

## Chapter 7 – Conclusion

*The love of God draws us out of the world, only to send us back into it, as we try to transform the world in the light of the vision provided by the gospel – Alister McGrath, professor Oxford University*

*Take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented – Elie Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize winner and survivor of a Nazi concentration camp*

*The underclass is neither proof of black inferiority nor a living legacy of white racism alone. Seen through my Christian spectacles, it is a living testament to our disdain for the poor and our disobedience to a Christ who commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves – Spencer Perkins, co-author of *More than equals**

### 7.1 – Introduction

Chapter six involved a discussion concerning a ‘distraction’ that led to the evangelical community becoming less interested in social issues. This distraction revolved around the theological debate over The Social Gospel Movement’s understanding of salvation versus the Fundamentalist’s perception of salvation. Also the inerrancy/infallibility debate served to further sidetrack evangelical participation in social engagement of justice issues. This has led to the mentality that evangelicals are irrelevant and aloof. This has also divided the Christian community into evangelical and ecumenical camps.

The thrust of the chapter was to present an outline for a theology of transformation. There were four major areas that were profiled: human dignity and equality, theological education, solidarity and Christian counter-cultural ethos. These are needed in conjunction with each other in order to establish a viable, long-term involvement in justice issues. Spiritual transformation was also highlighted as an

important aspect underlying a theology of transformation. Various civic and political leaders are calling for this spiritual aspect in modern society.

## **7.2 – Creeds of Past and Present**

John Lennon expressed a humanistic and atheistic version of the world in his popular 1971 hit 'Imagine.' He spurred our imagination to visions of a godless world that would be characterized by peace, unity and no greed or hunger. George and Woodbridge (2005:10) state: "In the early 1970s, the song's vision of a world at peace struck a responsive chord with numerous young people of the Vietnam War generation. The vision appeared to mirror well their idealistic aspirations for a world in which social, racial, and economic equality and justice might finally reign – a secular millennium, if you will. 'Imagine' quickly became one of the most listened-to songs of all time and assumed its place as a cherished, atheistic anthem of the 'post-Christian' West." The world is screaming for peace, unity and equity for all as we live in a post 9/11 generation. The current Middle East crisis of Israel invading Gaza to squelch Hamas rocket attacks and the ongoing Afghanistan and Iraqi wars, could easily re-invoke the desires expressed in 'Imagine.'

This popular 1970s hit reminds us that the world is looking for something to provide peace and justice for all. Evangelicals have lost a century or more fighting a theological war while the frontline of social injustice has remained a demilitarized zone. There seems to be a social awareness arising in the evangelical camp. Seemingly much awareness, but more involvement, is surely needed.

It is of interest to peruse several creeds and statements of faith from previous and present organizations. As one begins with Leviticus, the author imagined a society that would love the emigrant as oneself as well as becoming involved in justice issues within greater society. When one moves to circa 100 CE, the *Didache* states in chapter 1 verse 2: “The way of life is this: First, you must love the One who formed you; Second, you must love your neighbor in the same manner as yourself. Do not do to others, what you yourself would not want done to you.” (Notice the negative expression of the Golden Rule.) If one compares this to the early 1<sup>st</sup> century Qumran document (Davies, Brooke and Callaway 2005:18), the emphasis shifts from solidarity to a segregated treatment of the neighbor: “and that they may love all the sons of light, each according to his lot in God’s design, and hate all the sons of darkness each according to his guilt in God’s vengeance” (1 QS 9-10). One would need to determine who are the ‘sons of light’ and the ‘sons of darkness.’ Either way there is a growing distinction between individuals by this time.

By the time the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE rolls around the emphasis is strictly on the vertical relationship with no mention of the horizontal relationship. The Apostle’s Creed and The Nicene Creed seem to adopt this creedal order. The Nicene Creed does list the 10 Commandments as part of its creedal statement. The focus has shifted from social justice issues as the leading edge of engagement to a dedicated focus on the theological issues of the day.

In 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne did issue the Lausanne Covenant. In it emerged a declaration of Christian Social Responsibility. Paragraph five of this Covenant states:

Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty.

This group of churches from 150 nations admitted and expressed penitence for the lack of evangelicals' participation in justice issues. This was a huge step forward but the evangelical commitment to social justice and transformation would still be years in coming.

The 1993 Chicago Declaration also calls for a renewal of evangelical commitment to social transformation. The document states: "We weep over the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, the scandal of hunger, and the growing number of people who live in oppressive conditions, insecurity, and danger. We dream of churches that work for education, economic empowerment and justice, both at the personal and structural levels, and that address the causes and the symptoms of poverty." This group of evangelical leaders was engaging in an imaginative evan-

gelical hermeneutic. They were suggesting the implementation of an alternative society. The document continues and reveals a tragedy:

In 1973, we called evangelicals to social engagement: this call still stands. We are thankful that more social engagement is emerging, yet tragically it has frequently divided us along ideological lines. Too often recent evangelical political engagement has been uncivil and polarizing, has demonized opponents, and lacked careful analysis and biblical integrity. Faithfulness to the full authority of the Scriptures transcends traditional categories of left and right.

In June of 2004, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) ended its 99-year relationship with the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Chang writing for the *Christian Post*, March 13, 2004 states: "The SBC study committee's report contained undocumented allegations that BWA leaders had been open to 'positions contrary to the New Testament and to Baptist doctrines.' The report also accused BWA meetings and officers of exhibiting a 'decided anti-American tone in recent years' and accused the group's international relief arm, Baptist World Aid, of funding 'questionable enterprises.'" This rings of the old battle cry from the Fundamentalist camp. It has the undertones of 'If you do not believe as we do on every issue, then we will not contribute or fellowship with you.' Have leaders adopted the Qumran style to love the sons of light and hate the sons of darkness ethos? These types of attitudes only serve to validate the rift between evangelical and ecumenical. It also legitimizes the attitude that evangelicals are irrelevant and aloof.

The SBC revised and adopted the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. In paragraph XV The Christian and the Social Order states:

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

As one looks at this statement it seems very exclusive. The dichotomy or binary opposites are found in the form of oppose/provide and promote/compromise. All of this is accomplished by one's understanding of 'men of good will.' This type of creedal statement is laced with Fundamentalist undertones. Following this form of social transformation will do more to divide than unite Christians on issues of social justice.

### 7.3 – The *Hitler* effect

The tragedy of World War II, the death camps, people being labeled and killed because of their race, sexual orientation, or religious convictions, causes a person to reflect on the core of this violence. In essence it was simply the accentuation of the minuscule differences that separate us all. Shreeve (2006:62) reporting on the genome project states: “The human genetic code, or genome, is 99.9 percent identical throughout the world.” Is that not amazing!? We are only 0.1 percent different. All the atrocities of war and discrimination over the years have been based on 0.1% of genetic restructuring. We would have possibly exterminated the human race if it would have been just the opposite. Shreeve (2006:62) continues by stating, “modern humans must have lived in Africa twice as long as anywhere else. Scientists now calculate that all living humans are related to a single woman who lived roughly 150,000 years ago in Africa...All the variously shaped and shaded people of Earth trace their ancestry to African hunter-gathers.” Imagine that, we are in reality all Africans. What a pity that we are unable to celebrate our commonalities in light of our differences.

Johns reports in the *Sunday Argus*, August 12, 2007, p. 7 on the African Genome Project. She states: “ALL South Africans are settlers, regardless of their skin colour, and their DNA carries the proof.” Johns quotes Dr. Wilmot James, head of the African Genome Project: “No one group can lay claim to South Africa. Everyone is a settler, and we will show how people came here in waves of migration.” The article states that the inhabitants up until 2,000 years ago were brown. The theory suggests that black people migrated to southern Africa from Niger and the

Congo. It might become apparent, as the results will be in this year (2009), that the outbreak of xenophobic violence was actually an assault on our own kin. How ironic it might be that brothers were in actual fact killing their own genetic brothers.

What a humbling reminder that the atrocities of WWII, the eugenics practiced in Australia in the early 1900s, the oppression of the Roma or Gypsies in Eastern Europe (the most oppressed minority in the western world and considered 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens in Europe) and the continued oppression of immigrants worldwide is the focus upon such a small amount of diversity. This in and of itself should be enough for the 21<sup>st</sup> century church to awake from its slumber of complacency. Even now there is a wind of denial blowing over the extent of the holocaust or that it even occurred. A holocaust denier's convention was convened by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran in 2006. A former Ku Klux Klan leader and former Louisiana state representative was stated as saying in the *News Sentinel*, December 13, 2006 p. A4: "The holocaust is the device used as the pillar of Zionist imperialism, Zionist aggression, Zionist terror and Zionist murder." In a world filled with those content and hell-bent on terrorizing the world because of the 0.1% of difference that we share, the church must be an agency by which we are able to celebrate our 99.9% shared commonality.

This same kind of effect was seen and experienced in the aftermath of 4 November 2008. This was a historical month for America. It saw the first African-American elected to the most powerful position in the world. On January the 20<sup>th</sup> 2009 Obama was sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. This event was heralded as the most watched event in history. The swearing in of Obama

was depicted as a defining moment for America. But in actual fact it has become a refining moment for all Americans.

Refining moments were experienced in various corners of the United States. Students admitted to writing anti-Obama comments in the free speech tunnel at North Carolina State University, posters were defaced of Obama with death threats and racial slurs at the University of Alabama, a black teenager was attacked in New York with a baseball bat, a boy on a school bus in Georgia tells a nine-year-old girl he hopes Obama gets assassinated and in Maine \$1 bets were being placed on when the president-elect would be killed.

There have even been rumors of some Southern states contemplating secession from the union of America based on the Spanish model where a large deal of autonomy is experienced by constituent regions. Jonsson reports in *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 17, 2008: “But the political marginalization of certain Southern whites, economic distress in rural areas, and a White House occupant who symbolizes a multiethnic United States could combine to produce a backlash against what some have heralded as the dawn of a postracial America.” Many Southern whites feel that the country that was built by their forefathers is being taken from them. This sentiment is best summed up through a personal e-mail correspondence I received from a former Baptist deacon from the first church I served as pastor. He wrote: “I was sitting here thinking during lunch and this thought struck me...After all that time and money spent during the election what actually was the outcome? Another black family living in government housing!!” It has been stated that racism is like cancer, it’s never totally wiped out – it’s in re-

mission. A professor of practical theology once stated that we are all recovering racists. This is ringing ever so true of America in this historic moment in world history.

Those who are disgruntled with Obama are not only Southern whites, but one influential African-American has stated his disgust with Obama. The world saw him shedding big old crocodile tears the night Obama won the election and CNN continues to run this scene over and over. It is a mystery why CNN and other broadcasting agencies squelched the disgusting remarks the Rev. Jessie Jackson made while his microphone was still on in an interview with Fox News. Rev. Jackson accused Obama of ‘talking down to black folk.’ Obama had been speaking to churches about their moral responsibilities as fathers, reading books over playing video games and young people sticking with school and forgetting about a career as a rap star or professional basketball player. BBC News on July 10, 2008, in an article entitled *Jesse Jackson regrets Obama jibe* reports: “The reverend added: ‘See, Barack been, um, talking down to black people on this faith based...I want to cut his n\*\*s off...Barack...he’s talking down to black people.’” The election of Obama has truly been a refining moment for all Americans.

#### **7.4 – Summary of the study**

Human migration and globalization is causing a worldwide defining if not a refining crux causing nation after nation to examine their ideology of ‘neighbor’ and the responsibility each has toward these people. The church is being catapulted into an era of soul-searching in regards to social transformation and justice issues. As

Israel struggled with the question of ‘who is my neighbor?’ so the 21<sup>st</sup> century has ushered in a similar if not more intense struggle with this age-old question.

When one examines the text of Leviticus 19 there is an apparent class designation within the nation. The text presents various actors on the societal stage: companion, day laborer, deaf, blind, one of low status, powerful, countryman, female slave, daughter, gray head, elder, and emigrant. The stipulations were given in context of relationships the Israelites were to have with each of these groups. They were instructed in how to build a just and socially transformed society as they associated with members of society in a predetermined way.

Ideological criticism was chosen as a methodological tool for biblical interpretation. This methodology has as a component critical introspection on the part of the reader or interpreter. This approach to biblical interpretation demands the reader or interpreter to become aware of his or her biases that may color the way the Bible is understood. As applied to Leviticus 19, the author imagined a society that would be based on justice and respect for all people in a given society. This, of course, is based on all members of society adhering to the theology of transformation outlined by the author. This method of transformation is very doable in any social order. The glitch in the transformation machine has been and will continue to be a person’s ethos towards those in society.

The myriad of ideological critics that were reviewed highlighted various issues affecting their racial or gender group. These critics help the general populace of biblical interpreters or readers to begin to empathize with the issues affecting certain

historically marginalized persons in the greater social environment. It is beneficial to 'hear' their voices in order that the church will be able to correct its mistakes of the past and chart a course for sustainable social transformation in its present context as well as its future context. The utilization of a methodology, e.g. ideological criticism, helps the reader and interpreter to experience how the Bible is heard and applied by those who have been marginalized. It may be of assistance to the evangelical church to read the Bible from the vantage point of the conquered in place of the conquerors.

It was argued that the classical or historical interpretation of 'be holy as YHWH is holy' may not be the intended focus the original author had in mind when he constructed this text. With the application of Mary Douglas' ring composition a new interpretation surfaces. Even though this literary form went out of vogue in the mid fifth century BCE, a later editor could have employed this rhetorical device in order to give the illusion that Moses was the original author of the entire body of material. If this device was in use for the compilation of Leviticus 19, then the inspiration of the author would shift from 'being holy' to 'loving one's neighbor and the emigrant.' Of course both of these start one on the road of holiness which is the goal of love. To state this another way, holiness and keeping and observing God's ordinances and commandments are bi-products of loving one's neighbor and the emigrant.

This being the case then it becomes more apparent why the New Testament writers and figures emphasized loving one's neighbor. Jesus and Paul are both taking this admonition and applying it to their individual context. In essence Jesus sug-

gests that one's neighbor is anyone that crosses his or her path and is in need of assistance. The assistance needed could be some deed or service the approached person can supply. In Paul's context, the passage is interpreted as meaning believers have an obligation to serve those in need. The law becomes exhaustively complete when the debt of love has been paid. Paul also encourages his readers to use their freedom in Christ to serve one another. In this context, simply loving one another brings completion to the law.

James on the other hand utilizes Leviticus 19 as a text to warn his audience not to show partiality to those who are considered rich and of high status in the eyes of the world. He also warns his audience not to be lured by the mystic of the wealthy. It is very likely that some of this wealth had been acquired through exploitation of those in similar circumstances of his audience. He goes as far as suggesting that the much exploited riches serve as a testimony against those who acquired such goods in this manner.

May 2008 was a moral low point for the nation of South Africa. It was a time of African abusing and killing African; African South Africans abusing and killing African South Africans. This cycle of violence was depicted as ethnic cleansing with allusions to Rwanda and Nazi Germany. Four primary perpetrators of the violence were articulated by numerous personalities: South Africa's apartheid past, failure of the distribution of South Africa's wealth, poor service delivery and the inability to control the country's borders. The underlying trigger for the violence lay in the simple fact that those who were violated were deemed as 'different' – even South Africans due to their 'dark' skin color and different language were targeted. To put

it simply, in that moment of history, society refused to love their neighbor and the emigrant as themselves. This event was an indicator that a change in societal ethos was needed.

It seems apparent that everything a society needs is already available and known within any given society. For example the concept of *ubuntu* or hospitality or love for one's neighbor and emigrant is already a known value. The problem occurs with the implementation of this concept in society. The mystery is the underlying reason members of society choose not to practice socially accepted behaviors. Could the fundamental ethos be society's focus upon the 0.1% difference that is observed instead of the 99.9% of similarity shared?

For at least a century evangelicals have been reluctant in pursuing consistent, sustained social transformation. Their focus has been on the defense of the 'pure' gospel as viewed from their perspective. This emphasis led them to veer from their socially balanced conviction to take up 'arms' against the modernism that was understood as a threat to their sacred belief system. This detour has of late begun to deviate back to a more balanced approach to evangelism and socio-political involvement. This movement will be a breath of fresh air if it can gain moment in a racially and politically<sup>175</sup> charged 21<sup>st</sup> century America.

A theology of transformation was outlined in order for the church as well as individuals to begin examination of their relationships with those living on the fringe of society. This is a practical guide that any group or person can easily apply. The

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<sup>175</sup> To gain an insight into how the Bible, and specifically the book of Isaiah, is utilized by politicians in American politics see Claassens (2008).

foundation of this approach understands that all of humanity should be accepted with dignity and equality. Teaching, especially theological education, is the door that opens the mind and heart to recognize the dignity and equality that each person possesses as a creation of God. The refining moment for America in 2009 is to concede acceptance to the necessity of unity amid diversity. Until we are able to view all Americans as Americans the issue of race and division will continue to be an issue. If the society at large is unwilling to embrace a theology of transformation, then the church has to be willing to exhibit a Christian counter-cultural ethos amid societal chaos.

## **7.5 – Reflections**

Professor Tinyiko Sam Maluleke presented the annual Desmond Tutu lecture which was delivered at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa on 26 August 2008. In this lecture, Maluleke addressed the problems and promises facing the postcolonial South African Church. His thesis was based on the fact that the prophetic voice of the church has been diminished by the fact that priests, theologians and church people had ‘jumped ship’ and become involved in politics. Maluleke (2008:2) states, “the SACC leadership appointment in particular and church leadership appointments in general, have now become a training group for future civil and governmental appoints. This creates the worrying spectre of church leaders spending their time waiting for that call; not the call from heaven, but the call from the Union Buildings or Luthuli House.” In other words, some of those who had a prophetic voice are now in bed with the government. The political involvement of former religious leaders has lead to the church being “often silent

when it should be speaking; often absent where it should be present; mostly inaudible where it should be heard loud and clear; tongue-tied when the nation is hungry for its word” (Maluleke 2008:3).

There seems to be a longing throughout society and among civil leaders for the church to take its rightful place. The church worldwide has the resources to lead a community or nation to spiritual renewal. The contradicting reality is the church, or more specifically church leaders desire positions of power and loathe positions of servitude to humanity. The society in general is faced with a void that has been left due to the silence of the prophetic voice that the church has abandoned. Instead of filling the void with hope and healing through the love of God, hate and injury become common place. How long and to what extent will the church go before it resumes its rightful, God-given position in society?

This study has caused me to reflect upon my past, the culture of America and the religious denomination that has shaped my worldview. I wish I could say it has been a pleasant journey. But I must admit that to scrutinize the environment that has moulded me has also instilled within me various images of people that are not like me. They haunt my thoughts like ghosts that are in need of exorcism. The indoctrination that I received from early childhood and beyond is likened to broken records that continue to play and rewind, play and rewind. Racism is truly a cancer that at best goes into remission and is ever present to resume its destructive carnage of one’s psyche. I desire to blame someone else for the beliefs and images that cloud my thoughts of those who are not like me. Perkins and Rice (2000:84) assert: “Our need to admit that we wear racial blinders is similar to an alcoholic’s

need to admit that he has the disease of alcoholism...Admitting helps me remember that left to my own devices, I will look out for me and mine first. Only by admitting our blinders can we begin the process of stripping them away, piece by piece." I wish for a 'Racist Anonymous 12 Step Program' to recovery. I am afraid that I am suffering from what Perkins and Rice call 'race fatigue.' They (2000:30) state: "We are all suffering from race fatigue. Someone forgot to tell us along the way that you can't legislate people's attitudes. Changing laws will not change hearts. The civil rights movement has run its course, and we've gotten just about all you can expect to get from a political movement. The dream of whites and blacks sitting down together at the table of brotherhood is far from a reality."

I have always thought that if people work hard enough and get up and do something their lot in life would improve on its own. I am beginning to understand that evil is sometimes in the structures of society and not in the laziness of individuals. Sometimes it is not a matter of whether a person is hard-working or intelligent; it may simply be a matter of the systems that are designed to keep and maintain power and control in the hands of a few. The prophetic voice of the church needs to be raised against the structures that keep people from becoming all that they were designed to be.

I have lived as a 'foreign national' or 'alien' for 12 years. On more than one occasion have I found myself afraid to speak for as soon as I speak I am recognized as a foreigner. On the outside I look like a white South African but I do not speak or think like a white South African. I have at times been afraid to disclose my country of origin. During the Bush years, being an American overseas was a scary propo-

sition. I was once asked by a white South African woman where I was from. I told her that I was from Pinelands. She looked and responded with disgust at my reply. She said matter of fact that I was most definitely not South African and I sounded like an American. Even though I have encountered various positive and negative reactions at the fact that I am an American, I cannot begin to imagine what it must be like to live in the various townships as a foreigner. I hope, to whatever small degree, that I am more sympathetic to those living as emigrants/immigrants in a foreign land.

This project has also shown a spotlight on the idea of who is my neighbor. I was preconditioned to understand neighbor as someone who looked an awful lot like me. A person who was worthy of neighborliness was someone in my family or possibly someone of similar heritage. The concept of neighbor was bound up in a 'clannish' ideology. The notion that neighbor was/is someone who crosses my path and is in need of something I can provide never surfaced in my indoctrination as a child and youth. This reality is not confined to my thinking alone, but is an ethos that affects untold numbers of people.

## **7.6 – Future considerations**

Dube (2006:182, 183) equates globalization with imperialism. She describes globalization as a 'mutation' of imperialism. She (2006:183) states: "I also see globalization as an attesting to my claim that 'imperialism [is] a central reality in the making of global relations affecting men and women, privileging some and oppressing others.'" In her words (2006:183) globalization is "a new form of an old

problem.” If this is the case, then exploitation and marginalization of those on the fringes of society will continue to be a plague that scars the societal landscape. This is a phenomenon that is melding the nations of the world into a truly global village.

Du Toit (2003:370) states: “The more the world becomes one, the more it becomes differentiated.” With this differentiation comes the danger of nationalistic pride. This can also contribute to society focusing on the 0.1% instead of celebrating our 99.9% affinity. What an incredible opportunity for the church to be the leading prophetic voice for those migrants who have embarked on our shores in search of a better and brighter future. The church must be the agent through which society at large can see an example of an alternative community embracing our differences – while at the same time recognizing our sameness.

Globalization is also having a macabre effect in the midst of the global recession that is in full swing. Economic migrants who fled their country of origin are now finding themselves economic refugees. These migrants are unable to find employment and this leads them to being trapped in their adopted country. They desperately desire to return to their home but due to the lack of finances they are unable to buy fares for a return trip home. Some might say they are getting their just dues by being in a foreign country illegally. One must ask, “What is the role of the church in assisting these immigrants?” Or is the church asking, “Are these people my neighbors?” If the answer returns in the positive, then the church has a responsibility to assist these immigrants in safe passage to their country of origin.

A final thought for future consideration delves into the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Baptist World Alliance. These two great entities bring incredible strengths to the transformation table. One must contemplate how and/or if these two great institutions representing thousands of congregations and hundreds of countries and nationalities can or will be able to partner in global transformation. Each group has its own unique strengths in evangelism and social transformation. What a powerhouse for social transformation these two great organizations could orchestrate. If, only if, we could look beyond our differences and focus on what matters most: transforming people inside and out with the gospel that leads to just and equitable societies.

The world is looking for spiritual and societal leadership. Even secular pop rock artists are asking for guidance. The Blackeyed Peas with Justin Timberlake in their popular tune *Where is the Love* comments:

But if you only have love for your own race/Then you only leave space to discriminate/And to discriminate only generates hate/And when you hate then you're bound to get irate, yeah/Madness is what you demonstrate/And that's exactly how anger works and operates/Man, you gotta have love just to set it straight/Take control of your mind and meditate/Let you soul gravitate to the love, y'all/People killin', people dyin'/children hurt and you hear them cryin'/Can you practice what you preach/And would you turn the other cheek/Father, Father, Father help us/Send some guidance from above/'Cause people got me, got me questionin'/Where is the love

The world needs an example of what genuine love looks like in action. The church is faced with a dire decision to begin demonstrating love or simply continue the rhetoric that has led us to this point in time.

Bennett (1995:761) records an incident in the life of Mother Teresa:

I had the most extraordinary experience of love of neighbor with a Hindu family. A gentleman came to our house and said: 'Mother Teresa, there is a family who has not eaten for so long. Do something.' So I took some rice and went there immediately. And I saw the children – their eyes shining with hunger, I don't know if you have ever seen hunger. But I have seen it very often. And the mother of the family took the rice I gave her and went out. When she came back, I asked her: 'Where did you go? What did you do?' and she gave me a very simple answer: 'They are hungry also.' What struck me was that she knew – and who are they? A Muslim family – and she knew. I didn't bring any more rice that evening because I wanted them, Hindus and Muslims, to enjoy the joy of sharing.

It is necessary to acknowledge the many NGOs, mission's organizations, community development projects and churches and individuals that have initiated various 'islands of hope' within different communities throughout South Africa. A few examples in the Cape Town area are Living Hope, Beautiful Gate, Learn to Earn and many churches. One example worthy of mentioning is of a pastor and his wife. After the murder of their son during the youth uprisings in Cape Town during the 1980s, they felt a desire to move into the area where the gangs lived that killed

their son. As of to date they are fostering 22 HIV/AIDS orphans in the former city rubbish heap of Cape Town.

Most of the aforementioned organizations are funded by overseas as well as local sources. This project has been to highlight the fact that every church within the many communities throughout South Africa, and America, have a responsibility to initiate 'islands of hope.' The resources for the development of these 'islands' are already available within the various religious communities. For a theology of transformation to develop it must not be dependent on outside resources. Sustainable development must occur within the confines of the local community and at the same time utilize the talents and gifts that are already in existence. The continued dependence and reliance on foreign resources will only inhibit the development of sustainable, indigenous societal transformation.

Does the church know of those suffering and downtrodden? Are we willing to discover those who are struggling to get by? Or are we so desensitized to the plight of those around us that we tire from race fatigue? The world is screaming for us to do something. What a joyous moment it would be if we could arrive to the place of alleviating suffering just for the joy of sharing.