotion of reconciliation and national unity. The TRC's mandate was to unravel the truth about past gross human rights abuses as it will be presented from different perceptions and assists the process of accepting our divided past, when in the meantime acknowledging our 'untold miseries and inequality' thereby restore the dignity of victims and afford culprits the opportunity to come to terms with their own past.' (TRC Report Volume 1, Chapter 4)

Successes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

In concurring with Battle (2000), Thesnaar (2008:54) endorses how apartheid damaged the social fabric of Africans: 'the tragedy of apartheid has damaged everyone, though not all in equal degree'. In addition, sadly, the transition of 1994 and the Truth and Reconciliation process (1996–1998) have not succeeded in assisting many South Africans to deal with the aftermath of apartheid or to face the reality of the new South Africa.

In perfecting the above mandate, Jardine (2008:69) concludes in her study that the TRC played a decisive role in the changeover to the democratic dispensation in South Africa. Furthermore, the Commission enabled and assisted many South Africans to make peace with the past and to rather focus on the future. An Afrikaans historian, Marietjie Oelofse of the University of the Free State, wrote in 2004 that one of the positive outcomes of the TRC was the empathy that developed between victims and perpetrators. She was especially impressed by the extraordinary capacity and willingness on the part of some victims to forgive perpetrators. This conclusion highlights the mandate of the TRC: 'the recognition of the need for the understanding but not for vengeance, the need for reparation but not for retaliation, for ubuntu but not for victimization' (TRC Report Volume 1, pp. 55–57).

From the church' side, the TRC has presented an opportunity for the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to publicly render

evidence about its role in apartheid, and in an official and trustworthy forum (Kuperus 2011:287; Niemandt 2015:611). Niemandt further alludes that it helped the DRC to experience that truth brings freedom and was influential in the process of ridding the DRC of the shackles of apartheid.

Failures of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Maluleke (2001:196) attests that the TRC's version of the truth was established through narrow lenses, crafted to reflect the experiences of a tiny minority. Maluleke (2001:197) adds that the TRC's mandate and its workings were such that it ran the very real risk of 'dealing lightly with the wounds of the people'. It lacked real proof that in the long term granting immunity to perpetrators would hopefully be more beneficial to society than criminal prosecutions. The wounds were not healed. Ultimately, that compromised the formation of reconciled communities.

Gibson (2006:409–432) summarises the failures of the TRC from the point of how justice was compromised in the name of reconciliation and that made a mockery of the whole exercise because of how perpetrators were given amnesty and when in totality all truth was not revealed. Besides that most critics refer to other factors that the TRC did not uncover the full 'truth' story about the injustice and abuse of the past especially during apartheid South Africa. Because of that people who were not entitled to amnesty did receive it easily and reconciliation was compromised at the cost of justice and that reparation to the victims was 'too little, too late'.

Taking cognisance of the above developments, this study maintains that the bleeding wounds of compromised communities are evident in South Africa. South Africans cannot live communally as a nation in peace, in loving relations and harmony. Hatred seethes among South Africans; the imagined rainbow nation has turned into a silhouette and a nation at war with itself. This is clear from the warring factions in churches and the racial attacks which South Africans have been subjected to recently from leading members of the community. Central to this animosity is lack of *koinonia* among South Africans, and some groups that want to dominate others, content in the illusion that they are better than their counterparts and forgetting that all are made in the image of God (*imago Dei*). This practice is rife in the government sectors which is supposed to be propagating peace, unity, and love.

The government and racialism

Lack of unity and peace is widespread among the communities and societies in South Africa. In this instance, it is promoted by civic leaders and politicians who are supposed to advocate peace and unity and denounce hatred. The people who sit in pews in the churches are the same people who are in charge of the government, economic sectors and even social sectors of daily life, and truly made in the

imago Dei. These people, in certain cases, advocate for peace and in others promote disunity among communities. These are the same people who desire to live in harmony and peace in the new South Africa. According to Ngwenya (2016), this can be attributed, in part, to the racial remarks by some prominent figures like Judge Jansen, Penny Sparrow, Lindiwe Sisulu, Julius Malema, and Isaac Mahlangu who have fomented these divisions on social, political and religious quarters.

To substantiate the above argument, the study draws from the survey which was conducted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation as per its Reconciliation Barometer Report (2017:16–17) which arrived at the following conclusions: that South Africans are desirous for unity and believe it is a possibility, however, equality among South African is the source of distrust and promotion of division. That was followed by racism which divides South Africans on the basis of colour. These two factors were the face of South Africa. The factors are seen and experienced through how the political parties address issues and articulate these around them. The survey has shown that political parties are the prime source of division. This is based on the salience of political parties and electoral politics for the 2004 and 2010 elections. The way the parties handle the political situation through intolerance and public patting has inculcated the spirit of non-tolerance and made the soil fertile for racism. Still, about the political parties, the use of language has divided South Africa according to the language sections; however, its impact in promoting segregation has not been felt that much in South Africa. But that is another issue that needs attention if South Africans are eager for peace and fellowship as a nation.

To showcase the prevalence of racialism and segregation, this study deemed it appropriate to draw extracts of Gwen Ngwenya of the *Mail and Guardian*, who posted an article on 07 January 2016 under the heading *Racist Black South Africa, who kept their jobs*. The following are her findings and experiences about racist remarks by the leaders of South Africa:

- **Lindiwe Sisulu – A parliamentarian**

What is the better way to showcase the illegitimacy of the recent furore over Chris Hart's tweet than, to begin with? – Sisulu's own tweet about entitlement. In July 2014 speaking about plans to eradicate the 2.3 million unit housing backlog, she said, 'What makes an 18-year-old think the state owes them a house? It's a culture of entitlement ... we can't continue with a dependency culture'.

In Parliament, in June of the same year, she accused Mmusi Maimane of being a 'hired native'. The comment was eventually ruled by parliament chairperson Thandi Modise as unparliamentary. It is near improbable that a white MP could get away with calling a black member of parliament a hired native.

In November 2012 in a heated discussion with David Maynier in the National Assembly over chartered jet flights used by the minister, Sisulu, retorted: 'Keep your flea-infested body at peace and sit down'.

- **Julius Malema – President of a political party**

A look at a list of racially provocative slurs would be incomplete without Malema. The leader of the EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) has become more demure in his racial taunts in an attempt to fashion the EFF as a party that embraces also white South Africans. Such is the amnesia that Floyd Shivambu has tweeted 'unfortunately the racist statements of #Penny Sparrow define many white people and DA (Democratic Alliance) supporters in SA & the indecisive Government is complicit'. Shivambu was seated right next to Malema in April 2010 when Malema lashed out at BBC correspondent Jonah Fisher:

This is a building of a revolutionary party, and you know nothing about the revolution ... so here you behave or else you jump ... chief can you get security to remove this *thing* here ... and you don't come here with that tendency, don't come here with that white tendency, not here ... you are a small boy, you cannot do anything'. He concludes this rant by calling Fischer a 'bastard' and a 'bloody agent'.

Richard Schweid (2015), in his book, *The Cockroach Papers: A Compendium of History and Lore*, gives a thorough examination of cockroaches, and says

if you want to say something nasty about someone, call him a cockroach: that lowest of the low, vilest of the vile, most easily eliminated without a pang of remorse, the cheapest of all lives. (p. 35)

In October 2010 addressing a crowd in Stellenbosch, Malema called Helen Zille a cockroach:

If Zille had her way, she would declare the Western Cape an independent republic. You have put a cockroach in Cabinet and we need to remove that cockroach by voting the ANC [African National Congress] into power. (Staff Reporter 30 October 2010)

Penny Sparrow took a feather from Malema's cap it would seem. Again deriding Zille he said in April 2012, 'Have you ever seen an ugly woman in a blue dress dancing like a monkey because she is looking for votes?'

But Malema's ire is not reserved only for his white political opponents: in May 2011 speaking of his refusal to debate Lindiwe Mazibuko, he said:

She is a tea girl of the madam, and her role must remain there in the kitchen for making the tea for the madam. Because that's what she chose for herself. So I am not going to be debating with servants for the madam. (Ngwenya 2016)

- **Baleka Mbete – Chairperson of the Parliament-House of Assembly**

Malema is not the only one fond of calling his opponents cockroaches. The 'joke' was turned on him in February last year when the speaker of the National Assembly speaking at the Mmabatho Civic Centre in Mafikeng said, 'We all need to [work] ... because if we don't we will continue to have the cockroaches like the Malemas ... roaming all over the place'.

- **Isaac Mahlangu – An executive member of the ANC Youth League**

Speaking in Nelspruit in 2009, the Mpumalanga ANC (African National Congress) Youth League secretary spoke of those who had defected to the Congress of the People (COPE) saying, 'Everyone knows that COPE was formed by insects that are hell-bent on holding onto power', and would be 'sprayed with Doom until it perishes'. Before calling them insects, he had also said: 'not one of those mad dogs who defected from the ANC and formed the Assembly of Polokwane Losers should get anything'.

- **Anele Mda – An executive member of a political party**

September 2009 Congress of the People youth leader Anele Mda and Member of Parliament calls the COPE Deputy Secretary-General Deidre Carter a 'stupid, white token bitch'.

At the time Charlotte Lobe, COPE General Secretary, made a statement that it was a one-off incident and speaking of the 2-month suspension of Mda said, 'This is not punishment, it is rehabilitation'. In 2011 Mda was welcomed back to the ANC with open arms at an announcement where Jacob Zuma was present.

- **Jimmy Manyi – Public servant**

Jimmy Manyi, the then Director General at the Department of Labour, appeared on KykNet in March 2010. He spoke of mixed race people in the Western Cape saying, 'This over-concentration of coloured people in the Western Cape is not working for them ... they are in over-supply where they are'.

- **Khaya Dlanga – Blogger**

This illustration here is added last, as an example of how black South Africans even outside of the political space, can make racially disturbing remarks in the name of humour. Not incidentally:

I have no objections to making fun of our racial insecurities, the trouble is that a white person would not get away with making the comments Dlanga does in this November 2008 YouTube video titled 'I want to marry a white woman'. 'Black women do not like it one bit when brothers are into white women ... I have noticed, especially the last few years that when a black man marry the white woman they seem to create this super child. So I want to have my own little tribe of super children ... this is my evidence; look at Barack Obama his father is a black man, his mother is a white woman'. (Ngwenya 2016:n.p.)

Based on the above remarks, this study surmises that if the proposed criminalisation of race were in place when the above comments were made, many prominent black South Africans would have been charged. This is not including the many black South Africans like Velaphi Khumalo, whose social media profiles on racism are scanned in All #RacismMustFall pic.twitter.com/mNVWvMSVnp. If we will not abandon the obsession with our racial identities, then at the very least perhaps we can lay bare the hypocrisy and dishonesty of treating black South Africans as the victims.

Gwen Ngwenya (2016) concurs:

We're all suffering from living in a country absolutely mad about race. Now that we're all victims perhaps we can stop the finger-wagging and conjuring of absurd laws and set our sights back on more productive areas of outrage and policy innovation such as the economy. (n.p.)

In aligning and complementing the above reports from e-mails, and other electronic media, it may be concluded that all the racist remarks are an indication that confirms that the promotion of segregation and judgment on racial lines is not the system of life in a 'rainbow' nation anticipated by the late president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. It further shows that South Africa needs an antidote to address the racist pandemic. If the racist remarks are not addressed, South Africa is facing mayhem.

Way forward

Despite the efforts of the TRC and the African Human Rights which have already been established and revised, it cannot be overlooked how there are still many human rights violations that occur in South Africa up to the present time. South Africa director of the Africa Division of Human Rights Watch, Tiseke Kasambala, once made a powerful statement (Human Rights Watch 2014):

South Africa's constitution provides strong protection for human rights and yet people are being attacked because of their sexual orientation or perceived refugee or migrant status. To make matters worse, the government is supporting legislation that would curb the rights to freedom of information and expression. (n.p.)

Although it is true that South Africa has played a massive role in enhancing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community's human rights over the years, it cannot be denied how the same country has still failed to manage and resolve the widespread abuse and violence being experienced by lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people in the country. In addition, South Africa has also not been able to address the grave violations to its citizens. This can be inferred from what happened in 2011 when a South African protester named Andries Tatane was killed by the police during a service delivery protest. All Andries did, he practiced his constitutional right to free expression and yet he suffered from police violence and died because of police brutality (Sosibo 2011).

The incidents, as outlined, clearly show that division is apparent and unity is necessary for South Africans to be in a position of fellowship. The events show that it appears there is a lackluster of the constitution especially on human rights among the communities. Selfishness, which is practised by some South Africans, has divided the South Africans who have requested for a call for fellowship and acceptance of each other as brothers and sisters of a big family called South Africans.

Koinonia is prominent in bringing healing, wholeness, and reconciliation in restorative justice. Reconciliation, healing,

and wholeness are possible when it grows and is embedded in being made in the image of God. South Africans should acknowledge and believe that they are the sons and daughters of Abraham through faith and that God is the Father who will at all times see to it that peace prevails. This is achievable if each must know and understand that we are servants and not rulers to benefit, but a benefit for all.

Marumo (2013:102) advances an argument that in order for hatred and racialism to be eliminated *all* relations must be based on a relationship with God. According to this perspective, religions play a truly providential role. God's activity in the world is not confined to a narrow history of salvation. His grace enfolds the world and touches it in many dimensions. The religions reflect the fact that every positive human response to any dimension of God's manifestation and revelation meets only God's eyes of grace in return. However, we should remember that the Cross is also 'no' to the world; humans may also respond negatively and every response to the divine initiative has its own consequences. Every relationship with God that proceeds on the basis of some dimension of God's self-giving to us meets a fulfillment for which it aims and hopes and opens towards the full *koinonia* of the divine life.

Furthermore, the Christian witness is that to each of these cases of rejection, hatred, and racialism, as well as marginalisation, the knowledge, and love of Christ, bring yet another dimension, one that knits all these together in communion and so constitutes salvation. This witness must be the preaching of the living Word. God creates by speaking, and in Ezekiel 37, the Word gives life to dry bones. Preaching this living Word of love and peace is to call people into *koinonia* with the living God.

Tutu (1984) in perfecting the above stresses that:

God calls us to be fellow workers with Him, so that we can extend His Kingdom of Shalom, of justice, of goodness, of compassion, of caring, of sharing, of laughter, joy, and reconciliation, so that the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. Amen. Then there will be a fulfillment of the wonderful vision in the Revelation of St. John the Divine. (Rv 6:9ff)

Potgieter (2017), in the *Executive summary* of the Reconciliation Barometer Report, touches on the subject of reconciliation as an ongoing process which must be mindful on how that it can eradicate barriers that might hinder the process and summarises that:

Progress towards reconciliation in South Africa cannot take place without opportunities for, and willingness to engage in, meaningful connection and interaction between different race groups. More than half of South Africa's population indicated an openness to greater racial integration in the latest SARB 2017 Survey. In general, the spaces where South Africans report having more interaction are also the spaces where they experience the most racism. Most South Africans, however, remain open to interracial interaction in all spaces – private and public – with the

main limitations in this regard (other than none) being language and confidence barriers. The latter is of particular importance, given that 'mother tongue' is the most salient primary identity of South Africans. A starting point for further interaction can thus be to promote multilingualism more actively. (p. 8)

From the above scholarly inputs, the study reaches the conclusion that any rejection of love and peace should be viewed as a sin and be treated as such because in other instances it becomes difficult to force people to accept each other as made in the image of God. But that should not stop the church, community, citizens, and government to propagate peace and love at all their respective gatherings. But every crisis has both its dangers and its opportunities. It can spell either salvation or doom. In a dark confused world, the Kingdom of God may yet reign in the hearts of men. All people are called as ambassadors of love and peace. Furthermore, the study is attuned that reconciliation, love, and peace cannot happen in a vacuum; the objects in reconciliation are communities or people. Thence, the people should engage meaningfully, honestly and truthfully. Without ongoing interactions and engagements, all efforts are in vain and peace and love will be unforeseeable.

Conclusion

Lastly, South Africans must accept that they are *all* made in the image of God as instruments of *koinonia* and they cannot afford to hate each other. Thence, they must reconcile and blossom in love and peace. This is only achievable through their own initiative and accepting each other as persons living according to the biblical tradition of justice and life and as Jesus would have done in this situation.

As the article concludes, it draws from the World Council of Churches, *Mission in the Margins – Towards a Just World* (2012), which cautions:

In our vision of the reign of God, inclusion rather than exclusion is the order of the day. We understand that mission involves working openly for right relationships, as a counter to perpetuating multiple, insidious divisions that plague us mercilessly, obscure our interdependence, and corrupt our relations not only with God, ourselves, and other human but also Mother Earth. The goal of the mission is to guarantee and maximise the well-being of all, which includes prosperity, security, freedom, and dignity. Mission fosters just relationships in the community, with mutual acknowledgment of persons and mutual maintenance of each one's sacred worth, and helps each person to play his or her part in the life of the community. The concept of *shalom* implies peace, but it is *always* a peace (*shalom*) that derives principally from justice and that promotes the flourishing of our potential to glorify God and serve each other. (p. 163)

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