

THE CALLING OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE  
MORAL RENEWAL OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

By

MOTSHINE A SEKHAULELO

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **'THE CALLING OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE MORAL RENEWAL OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA'**

The main aim of this study was to investigate the prophetic calling of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA) in the moral regeneration of the South African urban community. The method of research followed in this study was to study primary and secondary sources, as well as appropriate biblical teachings and theological principles relevant to this study and to systematise the information. An analysis was provided of the main problems regarding moral decay besetting the South African urban community and the main challenges this moral decay poses for the RCSA were identified. A strategy the RCSA should implement in tackling these challenges was devised and a number of practical projects the RCSA could undertake at congregational level to concretise the strategy were discussed.

The study confirmed that the Church has an important role to play as the driving agent for moral regeneration of the South African urban community. It was pointed out that the moral regeneration of the urban community in South Africa cannot be left to the government. The main reason is that morality cannot be legislated. However, when the love of God transforms the lives of people, it changes the heart, heals moral decay, provides strength to overcome temptation and gives the desire to reach out to people (friends, relatives' neighbours, strangers and even enemies) in true love. The congregation's main task with regard to moral regeneration is therefore to be clear about God's mission, to discern what God is doing in the community and to serve his mission in practical ways.

## **KEY WORDS**

KINGDOM OF GOD

MORAL DECAY

MORAL RENEWAL

MORAL REGENERATIONMOVEMENT

REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

THEOLOGY OF THE CITY

URBAN COMMUNITY

URBANISATION

URBAN MINISTRY

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.1 TITLE**

#### **THE CALLING OF THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE MORAL RENEWAL OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **1.2 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

#### **1.2.1 Background**

One of the salient features of our time is the rapid growth of cities in all six continents. “Developing countries are facing an urbanisation explosion which has yet not been experienced” (Mutavhatsindi, 2008:91). This rapid urban growth was confirmed by Richardson (2007:53) who says: “The relentless development of urbanisation has created cities of size”. Furthermore he notes that the drift of mankind away from the land into cities has created an urban monster that few could have foreseen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Pierli & Abeledo (2002:61) defines the phenomenon of urbanisation as the process whereby people acquire material and non-material elements of culture, behaviour patterns and ideas that originate in, or are distinctive of, the city. Urban growth, on the other hand, is the physical aspect of urbanisation. The term refers to the number of people actually living in urban areas, the increase of urban populations and the multiplication of towns. It is a global phenomenon, caused by a combination of economic and socio-cultural factors. Almost fifty per cent of the world’s population currently live in towns and cities and are considered to be urbanised (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:6; McLaren, 2006:129).

The high population growth in South Africa, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, is positively linked to rapid and high levels of urbanisation. The abolishment of influx control in 1986 resulted in a great number of individuals and families flocking to urban areas in search of a better life. When one speak of cities and the nature of the urban environment, one largely describes what in contemporary parlance is called globalisation. Globalisation is predominantly, though not exclusively; an urban

phenomenon. Tiplay (2003:2) describes globalisation as an increasing sense of a single global whole. These trends resulted in the breakdown of tribal and family life and an increased disregard for their social and moral norms, as well as economic, religious and mental insecurity.

Within the church, the harm of globalisation is also clearly seen. The importing of all kinds of foreign teaching and styles of worship means that churches in the cities are conforming to non-traditional values and imported behaviour and are not valuing their own cultural church heritage. There is a lack of understanding in the Church about sects and the New Age coming, especially in Africa (Tiplady, 2003:183). In South Africa, the most rapid urbanisation is occurring around the largest cities: Cape Town, Durban, Greater Johannesburg, the Vaal Triangle, Pretoria, the North East Rand (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:8; Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:42; Venter, 1998:196). Due to the researcher's own limitations, but also because of the breadth of his research, Greater Johannesburg is going to be used for the purpose of illustration.

### 1.2.2 Problem Statement

Mostert (1997:27) remarks that South African cities have changed since 1994. In the past, most decisions were based on a Calvinistic mind-set anchored in the Bible and biblical principles. This does not mean that all city council members were Christian, but the council functioned according to Christian values. He indicates further that in the new political situations, everything is moving in the direction of a secular state that is anchored in an African-Western, humanistic mind-set which is basically in opposition to biblical truth. South African cities are therefore very much in the mould of change: political change, change of racial authority and, last change in value systems. Strydom & Wessels (2000:7) added to the idea of Mostert when they say: "The face of South African society has changed and new challenges have arisen."

Moreover, Hui (2004:99) recognises that terrorism, coupled with religious militancy, the increase in illegal immigration and the refugee problems, has changed the face of church mission altogether. During the past few years there have also been renewed calls on all South Africans to meet these challenges. However, one issue which is the

centre of debate at the moment is the degeneration of morality as one of the consequences of urbanisation (Greenway & Mashau (2007:17). Indeed, this unprecedented urban growth has repercussions on traditional sustainable land use, water resources, environmental quality and management.

Of real concern is water pollution, which is partially caused by urban activities such as industry. For example, many factories discharge effluent into surface water or cause indirect water pollution by dumping waste (see Singh, 2001:51). Richardson (2007:53) on the other hand says, "Air pollution is often bad, and respiratory diseases are endemic". This implies that the urban environment too needs redemption and restoration.

Van der Walt (1991:216) justifiably points out that urbanisation complicated people's lives enormously and contributed to the origin of a new kind of man. He mentions further that "urban disorders and endemic warfare in the countryside, increased conflict among individuals, families, and social groups, a growing social mobility that left a substantial proportion of the urban population rootless and insecure, above all the terrible anxieties of life in which familiar conventions of a close and traditional human community had given way to a relentless struggle for survival in a total unpredictable and threatening world.

As Woodberry *et al.*, (1996:144) put it cities are like battlefields where issues of many kinds are raised and fought over daily. Opposing world views, value systems, and lifestyles stand toe to toe in urban centres. From these same places emanates most of the negative and disintegrating forces that wage havoc on the natural environment and on human life in general. It is beyond doubt that urbanisation has left our cities struggling to cope with new demands: corruption, the scale of disorder, violence against women and children, and family erosion (Gevisser, 2009:221; Altbeker, 2007:100; Pottinger, 2008:121; Holden, 2008:71; see Vorster, 2004:251; Strauss *et al.*, 2006:42).

Vorster (2007:71) contends rightly that commercial sex is common in Africa, especially in urban centres, since illicit sex provides an easy and substantial source of income. The advent of HIV/Aids is a clear reminder of this public dimension of sexual behaviour and the need to develop safe sexual mores. The virus has been spread by people

movements, like many other illnesses in history. South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis with regard to sexual mores.

Other factors, which also contribute to the decay of morality in urban areas today, includes: murder, drug addicts, street beggars, street alcoholics, the street children, cash-in-transit, robberies, high rate of femicide, pornography and prostitution, xenophobic attacks, high rate of divorce, syncretism, cohabitation, carjacking, kidnapping, and the commune (Snyder, 2001:82; Richardson, 2007:66; Pottinger, 2008:121; Gumede, 2005:162;Altbeker, 2007:65; Vorster, 2007:100; Dobson, 2002:142; Popenoe et al., 1998:148; Monsma, 2006:78; Basu, 2005:133; Brown, 1978:166; see Vincent, 2000:59; Roger et al., 1999:107; Feinstein, 2007:248). If this is the city, the conclusion is inescapable that fierce spiritual battles rage here and the chief struggle is for the allegiance of human hearts and lives. Here lies Christianity's chief challenge. Having delineated the context for this study, the focus of this research will endeavour to answer this question:

What is the profile and manifestation of moral decay in the urban community, and what prophetic role does the RCSA has towards moral renewal of the South African urban society?

This question can be divided into six sub-questions. These are:

- What are the challenges of urbanisation, especially regarding moral decay?
- What is a biblical theology of cities and of urban ministry?
- How should the Reformed Churches in South Africa respond to the moral decay posed by urbanisation?
- Which strategy should the local congregations of the RCSA implement in their urban ministry to promote moral renewal?
- Which projects can the local congregations of the RCSA undertake to promote moral regeneration in urban areas?

### 1.3 RELEVANCY OF THIS STUDY

The study is relevant in the following ways:

By way of background, after the researcher completed his theological training in 1999, he was called by the Reformed church in Meadowlands in Soweto in 2001. Meadowlands is on the south-western border of Johannesburg. To a large extent the sad urban situation is the result of the lack of proper housing and facilities (cf. Kritzinger *et al.*, 1994:94). Meadowlands is no exception in this regard. The researcher finds this in practice: although some impressive buildings remain, like shopping malls, police stations and schools, in reality, much of Meadowlands had degenerated into a slum.

Richardson (2007:55) defines a 'slum' as an overcrowded squalid neighbourhood where there is bad housing. Common features of slums are a lack of clean water, poor sanitation and pollution. An acceptable healthy family life is not possible in the slums. People are sharing the space with no privacy for either personal or family life. The yards are packed tightly with shacks and hovels in which whole families struggle to survive. Landlords crammed as many tenants as possible into one property, often charging them exorbitant rent; as many as eighty people live on one stand, sharing a single water tap and single toilet. Recreational and educational activities and facilities are mostly absent. The youth live on the streets and only come home to sleep.

Morally, there are high rates of divorce and, sexual licentiousness among the youth, teenage pregnancy and single-motherhood, mainly among young girls. Socially, there are outbreaks of xenophobic attacks, the increase of drug and alcohol abuse and the continuing trauma of poverty. There are also escalating numbers of heart-rending stories in Meadowlands. One of the most heart-breaking and also striking social consequences of the AIDS epidemic which the researcher observes in Meadowlands is the number of orphans and in many cases the increase of child-headed households.

Due to stigma surrounding the deaths of their parents, Aids orphans are shunned and left to roam the streets. Even when they are accepted by relatives, poverty makes many of these children vulnerable to HIV infection in their turn (Kalipeni, 2004:4). The responsibility for income and care, sometimes not only for siblings but also for their

ailing parents and elderly grandparents, is falling increasingly on the shoulders of children. Concomitant with the above-mentioned pressing challenges is the lack of culture and constructive authority in schools. As a result many schools in Meadowlands are dysfunctional and are being plagued by drugs, alcohol, sexual abuse, and violence. The majority of teachers lack the required subject knowledge, and are not teaching what they are trained to teach and too often they lack the commitment to teach for six and a half hours every day.

As a result many pupils leave the foundation phase without basic literacy and numeracy skills required to succeed later on. Many young girls are using abortion as contraception and are dying as a result. When one moves around the city one sees pamphlets all over the lampposts advertising abortion. There is also an 'urban legend' in Meadowlands that many girls become pregnant just to get their hands on child support grants. The events that led to this tragedy are symbolic of the moral decay in the South African cities to which one is becoming accustomed.

The second reason for doing this research is that Churches are important moral decision makers. Apart from promoting a theocentric worldview according to Scripture, many other issues relating to the protection of the environment can be attended to by Churches at local level (Vorster, 2004:263; cf. Greenlee, 2003:142; see Senkhane, 2002:29). The researcher also believes that in order for the moral generation project to succeed, and if anyone would be motivated to change the urban settings and regenerate its moral decay it ought to be the followers of Christ (Church), who do not only have the reason but also the power to act through the Holy Spirit. One cannot stand as spectators any longer but should take charge and change this world.

Furthermore, Rogers (1989:2-3) pointed out that worldwide trends indicate that all nations are becoming urbanised and that the Church in every country must solve the issues of ministry in urban areas or face great ineffectiveness. Mutavhatsindi (2008:92) also indicated that the rush to the cities is on, and within the next few decades perhaps three quarters of the human race will be born, live, and die in urban rather than rural areas. Dawson (1989:35) concurs with the above-mentioned views in that the larger



cities are filled with a multiplicity of ethnic peoples who have turned urban areas into one of the major mission fields of the world.

The author is of the view that people who are recently dislocated, and are experiencing major changes in their lives, are more open to the gospel than they were before. This is true also among people who have recently arrived in SA cities. New people in the SA cities are open to new ideas, including ideas about God and religion. This led the researcher to believe that the massive migration to the cities that is occurring around the world may be, in God's providence, a key to world evangelisation. Through urbanisation, God is drawing people of every race, tribe and language to places where they can be reached with the gospel. This means that God is creating new opportunities for spreading the gospel among unreached people coming from remote towns and villages. It is our task to take hold of the opportunity and carry out Christ's missionary command (Winter & Hawthorne, 1999:554).

Therefore, the third reason for doing this research is to give advocacy and encouragement to those who harbour misgivings about cities, and hence are reluctant to consider urbanising the curriculum, to reflect on the fact that urbanisation as a present fact of life for most of the human family it is a reality under the providential control of God. Fourth reason is that the majority of Reformed Churches in the urban settings, even those in smaller cities, are facing enormous demographic shifts and are perplexed as to how to meet the needs of their changing communities. Many churches in these transitional communities face a number of options:

- Many Reformed Churches in the urban areas decide to find new homes in the suburbs instead of dealing with the constant change.
- Some stay but maintain a "fortress mentality" and die a slow death from irrelevance. Still others stay and decide to change with the community.
- For those congregations that decide to stay and change, provide food distribution, and housing and employment programs to reach out to the strange, but the church continues to struggle at the point of extending community to the stranger.

- Many urban Churches have reached out through elaborate and costly programs, but a fence of professional distance remains. They have not allowed the stranger to be one with them (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1996:106-7).

McGavran (1988:112) is of the opinion that the birth and growth of world class cities is a new frontier for the evangelist and church planter. He indicates further that the world's population has migrated to the cities and this migration has given birth to cities larger than ever existed. It can be deduced that men and women need to be educated for Christian service in this world of urbanisation and globalisation. Their education must have a solid foundation in the Scriptures and make them effective servants of Christ in the cities. Biblical strategies for growing city Churches must be sought and city workers must be trained for this purpose (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:9-11).

1.3.1 The specific objectives of this study are:

- To outline the introduction, the purpose, and relevancy of this study.
- To investigate and to outline a biblical theology of cities and of urban ministry.
- To explain the urbanisation as a new frontier for the Reformed Churches in South Africa.
- To research the role of the RCSA towards moral renewal of urban communities.
- To research the strategy which the RCSA can employ in the cities.
- To make recommendations regarding specific projects local congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa can undertake towards moral renewal of urban community.

#### 1.4 CENTRAL THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

This dissertation argues that due to the consequences of urbanisation there are definite symptoms of moral decay in South African urban communities today, and that the RCSA has a prophetic role to play in promoting the moral renewal of the South African urban community.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

This study will employ one research method, namely literature study method. By literature study is meant the selection and ordering of relevant material by analysis and interpretation from mainly basis-theory literature to fit the needs of the research. In order to have relevant information regarding this research, a few remarks about a suitable hermeneutic for Reformed ethics flowing from the classic Reformed view of the authority of Scripture will thus be appropriate in this research. However, to avoid excessive prejudice in this study, the author proposes to give a balanced recognition to sources of information that are not written exclusively by those of a Reformed persuasion.

## 1.6 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter one: Gives an introduction, it focus on the relevancy of the study, problem statement, aim and objectives, central theoretical argument, reasons for studying, research methodology and explanation of related concepts.

Chapter two: Focuses on a biblical theology of the cities and of urban ministry; it outlines the dynamics of urban demographics. It points out that city growth is not something to be perceived as entirely the work of the devil, but as part of God's providential plan in history.

Chapter three: It outlines the profile and the manifestation of moral decay in the urban areas; it focuses on the urbanisation as a new frontier for the African church.

Chapter four: It defines the prophetic role of the Reformed Churches in South Africa towards moral renewal of urban societies; it describes how the Reformed Churches can respond to the diverse challenges posed by urbanisation.

Chapter five: Focuses on the effective strategy the Reformed Churches should implement to promote moral renewal in the city.

Chapter six: Outlines projects which local congregations of the Reformed Churches in South Africa can undertake to promote moral restoration in the South African urban

areas. It provides some inspiration for pastoral, mission agents, social workers, civil servants, and people of good will dealing with issues related to life in the city.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF URBAN MINISTRY

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the biblical theology of urban ministry. It starts by outlining the biblical theology of the city; it focuses on what urban ministry entails; the threefold divine sources of urban ministry, and specifically on how both the Old and the New Testaments view urban ministry. It points out that city growth is not something to be perceived as entirely the work of the devil, but as part of God's providential plan in history. The Apostle Paul's concern for urban mission will be the last issue to be discussed in this chapter. As urban ministry is studied in this chapter from a biblical theology, some explication of relevant texts will be made in this chapter.

#### 2.2 THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE CITY

The starting place for a Christian, when considering the city, is with the question, "What is a theology of mission for the city"? One can state the biblical theology of the city as follows: A theology for the city is a way of viewing a city from a God point of view or from a God frame of reference (cf. Dubose, 1978:100; Engen & Tiersma (1994:249). Theology is therefore the discipline that accepts divine intervention and exerts itself to discover ever better its meaning. It is not its concern only to go beyond empirical reality, to discover the transcendent and understand it better. Theology accepts, as *kerygma*, the intervention of God, in work and in word, in the Word, and concentrates on interpreting it in order to arrive at orthopraxis-that is, at the ways in which human activity should be melded once it has been touched by that intervention (Tonna, 1982:117).

##### 2.2.1 What urban ministry entails

A foundational question one may ask is: What do Christians understand when they speak of urban ministry? In answering this question, Hui (2004:143) says urban ministry in its simplest form is to introduce urban community to Jesus Christ so that they may have eternal life, enjoy fellowship with and worship the Triune God. It does not matter what approaches or methods people may use, the hope and prayer and heartfelt

desire is for this to take place. Whether it is through aid, development, crisis and emergency relief, or day to day plodding on in Bible translation or teaching to read, our deepest desire should be in line with the Triune.

Greenway (1979:180) comments that the mission of the church in the city prepares men and nature for the final and eternal city whose builder and maker is God. He notes further that urban ministry (including the whole of the body of Christ in that city) is to comprise of the people of God who belong to the city, to pervade the structures of the city that it may repent and that the rule of God in an anticipatory form be established.

### 2.2.2 The triune God as involved in the sending

Sookhdeo (1987:136) maintains that divine resources are vital in frontier mission. Mutavhatsindi (2008:20) defines the term “divine resources” as the way God reveals Himself to Christians in three persons, i.e. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This implies that the Christian Church bears witness not to a static God, but rather to a dynamic divine community that makes itself known in history as Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, sending and seeking in love redeeming and uniting the unloved (Thomas, 1995:118; Berkhof, 1996:84; cf. Nürnberger, 2005:14; de Bruyn, 1998:34).

According to Kuiper (2002:13), before the world was created, the Triune God formed a plan of salvation to be executed in its several reciprocally distributed parts by the Father as Sender and Principal, by the Son as Sent, Mediator, and Sender, and by the Holy Spirit as Sent and Applier. It follows that the Triune God is the author of salvation. And, inasmuch as He has executed in time the eternal plan of salvation, has revealed its execution in the gospel, and has ordained the gospel as the indispensable means of salvation, it is no less clear that the Triune God is the author of urban ministry.

This implies that the church is not an end in itself but God’s elect instrument for God’s purposes and organic extension of the triune God. Therefore, the church is the gathered community that shares God’s life and expresses it on the earth. Moreover, it is mediating the presence of God the Spirit, who blows where He wishes (Viola, 2008:35; Coalter & Cruz, 1995:176). In view of this analysis it is quite clear that the biblical

teaching of the Trinity is not an exposition about the abstract design of God. Instead, it teaches us about God's nature and how it operates in a Christian community.

As such, it shouldn't be relegated to an endnote to the gospel. Rather, it should shape the Christian life and inform the practice of the church (cf. Viola, 2008:34). As Nürnberger (2005:14) put it these three aspects (Trinity) did not drop from heaven as ready-made doctrine, however, they are the outcome of faith experiences, which we first have to analyse.

#### 2.2.2.1 God the Father as the Sender

For Kritzinger *et al* (1994:40) mission is first and foremost to be regarded as *missio Dei*, God's mission on earth. Coalter & Cruz (1995:177) also identified the theological foundation of all evangelism in the very nature of God as a sending God. According to Peters (1976:144) the fullest missionary presentation is made by John in the Book of Revelation where most dramatically God is presented as the God of the cosmos, the God of all the earth and of all the nations no realm excluded.

This implies that urban ministry then is not just about the love of God bringing creation into existence. It must also be about the redemption, restoration and, indeed, further development of human beings and of the world at large. However, the restoration is not to be seen, in either case, as a return to some primeval perfection but rather to a wholeness which makes further development possible (Nazir –Ali, 1991:10). From the above it is clear that mission begins in the heart of God, and it is His initiative to which we humans respond.

If Christian mission is first and foremost God's mission, Christians should always conduct urban ministry in an attitude of humility and dependence on God. When the human dimensions of the missionary task overtake and determine the way in which mission is conducted, mission becomes a human activity without redemptive power (Escobar, 2003:94; Kaiser, 2000:12).

Of course the researcher does not wish to disparage the importance of Christian obedience, but he does wish to point out that the deepest root of urban ministry is

gratitude, wonder at the miracle of God's grace. It is very important therefore, to realise that our involvement, as Churches, as mission organisation, or as individuals, in the *missio Dei* is a response to the miracle of God's graceful love.

#### 2.2.2.2 Christ the Son as Outgoing

According to Morris (1986:252), the closeness of the Father and the Son is brought out with the concept of mission, a fact that brings out both the unity of the two and the divine compassion for sinners. Samuel & Sugden (1987:132) remark that the coming of Jesus showed that God was active in the world, and even more, that he was active not only to judge but also to save, to establish his victory, to bring the first fruits of the final destructing of evil, and to introduce his kingdom to bind the strong and set the captives free. In addition to that, the Son has left very specific instructions to the disciples, and to Christians. It is for us to obey. Let us look at several key passages with the instructions. The researcher has deliberately chosen the ones spoken by Jesus after his resurrection:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt. 28:18-20) (NIV). This instruction is commonly known as the Great Commission given by Jesus, this passage is pretty comprehensive. Christians are commissioned with this authority. Our mandate is to make disciples, baptising and teaching them – essentially this describes the enterprise of all Churches (cf. Swindoll, 1988:66).

The scope is 'all nations' or peoples (not just countries). And we have Jesus' promise of his presence. This is a powerful and power-packed passage indeed. With such resources, there is very little else that one needs (cf. Hui 2003:145). Furthermore, in Mark, Christ says "Go into the world and preach the entire world and preach the good news to all creation." Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15-16). The word 'go', the researcher



believes has been the definitive command that has mobilised thousands of missionaries in Church and mission history.

### 2.2.2.3 The Holy Spirit as the agent of urban ministry

Having thus connected the program of the church with the Lord's instructions and commission, Luke proceeds to trace the development of Christianity under the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Thiessen, 1987:186). As Cairns (1996:60) put it, the Holy Spirit was given the position of prominence in the founding of the Christian church. This implies that the growth of the church in numbers and depth was the work of the Holy Spirit. This was in accord with Christ's promises in the last weeks of Jesus' life that he would send "another Comforter" who would give leadership to the church after his ascension (John 14:16-18; 15:26-27; 16:7-15).

The Books of Acts recounts the first years of the Church's growth. Here the researcher presents most of these accounts of the advent, thus: The Spirit takes Philip to the road where he evangelises and baptises the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38); the Spirit opens Peter's eyes and gives him missionary lessons he finds hard to learn (Acts 10); the Spirit moves the Church in Antioch to send its best leaders on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-6); and when the gospel is about to be taken into Europe, the Spirit leads Paul and Silas to Macedonia, away from the route they have planned (Acts 16:6-10) (Thiessen 1987:187-88; McConnell 1997:25; Escobar 2003:125; Ladd, 1993:587; Kuiper, 2002:19-20).

Engen & Tiersma (1994:86) also observe that the Spirit mediates the presence of Jesus in the city. The Spirit in us today is proof that the resurrected Jesus is alive, that he is with his church that he desires to produce life. Again, this living Jesus wants to transform, regenerate, heal, save, illuminate, and comfort, just as he did when he walked among us in the flesh. Where there is death, darkness, and dehumanisation, Jesus says, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (Mark 2:17).

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit creates community. The creation of a group of men to take care of the needy was another remarkable social phenomenon that occurred in the early

years of the church. This new community began with a demonstration of inclusiveness that is profoundly foundational for urban ministry (Cairns, 1996:60).

According to McConnell (1997:29), this is the critical work of the Spirit in the entire missionary enterprise. In the same vein, Coalter & Cruz (1995:40), the work of regeneration that is done by the Holy Spirit in the Church is not an end in itself. As it was already indicated, regeneration nurtures individuals in the community of faith, and calls them back when they stray, so that they can participate in the work of realising God's purposes for the whole creation. Ezekiel for example, during the exile, declares that when God restores his people's fortunes, he will give them a new Spirit, his own Spirit, so that, cleansed from their moral and religious defilement, they may thenceforth do His will from the heart (cf. Ezekiel 11: 120; 36; 24:27; Jn 3:8; Titus 3:5) (see Bruce 1991:140; Green 1990:450).

Horton (1992:32) also observes that "anyone who is truly born again by Holy Spirit will be a new creature, and therefore will be eager to love and obey God even when he or she ends up falling short of the mark constantly." Kuiper (2002:20) observes that the Holy Spirit calls evangelists to their work and guides them in its performance. To the church at Antioch in Syria, The Holy Ghost said: 'Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them' (Acts 13:2). Furthermore the Holy Spirit opens doors for the spread of the gospel. By a marvellous providence he guided Paul to Rome, the capital of the pagan world, where, though a prisoner, he preached the kingdom of God and taught those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ 'with all confidence, no man forbidding him' (Acts 28:31).

From the foregoing it is clear that Reformed pneumatology (the branch of theology that deals with the Holy Spirit and other spiritual beings) also acknowledges that the Spirit not only works in the hearts of individuals, but also in the large context of the world, including cities. It is not only concerned with one's heart and faith, but also with experiencing the world and discovering God's footprints in creation. In view of this paragraph one may conclude that only as urban ministry has its source in and derives its nature and authority from the triune God can it truly generate lasting and enduring motivation and become really Christian, really meaningful. Thus the Trinity is the

paradigm informing us on how the church should function in the city. This implies that whatever else ought to be said about the structure, life and purpose of the church, this one thing must be said: that “urban mission” is woven into all three and cannot be separated out from any one without destroying it (Thomas 1995:104; Viola, 2008:41).

## 2.3 THE TWOFOLD MANDATE OF URBAN MINISTRY

There is a fundamental twofold mandate from God to man set forth in the Bible that one should grasp clearly in order to define precisely the urban ministry assignment of the Church. These twofold mandates are given at the beginning of each Testament and to each humanity: the humanity in the first Adam, and the humanity in the second Adam Christ. Delineation of the two mandates:

### 2.3.1 The humanity in the first Adam

According to Peters (1976:166), the first mandate was spoken to Adam as a representative of the race and involves the whole realm of human culture. In its widest sense it includes religion. It serves man in his need as a socio-religion-cultural creature. It includes the natural and social aspects of man such as habit, agriculture, industrialisation, commerce, political, health, social and moral order, academic and scientific advancement, education and physical care. In simple words, it is the qualitative and quantitative improvement of culture on the basis of the revelational theism manifested in creation. Such culture was to benefit man and glorify God. The Bible expresses it in the following terms: to populate, to subjugate, to dominate, to cultivate, and to preserve (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

### 2.3.2 The humanity in Christ

The second mandate deals principally with the problem of sin and guilt. It proclaims the good news that in Christ forgiveness of sins may be found, that Christ can make a man whole and restore him to his original purpose and mission. This mandate is carried forward by evangelisation, discipleship training, church-planting, church care, and benevolent ministries. We find this substantiated and outlined in: (1) the sending of the twelve (Mt. 10:1-20; Mk 3:13:19; Lk 6:12-16); (2) the sending of the seventy (Luk. 10:1-

20); (3) the further sending of the twelve (Matt. 16:14-18; Lk. 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23; Act 1:7-8); and (4) the sending of Paul (Acts 9:15-16; 26:14-20) (Peters 1976:168).

Thus there is first a mandate to man as man and as a member of the human race; and second, there is a mandate to the Christian as a Christian and as a member of the church of Jesus Christ. However, it should be emphasised that both mandates originated in God and are designed to serve mankind. Together they meet every need of man. In view of this, it is clear that the Bible does concern itself with social and cultural welfare. It has ethical principles for society and nations which form the cornerstone of God's judgment of the nations. It is the Church's responsibility to build a wholesome culture in which man can live as a true human being according to the moral order and creative purpose of God.

It is beyond reasonable doubt that this program was severely interrupted by sin and made extremely difficult by man's depravity due to the fall, the mandate remains in power and still rests upon man. Indeed, the fall made it even more imperative if man is to survive as a human being. This is evident from the message of God to Noah after the flood, as recorded in Gen. 8:15; 9:17. It is also evident from the strong denunciatory messages of the prophets directed against Israel and the nations of the world whenever they violated moral order and basic human rights. God has never absolved man from his divinely ordained mission and moral responsibility (Peters, 1976:167).

#### 2.4 DIFFERENT VIEWS CONCERNING THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE CITY

According to Linthicum (1991:21), the world in which the Bible was written was dominated by its cities. The biblical people of God were themselves urban people. David was king of Jerusalem as well as of an empire. Isaiah and Jeremiah were both prophets committed to Jerusalem. Moreover, most of Paul's letter was written to city churches as primers on how the church can effectively carry on ministry in a city. Similarly the Psalter is filled with city psalms; note how often they speak of Jerusalem or Mount Zion (Mount Zion, incidentally, is not some rural snow-capped peak; it is the hill upon which Jerusalem was build).

Tonna (1982:121) correctly states that to understand better the role of the city in the plan of God, one has the biblical vision of the New Jerusalem, the renewed city in the book of Revelation (Rev. 21:2). This vision seems to indicate the direction in which the progressive activation of the plan of salvation moves and points out the stages needed for its development. Claerbaut (1983:18) observes that in the Old Testament the prophets were involved not only in evangelising but also in urban planning. For example, Joseph and Daniel did key urban planning while occupying powerful political positions. Jeremiah modelled sainthood in Jerusalem.

In this view, the fundamental two questions that might come to people when they hear about the biblical theology of the city might be: What is the message conveyed by the vocabulary of the city in Scripture? What is the biblical meaning of the city? As a valuable illustration to these questions Greenway (1979:236) indicated that:

Running alongside this dark edge of the city in the Bible is also another given, another relationship between the city and the purpose of God. It is the theme of the city as the fulfiller of the paradise of God, the city redeemed by God as the kingdom sign of new creation. This eschatological strand repeatedly ties the future of the city with the original, sinless past of Eden and its restoration in Christ. Even under the curse, man's cultural calling will be maintained. Adam's painful labour will subdue the resistant earth; Eve's travail will fill it. Music, poetry, forging metals and building cities, all these are the works of men made in the image of God and spared from destruction.

#### 2.4.1 The positive image of the city

##### 2.4.1.1 The city of God

According to Bauckham (2003:41), YHWH singled out one place in the land of Israel. This is the city of Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5; cf. 1 Kings, 8:16-25). Jerusalem, by contrast, was seen in its idealised form as the city of God. As a social system, it is called to witness to God's shalom (Ps. 122:6-9; 147:2). As an economic entity, it was meant to practice equitable stewardship and in its politics, a communal and just existence (Exod. 25-40; 1 Sam. 8:4 (Eybers, 1988:63; Linthicum, 1995:25). According to Mutavhatsindi (2008:32), Jesus also regarded Jerusalem as the 'city of the Great King'. This principle is seen most clearly in connection with Jesus' statement that his followers should not swear 'by Jerusalem' because she was the 'city of the Great King' (Mt 5:35).

By using this phrase Jesus affirms that Jerusalem is a city with which God, the Great King, has been pleased to identify Himself. Hence, Walker (1990:334) observes that Jerusalem's special role was not, however, to be felt only by individual believers but also in the corporate life of the church. Its pre-eminent status was to be experienced, not only in the personal realm, but also in matters ecclesiastical. This implies that Jerusalem is not just another city. In this way, Jerusalem is a spiritual lighthouse to the entire world, sending its beacon of hope to a world staggering in despair. King David's passion for the Holy City is revealed in his writing:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

Let my right hand forget its skill!

If I do not remember you,

Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth—

If do not exalt Jerusalem

Above my chief joy (Ps 137:5-6).

David's message was simple: if he were to forget Jerusalem, his life would have no meaning. Again, if Jerusalem was not the source of his deepest joy, he felt there was no need to exist. He saw Jerusalem as the Holy City, the place of God and God's people called home (Gen. 22:1-19; 2 Chron. 3:1) (Hagee, 2001:22; cf. Barclay 1995:134).

#### 2.4.1.2 A symbol of Good

Even though the prophets were deeply aware of the potential for evil in the city they were equally appreciative of the potential for good in the city (Dubose 1978:105). For example, in Joshua 20 we learn of the Lord's direction to Joshua to designate certain cities as cities of refuge. The purpose of those cities was to serve as havens for persons guilty of manslaughter where they might flee the "avenge of blood" until a fair hearing could be held.

These cities therefore symbolised both mercy and justice. Moreover, they were built not by any motivation of man, let alone one man's pride and rebellion against God. Those cities were established by a direct order from God Himself and were therefore of divine motivation and origin (see Mutavhatsindi, 2008:35). What is interesting is that, those cities involved a structure that provides both Israelites and aliens living in Israel with justice, as it was already noted, revenge in the event of death of relative or loved ones.

The Levites would hold preliminary hearings outside the gates, while the accused person was kept in the city until the time of his trial. If the killing was judged accidental, the person would stay in the city until the death of the high priest. Here the city is portrayed as a place of security and stability and as a place of physical and spiritual prosperity. Thus the city is synonymous with home and community (cf. Engen & Tiersma, 1994:35; see Dubose 1978:106).

#### 2.4.2 The negative image of the city

##### 2.4.2.1 A symbol of pride and arrogance

According to Greenway (1979:178), Cain, Babel, and Babylon have prejudiced the Christian mind against cities. Silviso (2007:189) remarks that the story climaxes at the end of the Bible as Jerusalem embodies the glory of and the presence of God depicted in the book of Revelation 20 and 21; whereas Babylon, representing a depraved centre of world commerce and oppression, is described as "The mother of harlots and of the abominations in the earth" (Rev. 17:5). It is clear that from the days of old, battle lines have been clearly drawn.

For instance, God calls Jerusalem, "The city where I chose to put My Name" (cf. 1 Kings 11:36), and Babylon' – always ruled by pagan kings – hates God and His people. Babylon's origins are found in the tower of Babel, when the post Flood world population committed themselves to an ungodly fourfold goal, as revealed in Genesis 11:4:

- Build a city for themselves
- Reach heaven from an earthly platform
- Make their name an object of honour and fear

- Avoid being scattered all over the earth

These four objectives represent the exact opposite of what God has consistently purposed for His people throughout the ages. For example,

- We are never instructed to build our own city, but rather, from the days of Abraham, to look for that city “whose architect and builder is God” (Heb.11:10).
- We do not have to strive to get to heaven; we are going there someday.
- The purpose of our lives is to bring heaven to Earth, not the other way around. That is why Jesus instructed his followers to pray, “Thy [God’s] will [not ours] be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10 (KJV) and to expect that it will happen.
- As far as name is concerned, it is not our name that should be recognised, for there is only one name, one that is above every name: “Jesus” to which every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (see Phil. 2:9-11).
- When it comes to our mission, God has designed from the time of Abraham that in his descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. And as the Church, we have been sent to go to the ends of the earth to set people and nations free (Matt. 28:18-20).

From the above-said it is clear that the men described in Genesis 11 were not just constructing a city; they were building a city of their own. As such, it was a city with an attitude of arrogance, as far as heaven was concerned, since their objectives was to be able to go there any time they chose by making its tower a platform from which to oppose God’s command to fill the earth (see Gen. 1:28) and to spiritually influence the earth.

The determination to make a name for themselves reveals how absolutely self-centred and humanistic they were, since such a choice was made as an overt act of rebellion against God, and their accompanying goal of not going to the ends of the earth was, in addition to being a direct challenge against the divine command to that effect (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1-7), is also an indication of their intent to make nature subservient to them, and not the other way around (Joyner, 2009:135; Helberg, 1988:142).



#### 2.4.2.2 The city of Satan

What erupted in Babel is the very essence of Satan's character, was cast out of heaven because he perverted himself and others through a self-serving scheme of control. Simply put, at Babel, the devil tried to "jump the gun" on God by taking control of the world population and inciting them to build a city that, by reflecting his ill-acquired expertise in trade, would give him complete domination of the human race to pre-empt the option of the Messiah's advent, since every nation on Earth would be under his direct control, thus blocking the way for Israel to come into the picture.

Hence, John the author of the Book of Revelation paints a picture of Babylon as city of Satan (Rv. 17:1-19-10). What caused the archetypal Babylon, the great city, city of power as indicated in Revelation 18:10, to be dumped by God? There are many reasons given by John, the author of the Book of Revelation. The first reason is that Babylon has become the city of Satan because she committed idolatry. The words used are "prostitutes" and "adultery". By seeing these words, one can think that Babylon committed adultery. Adultery is used regularly by the Old Testament prophets as a pseudonym for idolatry (e.g. Jr 3:8; 29:23; Ezk 16:32; 23:37).

The second reason, according to Mutavhatsindi (2008:27), was that Babylon has committed herself solely to emperor worship. He notes further that for Babylon to commit herself solely to emperor worship was not only to bring about her spiritual disintegration, but also to cause the corruption of the people of her city, and the nations and kings around her. With her total and complete submission to emperor worship and idolatry, Babylon's spiritual interior had become irredeemably evil. Babylon had become the city of Satan first of all because she had committed herself to the worship of another god.

The third reason, is that Babylon is painted in Scripture as a bureaucratic, self-serving, and dehumanising social system with economics geared to benefit its privileged and exploit its poor, with politics of oppression and with a religion that ignores the covenant with God and deifies power and wealth (Isa. 14:5-21; Jer. 50:2-17; 51:6-10; Dan. 3:1-7; Rev. 17:1-6; 18:2-19, 24) (cf. Linthicum, 1995:24-25; Greenway, 1979:178). Babylon's

demand for wealth, economic security, and luxury has brought the wealth of the world to her; it was brought through both economic power and her military strength.

The serious misuse of the economic order was equal to the sin of idolatry. Hence, the prophets of the Old Testament felt strongly about this issue and often spoke out against the abuse of power and suffering caused by it ( Micah 2; 3. They blame the leaders in society, who should look out for ordinary people, for being particularly guilty of this transgression (cf. Strydom & Wessels, 2000:22). Babylon's greed and lust for wealth and economic security impacted on the rest of the world, leaving her helpless and destitute, unable to cope with either the national or the individual demands of life. This implies that the radical impoverishment of the world, both of its people and its natural resources, meant nothing to Babylon, as long as she could have her little niceties and obscene luxuries.

#### 2.4.2.3 Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stone those sent to her

As the researcher has already indicated, Jerusalem was Israel' largest city and the nation's spiritual and political capital, and Jews from around the world visited it frequently. However, Jerusalem had a history of rejecting God's prophets (1 Kings 19:10; 2 Chronicles 24:19; Jeremiah 2:30; 26:20-23) (NIV). Jonson (2004:39) commends that Jerusalem also rejected the Messiah (Jesus Christ) just as she had done with his forerunners. In addition, according to Ezra 4:19, Jerusalem has a long history of revolt against kings and has been a place of rebellion and sedition. If the above picture were the only image of the city in the Bible, it would be a discouraging one indeed. However, as paradoxical as it seems, the Bible is just as positive about the city as it is negative (Dubose 11978:104).

## 2.5 URBAN MINISTRY FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

### 2.5.1 God wants cities to be places where systems are developed to benefit people.

According to Bernard (2004:11), God wants cities to be places where systems are developed to benefit people. In other words, God has created, loved, preserved, and redeemed the city so that it can be transformed into the city God intends it to be. And

as that transformed community, the city becomes a lighthouse to the world, the manifestation of God's handwork to the nation and the world. The contents of this communication can be summed up as follows: God has a plan of salvation for humankind and God is realising it in the cities. The key point of this plan is that God wants the city to know His providence, protection and provision.

Dake (1992:165) says that providence is the actual control and care of God in the working out of the eternal plan for man. It should be noted that man remains man even after the fall. He is a culture-creature and remains within the providential care of God, responsible to God for the moral and social structure of society and behaviour as well as the culture he develops. Woodberry, (1996:145) concurs with Dake's views in that God's redemptive purpose behind urban growth is that "man would seek him and reach out for him." This implies that the welfare of people in Jerusalem and other cities was His concern.

Greenway & Monsma (1989:7) even goes further to suggest that it was plainly by an act of grace and mercy that, after Adam and Eve had fallen into sin and broken covenant with God, God again appointed a city structure for the benefit of the human race. In this light, the scattering of the tower builders at Babel not only demonstrates the wrath of God against the impious spirit of the builders, but also His redemptive purpose for the city. In fidelity to His promise, He will not allow again a sinful development of humanity to reach such a scale that demands the repetition of another catastrophe of the order of the deluge. By breaking up the city, He saves the cities (Greenway 1979:237).

#### 2.5.1.1 God's concern for the city of Nineveh

Bernard (2004:12) notes that biblical example of God's intentions for cities are found in the story of Jonah. Nineveh is completely outside the bounds of particularistic revelation, but it is still within the bounds of God's care and concern, to the degree that He sends them a messenger. Of course, there were many other cities that could just as well have been chosen with equal fairness for a similar message. Besides the inscrutable mystery of the sovereignty of God, the following special reasons might be listed for choosing Nineveh: First, the greatness of its population and resources,

second, the enormity of its crimes, and, third, Nineveh was ‘that great city’ whose descriptions both in antiquity and now in modern archaeological terms boggle the mind! A city with 1, 500 towers spaced along the walls rising up to 200 feet high, it contained 120, 000 children as well. It was regarded as the height of civilisation of that day (Greenway & Monsma, 1989:11).

According to Kaiser (2000:71), few would have ever thought that a city and nation so self-sufficient in itself would ever be capable of being stirred to repentance and reformation. However, if this one nation should by any chance respond to the call for repentance, despite the unlikelihood of success, surely that would come as an open rebuke to Israel, who had such superior advantages in the gospel, as well as to the other nations that were just as vulnerable to similar declarations of impending judgment.

If the wayward foreigner’s eagerly received the word from God and acted appropriately, should not the people of God have done at least the same by obeying? Was this not the very point that our Lord made when he used Nineveh as an example in his preaching? He declared that the people of Nineveh would rise up in judgment to condemn those who had even greater access to the truth and evidence for the gospel, but who had also not repented as had the people of Nineveh.

The task being performed by Jonah was to move his own people to jealousy and action. The central and significant fact is that Jonah had a theological problem with this. Along with the spiritual leaders of Israel in general, Jonah did not think of God in terms of mercy and forgiveness towards pagan (Peters, 1976:108). Kaiser (2000:65) also observes that Jonah was deeply disappointed that God’s grace should have been extended to such brutal and hostile enemies who had wrecked so much havoc on Jonah’s own homeland.

In Jonah’s view, this was payback time. So let God do what he said he was going to do. Why warn them and take a chance that even some, much less the whole nation, would repent? The researcher is of the view that perhaps Jonah was afraid of being persecuted in Nineveh, or he had a false concept of the separation of Jews from Gentiles, or he didn’t understand God’s love and commission for the world. There is no

doubt that Jonah was unable to see God's universalistic design of salvation behind particularistic revelation. Blinded by provincialism, he lacked the prophetic vision to recognise universal light rays emanating from God's gracious promises to Israel.

Hence, God reprimanded Jonah for his lack of compassion for the city of Nineveh:

“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120, 000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”

When God said He felt compassion for the thousands there who did not know their right hand from their left, He was referring to innocent children who would suffer along with the city's rebellious adults. By mentioning animals, God showed the breadth of His compassion and His concern for the economic development of the city, which was related to them. He was saying, “I have concern for the future well-being of this city and the people who live in it and so should you as one of my servants (Jonah 4:11) Bernard 2004:12). Surely this is a missionary appeal. Here is the purpose of the whole book. It is put as a rhetorical question to Jonah, but as a direct one to all who ever think that God is not concerned about the urban areas.

The result of Jonah's preaching to Nineveh was that the king and the people of the city believed Jonah; they repented of their sin and turned from their evil ways (cf. Winward, 1976:234; Young, 1989:264). The ministry of Jonah also serves to point out the stubborn and rebellious character of the Israelites. Final, the mission of Johan served to impress upon the Israelites the fact that the Lord's salvation was not to be confined to one nation. Israel was the servant to bring the knowledge of the Lord to the world (Towns, 2003:403).

#### 2.5.1.2 God's concern for the city of Jericho

Jericho was the place where the Israelites entered their rest and had renewed her covenant with God as they crossed over the Jordan into the land promised to them by Jehovah God. The city was given by God through His judgement, thus, the people were commanded to treat the city and its possessions as a burnt sacrifice to God. They were

to take all the gold and silver and give it to God and then burn the rest of the spoils (Josh. 6:18-19) (Towns 2003:328).

According to Helberg (1988:188), the Lord showed Himself to be a righteous God. He spared Rahab and her family and thereby reversed His curse on Jericho. Instead of being killed, they were saved and also incorporated into the people of the covenant. Towns (2003:327) mentions that the promise of redemption of Rahab and her family came about because she protected the two messengers of Israel (Josh. 6:22-25). This history of Rahab proves that God's dominion is not merely the external overpowering of cities, people and nations. However, God also brings about an inner change in the hearts of people.

#### 2.5.1.3 God's concern for the city of Sodom

The first example of intercession in the Bible is Abraham's prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:22-23). Sodom is mentioned more than fifty times in the Bible. People who know almost nothing about the Bible seem to know a great deal about this city, for its reputation for sex and violence has flourished in the worldwide film industry (Prime, 2007:92). What specifically was the terrible sin of Sodom that displeased almighty God?

Bernard (2004:12) notices that God was displeased by the city of Sodom and Gomorrah because they were well off but failed to tend to the welfare of their people. The rich were getting richer and were proud of their extravagant surpluses while the poor were getting poorer. Claerbaut (1983:29) disturbingly points out that the major sin of Sodom was its insensitivity towards the poor and deprived within that decadent city. Moreover, Sodom and Gomorrah were so sinful that they became proverbial for extreme sinfulness (Isa 1:9; 13:19; Jer. 50:40; Lam 4:6).

De Bruyn (1993:208) indicates that people of Sodom and Gomorrah lived morally poor lives, as illustrated by their homosexual actions against Lot's guest (Gen. 19:4-5). Homosexuality is condemned in the strongest possible terms by God (cf. Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus, 20:13). Hence, Genesis 13:13 reads, "Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord". In Genesis 18 and 19 Abram is

visited by three “men”. We are told that this group is actually made up of two angels and the Lord himself (Genesis 18:22; 19:1).

After showing hospitality to these visitors, Abram accompanies them towards Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin of the Sodom and Gomorrah climaxes in Genesis 18, when God reveals that He is about to bring judgment upon these cities:

And the Lord said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to me; and if not, I will know.”

For the second time the text speaks of the greatness of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. So strong is the description of the rebellion of these cities that God sends the angels to the cities for direct contact with these rebel sinners. Abram, realising Lot is among these men, seeks to save the cities if as few as ten righteous men can be found within them. He appealed to God’s justness: God had to save the whole city so that the few righteous people left in it would not die unjustly. Abraham responded in a most commendable and instructive manner. Two points are worthy of special mention:

First, the basis of Abraham’s intercession was his faith in God’s character. “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it”? (Gen.18:23-25). Second, Abraham’s intercession was marked by persistence. Six times he asked God to spare Sodom, and each time God granted his petition (Genesis 18:22-33) (Prime, 2007:92).

Greenway & Mashau (2007:47) maintains that Sodom was frightfully wicked, so wicked, in fact, that there were not even ten righteous people to be found within its gate. However, for the sake of just ten, God would have saved the city. What was the significance of this handful of righteous leaven in such a sinful environment? They were agents of shalom: a righteous leaven in an unrighteous loaf. The city could go on only as long as it contained these bearers of God’s word. Without them, the city was doomed (Kaiser & Silva, 1994:152).

#### 2.5.1.4 God urged Israelites to seek the welfare of Babylon

As it was already noted, Babylon was a wicked and idolatrous city, and it was eventually going to be destroyed. The people were deeply discouraged, feeling that God had abandoned them. According to Winter (1994:16), the suggested alternative was that the Jews in exile were to continue to seek the welfare of their city, and then their return to the promised inheritance of their forefathers would be realised (Jer. 29:4-14). It has been shown that the treatment of the Jews in exile was no different from that experienced by other dispossessed minority groups in Babylon.

However, what was unique was the attitude Israel was called upon to adopt: not to plot the destruction of their conquerors, but to seek their blessing. As God's people, they were to seek in every way the welfare of the city; it's shalom in the fullest sense. In addition, they were to pray for the city. Prayer to the Lord on behalf of the city was to be the most profound expression of their attitude. In the welfare of Babylon the people of Israel would find their own well-being (Greenway & Mashau 2007:40). This was not the first time in the Bible that we find prayers offered for the sinful city of the Babylon. For example, in (Daniel 9:17-19) Daniel also interceded for the sinful city of Babylon:

"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant.

For your sake, O Lord, look with favour on your desolate sanctuary.

Give ear, O God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name.

We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.

O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hear and act! For your sake, O my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name" (Daniel 9:17-19) (NIV).

Prayer for the city is spiritual warfare against all the hostile forces that militate against peace and well-being in the city. By their prayers, God's people distinguish themselves from those who delight in evil. Again, prayer for the city is missionary prayer. It pleads that the lordship of Jesus Christ be established in the city. Like Daniel and Jeremiah, they intercede that the city be spared, that its good be promoted, that its sins be forgiven, and that all citizens come to know the fullness of shalom (Lewis, 1987:14).



### 2.5.1.5 God transformed secular cities

The Old Testament records two monumental moves of God that thoroughly transformed secular cities, one in Egypt and the other in Persia. Both cities constituted a leading world empire of the day. Neither one neither had a Jewish background nor was the Lord of Israel part of their worldview, religious or otherwise. The detonator in both cases was revelation entrusted by God to His servants that solved serious problems in the city (marketplace).

In the case of Egypt, Joseph received insights to overhaul the nation's famine and made Egypt the leading power in the region. In Babylon, Daniel's answer to the King's dilemma catapulted him to the number one position in the empire, from where he served three rulers with distinction, administrating the affairs of the state. As a result, two leading world powers, their population and scores of neighbouring nations were impacted because God's power was channelled into and demonstrated in the marketplace.

God is focused on the marketplace because it is the heart of the city and the nation, and He is after nations. The list of heroes of the faith provided in Hebrews 11 consists of people who received a call in the marketplace and fulfilled it in the marketplace. None of them left the marketplace in order to do God's work elsewhere. A prime example was Abraham, the father of the faith. One can hardly go any higher up the ladder when it comes to influential leadership over nations than him.

He did not come home one day and announce to Sarah, his wife, that because he had received the call he would sell the animals, lay off the workers and leave his job in order to buy a mountain where they would spend the rest of their lives learning how to become the father of the nation in the marketplace day after day (Silvoso, 2007:164).

### 2.5.1.6 Rebuilding the city of Jerusalem

#### 2.5.1.6.1 Background

Two post-captivity historic books of Ezra and Nehemiah relate the account of the Jews that came in three groups; the first returned Jews were led by Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:1-

6:22), the second group led by Ezra (Ezra 7:1-10:44) and the third smaller group led by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1-7:73). The three leaders came back and rebuilt the city of Jerusalem leading and managing various important landmarks and practices.

The whole exercise was complementary. The three important things were the restoration of the temple that was destroyed, the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem that were destroyed and the restoration of worship. The three leaders, Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah had to fulfil a complementary job and focus on three specific tasks (Greenlee, 2003:154).

#### 2.5.1.6.2 Zerubbabel's task to rebuild the temple.

According to Lebusa (2009:25), Zerubbabel's primary role was to lead the restoration of the temple (Ezra 3:1-10). This task did not only require the skills to build but, those skills and the means they had, to build the temple, had to be complemented by legislations from the empires of that era (Ezra 5:13; 6:2, 3, 14, 15). For example, the Persian Administration passed legislation that favoured the Jews. In simple terms there was support needed from the governments of that time. Zerubbabel together with Joshua and others started building the Altar of sacrifices.

The foundations of the new temple were then laid (Ezra 4:17-24). There were challenges that opposed the rebuilding of the temple and it was ordered to stop for while by a legislation from King Artaxerxes (Ezra 4:17-24). The prophets; Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy to encourage Zerubbabel to continue their work (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 2:1-6). The interesting thing is that 'these prophets were with them helping them.' They were supporting them. This is an indication that the prophets were in partnership and cooperation with Zerubbabel and his group.

#### 2.5.1.6.3 Nehemiah's task of rebuilding the walls of the city.

The second complementary partner in rebuilding Jerusalem was Nehemiah. According to Greenlee (2003:155), Nehemiah, who was the architect of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, to manage the important task of restoring the walls and the gates that protect the people of God and the house of God, the Temple (Nehemiah 1:3; 3). He also

had the support and the backing of the government under King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 1:6:9) and the hand of God was upon him (Nehemiah 2:18). There were necessary skills to complement him (Nehemiah 3:31, 32).

Linthicum (1991:212) notes that when Nehemiah had to deal with external resistance, he first tried to heal the breach – to turn potential enemies into friends. He failed – not because he made no effort to negotiate, but because Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem rejected his overtures. What did Nehemiah do then? He stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places; posting them by families with their swords, spears and bows . . . When Nehemiah’s enemies heard that they were aware of their plot (cf. Neh. 4:7-9) and that God had frustrated it, they all returned to the wall, each to his own work. Nehemiah knew how to maintain the balance between prayer and action. He kept putting the threats, challenges, discouragement and impossibilities of it all back to God. “Our God will fight for us” He confidently asserted.

This implies that Nehemiah established important departments that would serve them distinctively while they continued in the main task of building the wall. The important issue is that each concentrated on a division of labour that served the whole enterprise. It was an indication that while some paid their attention and focused on some emergencies and threatening challenges, others had enough time to concentrate on the main task. This strategy of independence gave them more flexibility to a point that ‘each one returned to their specific work’ (Nehemiah 4:15 (Lebusa 2009:27).

#### 2.5.1.6.4 Ezra’s task to restore the Law

According to Greenlee (2003:155), the physical rebuilding of the walls prepared the way for inner rebuilding of the identity of the people of God around the Law, the expression of God’s moral character. This implies that Nehemiah’s ambition was not simply to reconstruct the city’s defences but also ‘to revitalise a spiritual community’. Hence, Nehemiah empowered Ezra to rearticulate the vision of being God’s people through understanding and applying the Law and renewing their covenant with God (Ezra 7:1-6). Some of the important aspects with regard to the subject of complementarity as discussed in the previous paragraphs are:

- Ezra was a scribe, knowledgeable in the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:6; 10).
- The hand of the Lord God was upon Ezra (Ezra 7:6, 9).
- King Artaxerxes supported the project (Ezra 7:11-25).
- The Jewish tradition regards Ezra as the author of the Pentateuch (see Neh. 8:1-5) (cf. Lion-Cachet 1995:57).

Lebusa (2009:26), comments that the word 'skilled' emphasises that he was a scholar and an expert in the Law. There is also the important aspect that God was involved in that complementarity for the hand of the Lord was upon Ezra. According to Greenway & Mashau (2007:69), it was a solemn movement, a turning point in the history of Israel, when Ezra opened the book and began to read. The people all rose to their feet as an act of reverence for the Word of God. The ruined city was not only rebuilt; it was spiritually reconstituted. Hence, only a few days after the completion of the rebuilding project, hundreds of men, women and children gathered in Jerusalem for a New Year celebration in which God's written word played a central role. An outdoor public meeting was devoted entirely to the reading and interpretation of God's word. 'The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away', reported Nehemiah (Nehemiah 12:43-47).

In the view of the book of Nehemiah one can see how personal and organisational renewal for Christians begins with worship, wonder and intimacy with the transcendent, creator, covenant-keeping God who stands by His word and delights in His creatures. It is also clear from the above-said that prayer is the most eloquent expression of our priorities. What transpired also from re-building of the wall of Jerusalem was in God's Kingdom, relationships with God and each other are the only realities that will last for eternity.

The systems were confronted and offered the opportunity to change. Sadly, they refused. The exploited then were provided the means to change their own situation. Happily, they fully accepted the responsibility. The powerful of Israel were given the opportunity to join with the people to seek the city's peace and prosperity. Even though they occasionally yielded to avarice and greed, they were willing to repent and to work side by side with the people to build a new community. Both individuals and the

community underwent profound change as they restructured their entire life together and became a new people of God (see Linthicum, 1991:228).

## 2.6 URBAN MINISTRY FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

### 2.6.1 Jesus' concern for urban ministry from the perspective of the Gospel

Jesus' life was centred mainly in an urban setting. He was born in the city of Bethlehem, grew up in the city of Nazareth, and was crucified and resurrected in the city of Jerusalem (Walker 1992:22; Eybers 1988:51; cf. Moore 1964:12). According to Dubose (1978:43), as a fitting climax to Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus commanded his disciples to tarry in the city of Jerusalem, and not in some rural haven, or in some desert cave, but in the city of Jerusalem –where he had been crucified, where a hostile urban establishment prevailed, where the problems were, where the action was, where the influence was.

#### 2.6.1.1 Jesus preached in cities

The major thrust of Jesus' ministry was in the urban centres of his day: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion (Woodberry, 1996:57). Furthermore, Guder (1989:89) notes that healing among the people of Capernaum leads them to cling to Jesus and urge him to remain with them. But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose" (Luk. 4:43). Even a cursory survey of Isaiah (40:9-10), will convince us that the urban settings formed the local point of Jesus' teaching:

Jerusalem, go up on a high mountain and proclaim the good news!

"Call out with a loud voice, Zion; announce the good news!

Speak out and do not be afraid.

Tell the towns of Judah that their God is coming!

The Sovereign Lord is coming to rule with power, bringing with him the people he has rescued” (Isa. 40:9-10).

Silvoso concurs with the above-mentioned views that Jesus was born and educated in the marketplace, where he was recognised as a carpenter, and a highly respected occupation at the time. Hence, his parables and teachings all have to do with marketplace issues, for example:

- Construction (Matt. 7:24-27).
- Wine making (Luke 5:37-38).
- Treasure hunting (see Matt. 13:44).
- Ranching (see Matt. 18:12-14).
- Management and labour (Matt. 20:1-16).
- Family –owned business (Matt. 21:28-31).
- Return on investments (see Matt. 25:14-30).
- Misuse of money and bankruptcy (Luke 15:11-16).

Furthermore, Jesus recruited his disciples in the marketplace. The church was also born in the marketplace when the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples in a private residence and the first 3, 000 members were saved and baptised in the heart of the city (Silvoso, 2007:164).

#### 2.6.1.2 Jesus sends disciples ahead of him to every city.

Jesus was not alone in performing some of his ministries in the cities. According to Bernard (2004:29), Jesus sends seventy disciples ahead of him to every city and place where he himself was going to come. These seventy were to go out and prepare the way for Jesus in those cities, which line the path to his ultimate destination, Jerusalem, charging them, ‘Go and preach’ Mt 10:5, 7) (NIV). The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out in pairs ahead of him into every town and place where he planned to go, he said to them, “There are a great many people to harvest, but there are only a few workers. So pray to God, who owns the harvest, that He will send more workers to help gather His harvest (Luk. 10:1-3 (Mutavhatsindi 2008:44).

### 2.6.1.3 Jesus wept over Jerusalem

Although Jerusalem kills the prophets, Jesus loved the city and wept over it: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her, how often did I wish to gather your children together in the way a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not (Luk. 13:34; Matt. 23:37). The word Luke uses here for weep, does not mean that a few burning tears came into his eyes as was the case at the grave of Lazarus, but He lamented audibly and plaintively (Janson, 2004:15). Jesus was saying to Jerusalem, “I wanted to embrace you.” I wanted you to know my protection, provision and providence (cf. Luke 13:35).

From the proceeding it is clear that although Jerusalem kills the prophets, as it was already noted, God does not flee from, or give up on, God sends his Son, who comes as King David’s descendant, who comes in the name of the Lord, who comes riding on a donkey on his way to the cross and the empty tomb – events that occur in the midst of, and for the sake of Jerusalem. In fact, one may view Jesus’ entire ministry from the perspective of his encounter with Jerusalem. These words of Jesus may or may not imply that he knew of the coming destruction of the temple.

However, the way both Matthew and Luke structure the text assures us that ultimately, through his death and resurrection, Jesus offers redemption and transformation of the old Jerusalem into the new City of God. This was an eschatological reality that John would later refer to in Revelation 21. True to God’s form of response throughout the history of Israel, there is always grace in the midst of judgment; in the end, there is a rewriting of the story of Jerusalem. Quoting Roger Greenway, Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:242-243), say:

The last chapter in the Jerusalem story awaits the future . . . she is called the Holy City and her Bridegroom is the Lamb. Life in the New Jerusalem is peaceful. There are neither tears, nor causes for them. Death and mourning are gone, and so are pain and suffering. Best of all, in this city God in Christ dwells forever with his people in perfect relationship. Grace has triumphed and shalom is established.

When the researcher hears those words of Jesus about Jerusalem, he hears the deep pain of an urban missionary. It also seems to the author Jesus offers some profound theological truths that are simultaneously historical, contextual, relational, and missiological. Is it not possible that these words represent for Jesus what today we would call “urban ministry” or a “theology of mission for the city”?

What was the theme of his preaching, and how did he explain his presence in the city? The central aspect of the teaching of Jesus Christ in the cities includes the following:

According to Cairns (1996:54), any careful study of the Gospel will reveal that the central aspect of the teaching (ministry of Jesus Christ) in urban areas was that concerning the Kingdom of God. Two phrases used by Christ were “the kingdom of God” and “the kingdom of heaven.” The latter designation was used mostly by Matthew (cf. Matt. 10:7). As Samuel & Sugden (1987:132) put it the kingdom was to be conceived as a present reality attacking evil, driving out demons, healing the sick, and forging new relationships of trust between alienated groups.

It was this message that Jesus placed on the lips of the disciples whom he sent out to share in the fulfilment of his urban ministry. The same was also embedded in his forecast of the mission that the whole Church would inherit: “And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14) (Guder 1998:89-90; Basu, 2005:189). Jesus Christ’s teaching in the urban centres also reveals the following things:

- ❖ He healed the sick (Matt. 15:21-28; John 4:43-54; Mark 7:31-37) (Peters 1976:48).
- ❖ He noticed population growth in the cities, and also the necessity for many leaders (Matt. 9:37-38).
- ❖ He prayed for unity and oneness amongst the believers (cf. John 17).
- ❖ He had compassion for children (Matt. 18:14).
- ❖ He invited those who were weary and heavy laden to come to him (Morris 1990:139; Green, 1990:162).



## 2.6.2 Jesus' concern for urban ministry from the perspective of the book of Acts

Greenway & Monsma (1989:13) note that the mission movement of the New Testament was primarily an urban movement. This is quite clear that God, through Christ, showed His great concern of spreading *missio Dei* to urban areas (Thiessen 1987:187; Basu 2005:37; Hui, 2003:145). The following cities in the New Testament were targeted as mission fields:

### 2.6.2.1 Jerusalem

According to Cairns (1996:59-60), the gospel was first proclaimed in Jerusalem by Peter on the day of Pentecost; then it was carried by the Christian Jews to other cities of Judea and Samaria. He notes further that not only the Gospel being openly proclaimed there, it had also produced a significant response. Jerusalem, without doubt, plays an important role in Luke's writings (Du Plessis, 1985:24; Conn & Ortiz, 2001:126; cf. Joyner, 2009:126). Even more striking are the instances in Luke's materials where the phrase "the polis" occurs by itself virtually without antecedent and yet clearly referring to Jerusalem (cf. Lk 19:41; 22:10; 23:19; 24:49).

### 2.6.2.2 Samaria

The fires of mass evangelism which began in Jerusalem spread to Samaria. Philip, a preaching deacon, was the instrument in that extension of Christian influence. In Samaria, "the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip" (Acts 8:6). So great was the response that the apostles at Jerusalem, hearing a good report, sent Peter and John to Samaria to develop a new Christian community there (Acts 8:14) (Dubose, 1978:44; cf. Bruce 1991:130). This revival was the first breach in the racial barrier to the spread of the Gospel (Greenway & Mashau 2007:94).

What were striking events that occurred at Samaria? A man named Simon had been a sorcerer there for many years, claiming to be someone great. The Samaritan people, from the least to the greatest, often spoke of him as "the Great One the Power of God." He was very influential because of the magic he performed. Some say Simon the sorcerer was saved because he believed, was baptised. Others believe he was not

saved because he wanted to buy the power of God with money. The apostle Peter suggests he was lost: “Your money perishes with you” (Acts 8:20). Also Simon had no “position in this matter” (Acts 8:21), and Peter told him, “Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are full of bitterness and captive to sin” (Acts 8:22-23).

#### 2.6.2.3 Judea

According to Mutavhatsindi (2008:46), the Gospel to all Judea was brought by some of the Hellenist Jews who became Christian in Jerusalem. They scattered and preached the Gospel outside Jerusalem during persecution that was led by Stephen’s death. The whole of Palestine was reached with the Gospel. The church in Judea had peace and was built up; and she walked in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit she was multiplied (Acts: 9-31).

#### 2.6.2.4 Antioch

The city of Antioch was known for both positive and negative things. The researcher will focus first on the positive things that the city of Antioch was known for, then her negative things, and then last, he will focus on how the Gospel reached this city.

##### 2.6.2.4.1 The positive things of the city of Antioch

Antioch was the centre for diplomatic relations with Rome’s vassal states in the East and a meeting point for many nationalities and cultures (Greenway & Monsma, 1989:32; Bruce 1991:130). According to Meeks (1983:10), Antioch, was the centre of political, military, and commercial communication between Rome and the Persian frontier and between Palestine and Asia Minor, was one of the three of four most important cities of the empire and the home of a large and vigorous Jewish community. There developed the form of missionary practice and organisation which we call Pauline Christianity, but which was probably characteristic of most of the urban expansion of the movement.

#### 2.6.2.4.2 The negative things about the city of Antioch

According to Mutavhatsindi (2008:48) archaeological excavations indicate that every religious movement in the ancient world was represented in Antioch. In Antioch as in every other major city, the gods of the Greek pantheon were well represented through temples and statues. Different cults were found in Syria, such as the cults of Zeus, Athens and Apollo and the rest of the Greek pantheon. Furthermore, Greenway & Monsma (1989:32) observe that there were also the Syrian worship of Baal and the Mother Goddess, and the mystery religions with their teachings on death and resurrection, initiation, and salvation. They note further that occultism was also common along with magic, witchcraft, and astrology.

Antioch was also known for her immorality. Guthrie et al (1990:51), note that the women enjoyed considerable prestige and sometimes occupied civic offices. The dancing girls of Antioch were the talk of the Mediterranean world. Paul's enemies employed some of these to obtain his expulsion from Antioch (Acts 13:50). Moreover, as a large and rich commercial centre, Antioch embodied the voluptuousness and corruption of a pagan society untouched by Christian influence.

#### 2.6.2.4.3 Striking features about the Church of Antioch

Why did the Church at Antioch get so much attention in Scripture? According to Greenway & Monsma (1989:32), Church at Antioch gets so much attention because; Antioch became the main gateway for the gospel to the Gentile world. Apart from Jerusalem itself, no other city was so intimately connected with the beginnings of Christianity.. As Yandian puts it the Spirit of the Lord had simply begun to move away from Jerusalem to find another place in which He could minister freely. He found that place in Antioch where He raised up a new Church which was not preaching the "Do's and Don'ts" (Yandian, 1985:84).

Sookhdeo (1987:183) concurs with Yandian in that the Church at Antioch provides an example of a community of God's people, themselves drawn from a variety of groups, with an ethnically integrated leadership, and with a concern to witness across cultural and geographical barriers. It was Church through which such barriers were being

broken down through the Gospel of Christ. Moreover, events in Antioch affected the course of the gospel, threw open the empire to evangelisation, and moulded the character of the missionary enterprise. As for its impact upon the world, Antioch soon came to supersede Jerusalem, developing into the missionary headquarters of the first century.

Another striking feature about the Church of Antioch is that it was founded by laypersons whose names were not recorded but whose labours began an important new chapter in the story of Christianity. The founders were Hellenists, natives of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had been forced to leave Jerusalem because of persecution. Arriving in Antioch they took the significant step of preaching the gospel to Gentiles, thereby beginning the mother Church of the Gentile Christian Movement (Acts 11:19-26). One result of this development was that people in Antioch began to perceive the followers of Jesus as a body distinct not only from paganism but also from normative Judaism (Walker, 1992:26).

#### 2.6.2.4.4 Witnessing Christ in the city of Antioch

Upon arriving in town, Paul and Barnabas began preaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath and made such an impact that apparently the Gentile proselytes, who were not confined by Jewish traditions to once-a week gatherings, continued to receive teaching during the week (see Acts 13:43b). As a result, on the next Sabbath, nearly the whole city came together to hear the apostles. This was a major breakthrough because; Antioch became a great missionary Church for the spreading of the gospel throughout the Mediterranean world (Acts 13:1-5).

Furthermore, the Churches of Philip, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesians were all planted as a result of Antioch' sending. In addition, Antioch was the church where Paul received his internship, demonstrating the power of God upon him, equipping him for missionary duty (Acts 11:25-26; Acts 16:6-10) (cf. McConnell, 1997:25; Johnstone, 1998:161. Thus, the church at Antioch became a movement within a movement (cf. Eckhardt, 2010:105-6; Cairns, 1996:62).

Unfortunately the revival that impacted the city of Antioch, did not last because “the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district” (cf. Acts 13:50). The establishment rose up in opposition and succeeded in shutting down the emerging revival, forcing Paul and Barnabas to leave town (see Silvano, 2007:82). In spite of the opposition, success greeted them immediately because, “when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48). The message was also welcomed beyond the city because “the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region” (Acts 13:349).

However, Meeks (1983:11) laments that Antioch was also the place where controversy between Jews and Gentiles first erupted within the church, and the radical position which Paul took on that issue led eventually to his breaking not only with Peter but even with Barnabas (Gal. 2:11-14) and gave a distinctive theological cast to his own subsequent mission, which thenceforth moved steadily westward through Asia Minor into mainland Greece (cf. Yandian, 1985:84).

## 2.7 PAUL AND THE CITY

Paul was a city person. He was born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), brought up in the city of Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of the Jews (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3). Meeks (1983:9) observes that the city breathes through his language. For example, when Paul constructs a metaphor of olive trees or gardens, on the other hand, the Greek is fluent and evokes urban man more than village men; he seems more at home with the clichés of Greek rhetoric, drawn from gymnasium, stadium, or workshop (cf. Acts 22:11). He was also a freeborn Roman citizen (Acts 22:28), and did not hesitate to make use of the privileges of a Roman citizen when such privileges would help in the carrying out of his mission for Christ (Dunn 2003:21; Ladd, 1993:398).

In the same vein, Paul was among those who depended on the city for their livelihood. He supported himself, at least partially, by working “with his own hands” – making tents.

This life as an artisan distinguished him both from the workers of the farms, who slaves or free, was perhaps at the very bottom of the social pyramid in antiquity, and from the lucky few whose wealth and status depended on their agricultural estates. The urban hand workers included slave and free, and a fair range of status and means, from desperate poverty to a reasonably comfortable living, but all belonged thoroughly to the city. If Paul's world consisted, practically speaking, only of the cities of the Roman Empire, then it is perhaps easier to understand the extraordinary claim he makes to the Christians in Rome. "From Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum," he writes, "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." The result was that "I no longer have any room for work in these regions" (Rom. 15:19b, 23a).

### 2.7.1 Propagating the Gospel in the cities

Appealing to the Scriptures, Thiessen (1987:190) states that after Paul was saved on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), he immediately began to preach Christ. He set out on his mission from Antioch (Acts 13), and used an urban strategy; planting Churches in the main cities with the expectation that they would spread the gospel to neighbouring towns and villages (cf. Acts 16:11-40; 17:16-33; 18:1-11; 19:1-10; 28:16-31). He did not work from a planned itinerary, apparently, but when a territory opened to him, he sought to reach it from the vantage point of the most strategic population centre of the area (Cairns, 1996:67).

According to Dubeso (1978:46), the cities which figured prominently in Paul's ministry were centres of administration, centres of commerce and trade. His pattern of ministry was to enter its own indigenous leaders, and move on. When opposition arose; he turned to a direct proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles in any city that he found suitable. After founding a church, Paul would organise it by appointing elders and deacons so that the church might be self-governing after his departure. His desire not to be a burden to the infant Churches led him to assume the responsibility of supporting himself while he preached to the people. However, he did not make this a rule for others but felt that it was a necessity for his work.

According to Paul's strategy the Church was to be self-supporting. It was also to be self-propagating as each was to be a witness of Christ to all (Acts 1:8). His dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance in his work is clearly evident in both Acts and his epistles (Acts 13:2, 4; 16:6-7). He did not wish to go to any city unless there was clear evidence that it was the field in which God would have him labour. He sought to reach the areas untouched by others so that he might be a pioneer of the gospel (Rom. 15:20). Here are some of the cities in which Paul planted churches.

#### 2.7.1.1 The city of Corinth

According to Joslin (1982:234), Corinth was a prosperous commercial centre located on a narrow neck of land between the Aegean Sea and the Gulf of Corinth. Populations of ancient cities can be difficult to assess, but some estimates put Corinth's population at around 500,000 in Paul's day. The city had a widespread reputation for revelry, recreation, and immorality. Corinth hosted the Isthmian games, a competitive gala second in popularity only to the ancient Olympic games. Paul's use of athletic metaphors likely came from his familiarity with these contests (Bruce 1991:248).

##### 2.7.1.1.1 The founding of the church at Corinth

Paul arrived in Corinth on his second missionary journey, and he stayed there for 18 months (Acts 18:11). Luke observes that the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision by night and assured him that he had much people in the city of Corinth (Acts 18:9). Paul was reassured, and the promise was fulfilled: he came to recognise that, while Corinth had not figured on his own programme, it had a prominent place in the Lord's programme for him (Bruce 1991:248; Dunn 2003:74). Towns (2003:505) observes that even though the city was filled with vice and corruption, the Church grew, and many apparently believed in Jesus Christ. Near the end of his time in the city, Paul was arrested and taken to court where Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia and a brother of Seneca, the famous Stoic philosopher, heard the charge from Paul's antagonists (cf. Acts 18:12).

Silvoso concurs with the above mentioned views in that Corinth, a city that was dominated by systemic demonic pagan worship was able to experience the liberating power of God because Paul moved his base of operating to the marketplace by turning



his tent-making corporation into a ministry base (Silvoso, 2007:80). In accordance with his regular practice, Paul maintained himself in Corinth by his own manual labour, and as it was already indicated, he found employment with a tent-making firm owned by a Jew, originally from Pontus, named Aquila, and his wife Priscilla (1 Cor. 5: 5).

#### 2.7.1.1.2 Paul's ethical system in Corinth

According to Cairns (1996:69), Paul's ethical system grew out of his personal union of the believer with Christ by faith. This vertical relationship was to be balanced by a horizontal relationship in which one is united with fellow believers by Christian love expressed in moral life. Neither the legalism of Judaism nor the rationalism of Stoicism, but Christian love (1 Cor. 13) is to be the spring of Christian conduct. This life of love involves separation from personal defilement growing out of idol worship, sexual impurity, or drunkenness – the major sins of heathendom. It results, positively, in loving service to others and steadfastness in the matter of personal integrity.

Paul uses another word in his ethical system that has no Hebrew equivalent: *syneidesis* (conscience). Conscience at best is, therefore, a guide of relative value. He challenges the Corinthians to judge his conduct in their light of their conscience (Ladd, 1993:519). Paul had three sources of information regarding the situation at Corinth – Chloe's people, the delegation, and the letter. Together these revealed two sets of problems, to which Paul responds in different ways (Dunn, 2003:76). What the Corinthians saw as problems he discusses calmly and rationally. Here the researcher will highlight some of the ethical and moral challenges which Paul resolved in Corinth.

#### 2.7.1.1.3 Division within the Church

Joslin (1982:235) is of the opinion that a city as racially cosmopolitan and as morally corrupt as Corinth would almost inevitably be troubled by tensions and frictions between the various ethnic groups. Hence, Clarke (2000:176) observes that one of the first problems which raises in 1 Corinthians was the matter of internal division and distinct parties, as reflected in the slogans, 'I am of Paul', 'I am of Apollo's', 'I am of Christ. Paul's immediate task was to attack the evils of division and party factions which were destroying the unity of the Church (1 Cor. 6:9-11).



Instead of making the body of Christ their base for Christian unity, some in Corinth were making their favourite apostolic worker the basis for their fellowship. With loving severity, Paul rebuked the Church for its sectarian spirit, condemning it as a work of the flesh (1 Cor.3:3-4). Patronage, we have seen, was a key characteristic of leadership at various levels in the Graeco-Roman world, including the empire, the province, the city, the association and the household.

It emerges that Christians, who themselves were leading figures within the Christian community, were similarly acting as clients to the apostolic figures highlighted in partisan slogans, and seeking to further the status of their preferred figure. There was the potential of significant benefits to be gained in siding loyalties with a particular patron, and it can be argued that the factions which characterised the Corinthian community were based on this sort of dynamic. Another area in which some of the Corinthian Christians displayed characteristics similar to those of pagan Graeco-Roman leaders and thereby introduced division was in their preoccupation with wisdom and proficiency in public speaking.

This is especially apparent in the number of contrasts which Paul draws in 1 Corinthians 1-3 between godly wisdom and the “wisdom of the world” or “human wisdom”. It emerges that some of the Corinthian Christians had adopted expectations that Paul would function with the oratorical skills and training of an accomplished sophist. In actuality he had adopted an anti-sophistic stance when he proclaimed the message to Corinthians, thereby distancing himself and delivery of his message from such characteristics of secular leaders strongly condemned these divisions. Thus Paul states:

‘When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. My message and my preaching were not in wise and persuasive words . . . so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.’

#### 2.7.1.1.4 Sexual immorality

Another ethical problem which Paul dealt with at Corinthians was sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-5). According to Joslin (1982:236), Vernus was the principal deity of Corinth.

His temple was one of the most magnificent buildings in the city. In it a thousand priestesses and public prostitutes, were kept at public expense. They were always available for those who wished to indulge their carnal lusts in the worship of their principal deity. Such licentious behaviour on the part of those Christians of higher status within the Church would have served to exacerbate the division which existed in the community (cf. Clarke, 2000:182).

#### 2.7.1.1.5 Family life

An atmosphere of lust and licentiousness in society led to broken laws, broken hearts and broken homes. Fragmented families were a feature of Corinth that the believers actually sent a message to Paul requesting instruction concerning Christian family life. Paul readily acceded to their request (1. Cor. 7:1-40). He was specific in his teaching about the right use of God's gift of sex. He recognised that this powerful and God-given desire had to be harnessed and used for the enrichment of a permanent relationship, but only within the married state.

His first instruction gave guidance to the Christian husband and wife. He then moved on to deal with the marriage in which one partner had become a Christian subsequent to the event of marriage. Paul considered the various reactions that could be expected from the unbelieving partner and advised accordingly. Instruction for the unmarried and widows was also given (cf. Lutzer, 2004:53).

#### 2.7.1.1.6 Treatment of the poor at Eucharist

The diseases of selfish individualism had infected the Church at Corinth and this spiritual malady was obvious in their times of worship. The distinction in the church between those who were wealthy and those who had no property was very visibly highlighted when they come together to share a meal. Those who enjoyed higher status were able to display this by means of the quantity and type of food they could eat, while those who were poorer had to go without.

For Paul such discrimination meant that the Eucharist was not really celebrated at Corinth because the sharing was only nominal (11:20; 11:17-34). In the intention of

Jesus at the last supper the sharing of bread and wine was meant to focus the daily sharing in love which was the message of the death of Jesus, who died for us (11:26). Those who attempted to celebrate the Eucharist without actually loving their fellows were no better than the soldiers who murdered Jesus (cf. Heb. 6:6; 11:28-9) (Dunn 2003:81).

#### 2.7.1.1.7 Food Sacrificed to Idols

According to Bruce (1991:270), the issue of food that had been sacrificed to idols could not be considered in isolation in a pagan city like Corinth: it was part of the wider problem of idolatrous associations. Here also there was an issue which was related to social status and the conflict which existed between those who were influential in both their households and the wider city and those who had a lower social status.

As it was already noted, religious pluralism was widespread in the Roman colony of Corinth and those who wished to maintain their social standing in this pagan culture would have felt it necessary to participate in the social customs of the time. The principal ethical problem which is being addressed in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 was that some Christians were themselves participating in pagan feasts in the pagan temples and consequently eating in those surroundings meat that had been formerly sacrificed to idols (Ladd 1993:520).

#### 2.7.1.1.8 Secular Courts

Paul also makes explicit accusations that some of the Corinthian Christians had adopted secular attitudes in their actions and relations. He says in (1 Corinthians 6:6-7) that, instead of trying to settle a Church dispute among themselves, believers went to court and tried to solve their differences with the help of secular courts. Consequently, some from the Christian community were using the leverage of this judicial mechanism as a means of publicly bolstering their personal standing and status in front of their peers and social network, whilst also endeavouring to denigrate the status and diminish the popularity of their opponent. In so doing they were reinforcing division within the community (Basu, 2005:272).

### 2.7.1.2 City of Thessalonica

According to Bruce (1991:223), the city and port of Thessalonica was founded about 315 B.C. by Cassander, king of Macedonia, who named it after his wife Thessalonica, daughter of Philip II and half-sister of Alexander the Great. Its original residents were the former inhabitants of Therme and some twenty-five other towns or villages in the area, whom Cassander forcibly settled in his new foundation.

#### 2.7.1.2.1 Church in Thessalonica

People of Thessalonica responded positively to the message of God. “Some of them [i.e., pious] were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women’ (Acts 17:4). Once more, the powers-that-be turned against Paul and shut him down. However, the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the city, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar” (Acts 17:5). This forced the apostles to flee, and “the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night” (Acts 17:10, leaving another revival to whither (cf. Towns 2003:522).

During this short period Paul had established a strong Church and taught the people well. They understood prophecy and the return of Jesus Christ. Paul himself would not be dependent upon the Thessalonians Church while he was there, although he was within his right to do so. Working ‘night and day’, he felt that he had provided an example for them to imitate (2 Thess. 3:8-9). Paul’s purpose was to wean such persons away from the welfare syndrome, be their source a wealthy Christian or non-Christian patron (Winter 1994:53).

#### 2.7.1.2.2 Ethical instruction in Thessalonians

The key ethical instruction is work ethics. He exhorts them to moral purity, brotherly love, he corrected their erroneous views of the Lord’s return; and he encouraged them to watchfulness, considerateness, and the fulfilment of their religious duties (cf. Thiessen, 1987:194). Notwithstanding the evidence that there were some in the Church

who were socially prominent, Paul's urge to the whole community is that the Thessalonian Christians become financially dependent on nobody.

In his subsequent letter, here assumed to be Pauline in authorship, he repeats an injunction which he had placed upon them in person. "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). For the most part these were not wealthy individuals, but they were nonetheless strongly affected by the civic and cultic cultural background of Graeco-Roman Thessalonica. Paul's ethical instruction is one of positive reinforcement to encourage them to remain strong in their faith and to resist society's pressure to conform.

Given his commitment to social ethics which aimed to bestow help and blessing on the everyday life of other citizens, his deep worry about some Thessalonians' welfare syndrome is explicable. Christians were not only to command the respect of outsiders by being self-sufficient, but they were to seek the welfare of their city, rather than be economically dependent on fellow citizens. Paul perceives that this involved sharing self-generated financial resources (Winter 1994:58).

### 2.7.1.3 The city of Ephesus

Ephesus was one of the foremost Asian cities, located on the western coast of modern-day Turkey. It was a commercial centre of Asia Minor and had a harbour for trade and travel. Ephesus was also a religious centre where the famous temple of Diana (Roman name), or Artemis (Greek name), was built, considered one of seven wonders of the ancient world (Acts 19:35ff).

#### 2.7.1.3.1 Church in Ephesus

Another breakthrough began in Ephesus and quickly expanded to the entire region: "All who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10). It was a movement characterised by unusual manifestations of divine power. "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul" (Acts 19:11). Paul's ministry went beyond setting victims free from witchcraft to disabling the evil system behind it: "Those who practice magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of

everyone” (Acts 19:19). So potent was the movement that no obstacle was able to stand in its way, and “the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing” (Acts 19:20).

Paul’s strategy in Ephesus consisted of four parts: work hard (in his business in the marketplace) to generate resources to help the needy (poor), and in so doing, to emulate Christ in order to be perceived (by society) as a giver instead of a taker. Unfortunately, the opposition, once again, did not delay in materialising. Soon, “there arose no small stir” (Acts 19:23), and an angry mob filled the city with “confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theatre” (v. 29) with murderous intentions, dragging along two of Paul’s associates.

Since the riot was fuelled by fear of an economic collapse in the leading local industry (witchcraft), members of the local “Chamber of Commerce,” threatened in their pocketbooks, were eager to pulverise the emerging movement, as had happened in other cities previously (Dubose, 1978:47). (1978:47). However, something was different this time. The Asiarchs (governors of Asia) had become Paul’s friends (see Acts 19:31). After hearing reports of the situation, they urged him not to go to the theatre, where two of Paul’s associates were in danger of being lynched.

Obviously, the Asiarchs knew how to work the system, because soon afterwards we read that the town clerk soothed the multitude, advised the crowd that they had no case, proceeded to let Paul’s associates go free, and dismissed the assembly, urging them to disband or face contempt charges (see Acts 19:35-40). Conditions in the area became so safe afterwards; hence, the impact of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus itself was phenomenal. For example, those who had engaged in magic brought their books to be burned, the value of which has been estimated to be the equivalent of a day’s wages for 50, 000 people (cf. Towns 2003:513).

#### 2.7.1.3.2 Ethical instructions in Ephesus

The ethical topics dealt with in the exhortation of 4:17-5:20 suggests that more attention ought to be paid to the quality of their behaviour in such areas as dealing with anger, edifying speech, forgiveness, sexual purity, worship, and thanksgiving. They need also

to bring distinctively Christian motivation into play in their conduct in the household (5:21-6-9) and to resolve to stand firm by availing themselves of Christ's strength and God's armour (6:10-20). Another ethical problem which Paul dealt with in Ephesus was Church unity. As Paul discussed the unity of the Church of Christ, he urged Christians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

He named seven "ones" which form the basic teaching for keeping unity in Christ's body. He said, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Paul also mentions that ministry gifts work with the saints and help them come into a relationship with each other in the works they do. This kind of relationship that ministry gifts help to foster among the saints was distinguished by what Paul calls 'the unity of faith'. It follows from this that unity can only be measured by the extent to which every member of the body supplies, resources and relates to other members concerning the works of service done in creation (cf. Thwaites, 2001:148).

#### 2.7.1.4 The city of Lystra

According to Douglas, Guthrie and Hillyer (1988:718), Lystra was founded as a Roman colony by Augustus, probably about 6 BCE. Its remote position and proximity to unsettled mountains suggests defensive motives, as also does the considerable Latin speaking settlement implied by surviving inscriptions. The population of the colony consisted of the Latin-speaking colonists, a local aristocracy of soldiers; the native population, some of whom were doubtless educated in Greek and strong supporters of the Roman imperial policy; while the majority were evidently uneducated, not well acquainted with Greek, but more naturally expressing themselves in the Lycaonian tongue.

##### 2.7.1.4.1 The striking events which occurred at Lystra

According to Joslin (1982:157-158), the striking events which occurred at Lystra are associated mainly with the humbler class of the Lycaonian populace and it was the only city of Asia Minor in which a native language is mentioned. The matters of 'language'

and 'education' can be linked together. The majority of the Lystran population spoke the Lycaonian language: they were not familiar with Greek. Most commentators on life in Lystra also draw attention to the fact that this community was without the asset of education.

When Paul spoke at Lystra he encountered for the first time a problem of communication, which was linked to the language and education of the people he was addressing. The fact that the crowd cried out in Lycaonian is specially mentioned by Luke (who possibly got his information from Paul) for two probable reasons: in the first place, Paul and Barnabas recognised that this was a different language from the Phrygian which they had heard on the lips of the indigenous population of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium; in the second place, the crowd's use of Lycaonian explains why Paul and Barnabas did not grasp what was afoot until preparation to pay them divine honours was well advanced.

#### 2.7.1.4.2 Church at Lystra

While the presence of Jewish residents in Lystra is clear (Acts 16:1), no synagogue is mentioned there, and the general tone of Acts 14:8-19 suggests surroundings more thoroughly pagan and less permeated by Jewish influence than in Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. The pagan majority of the community were 'much under the influence of native superstition'. As the researcher has already carefully distinguished between 'Jewish evangelism' as it was outlined in the New Testament, and particularly in the ministry of the apostle Paul. According to Luke, there are only two recorded sermons in the book of Acts which were preached to pagan Gentiles. They were the sermons preached by Paul at Lystra (Acts 14:8-20), and at Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

It is in these two sermons in particular we have detailed examples of the type of approach Paul used when he spoke to the people who had no knowledge of Scripture. The sermon preached at Athens was preached to people who could be called 'middle-class intellectuals', whereas the sermon at Lystra was directed to ordinary 'working people'. It is the only example we have of detailed information concerning the social and spiritual condition of a New Testament working class community and the structure



and content of the evangelistic sermon which Paul addressed to them. The importance of Paul's experiences at Lystra becomes clear for our understanding of appropriate biblical evangelism (see Joslin, 1982:159).

#### 2.7.1.4.3 The content and structure of the message brought to the people of Lystra

The opening words of the Apostle Paul's address to the people of Lystra established the fact that the living God was primarily concerned with 'repentance' and not 'ritual'. In summary rituals was nothing but 'worthless things'. The living God, Creator of all things requires His creatures to turn from the error of their ways and demands that they set their lives to serve and honour Him. Paul and Barnabas faced the same problem at Lystra. Thiessen (1987:216) notes that after healing a cripple, Paul and Barnabas were on the point of being venerated with divine honours. Paul dismissed this misplaced homage and used the incident as a base from which to proclaim the gospel. He spoke in a way which demonstrated the practical relevance of his subject to their lives (Bruce, 1991:214).

The high social standing of those who believed initially suggests that a major breakthrough was in the making there, 'but when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds' (Acts 17:13-14). As a result Paul was outflanked by the opposition and forced to leave town because of the clever manipulation of city leaders and the agitation of crowds by an influential group in spite of the favourable response by a large part of the population (Silvoso, 2007:84).

From the above one is led to believe that involvement in matters of ethical and moral challenges has been the heritage of the Church throughout the centuries. Starting from the first century Church, which laid great emphasis on taking care of the poor, the needy, the orphans and the widows, right down to the twentieth century, the Church has taken an active role to promote the morality of the urban community.

## 2.7.2 KEY METHODS THAT PAUL USED IN THE URBAN AREAS

### 2.7.2.1 Contacts

One cannot read far in the letters of Paul and his disciples without discovering that it was concern about the internal life of the Christian groups in each city that prompted most of the correspondence (Meeks 1983:74). Continually making contacts with new people was absolutely essential to effective evangelism and the planting of Churches. Paul made contacts in many different ways. For example, at Philippi Paul found out about a group of Jewish women who met for prayer by the side of a river, and that is where he went to tell them about Christ (Acts 16:13). Paul knew that making contacts with the Gentile population was essential for fulfilling his mission directly to the synagogues (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:140).

### 2.7.2.2 Household

Paul focussed mainly on families and households both in evangelism and outreach into society. He assumed that once the gospel took root in a home and among family members it would eventual make an impact on the entire community. The families and households of the time of Paul were similar to the “extended” families that are common in many African traditions. When the New Testament speaks of a family or household (cf. 1 Cor. 1:16; Gal 6:10), it refers to more than one set of parents with their children. It includes everyone living together and related to one another, plus friends, servants even neighbours and guests in their homes (cf. Greenway, 1999:63).

The converts were baptised together and shared Holy Communion together. The first blows against racial and social discrimination, and against slavery and mistreatment of women were struck at the communion table when Jew and Gentile, master and slave, men and women sat together around the same table and confessed their dependence on the same Saviour. The strategy of Paul was to teach the first and basic lessons in the context of the extended family when he preached the gospel and won converts. These lessons were concerned with the nature of the Church as the family of God and of the transforming life of the Kingdom (cf. Ladd 1993:577; Viola 2008:85).

In connection to this, Paul also used the natural “bridges” of family relatives, friends, and other contacts in spreading the gospel. This means that Paul used human brides to carry the gospel to the Jews who lived in many cities and beyond the Jews to the Gentiles. The author is of the view that this method has great potential for mission work today. Cities and towns are filled with natural human brides. The gospel can pass over these brides from person to person and from family to family. The lines of family and friendship run from city to village and back again and across the cities. This makes human networks as important in spreading the gospel today as they were in the first century (see Greenway, 1999:65).

#### 2.7.2.3 Cemeteries of the martyrs

The second places the cemeteries that were the burial places of the martyrs. When Christianity was officially tolerated in the fourth century, the martyrs’ relics were translated to basilicas erected in the towns by Christian emperors, and these became the focal point of worship. The Christian ecclesia or assembly embraced the whole town and the liturgy was celebrated in the basilicas at different times (Shorter, 1991:60).

#### 2.7.2.4 The Synagogue

According to Cairns (1996:67), Paul began his work in strategic Roman centres by going first to the synagogue, where he proclaimed his message as long as he was received. In the cities where Paul founded congregations, however, the Jews had probably already advanced to the stage of possessing buildings used exclusively for the community’s functions. The sorts of activities in the meeting were also marked by prophecy, admonitions, the reading of apostolic letters, and by phenomena of spirit possession (Meeks 1983:80).

#### 2.7.2.5 Letters and visits

According to Cairns (1996:68), Paul made a practice of keeping in touch with the local situation in each Church through visitors from that Church (1Cor. 1:11) or through the reports of agents whom he sent to visit the churches (1 These. 3:6). Whenever the local situation seemed to demand it, he wrote letters under the guidance of the Holy

Spirit to deal with particular problems. For example, he wrote twice to the Thessalonians' Church to clear up misunderstandings concerning the doctrine of the second coming of Christ.

These communications also afforded the means of more direct and specific attempts at social control. There were instructions to be given, often in response to reports of specific local problems; there were general reminders of the mode of life deemed appropriate for the new faith; there were arguments against viewpoints that Paul regarded as unacceptable; there were even directives for quite specific actions such as the discipline of deviants and procedures for the Jerusalem collections (Meeks 1983:114).

## 2.8 LESSON FROM SCRIPTURE FOR THE CITIES

In view of the foregoing proceedings, one may ask this question: which lesson may one derive at or deduce from the biblical theology of urban ministry? Or how does Scripture view the city? On the basis of this discussion the researcher is of the opinion that this reflection on cities from a biblical perspective leaves four impressions that can also be viewed as imperative for the church to rediscover the city in both the developed and the developing worlds:

### 2.8.1 The Bible views the city as sign of our times

The Bible point out that city growth is not something to be perceived as entirely the work of the devil, but as part of God's providential plan in history. As Hiebert&Meneses (1995:325) said it, the city is a place where God is mightily at work establishing his rule over human societies. This led Winter & Hawthorne (1999:555) to believe that the massive migration to the cities that is occurring around the world may be, in God's providence, a key to world evangelisation. Through urbanisation, God is drawing people of every race, tribe and language to places where they can be reached with the gospel. By this movement God carries forward His redemption purpose in history. The world is coming to the city, and the Church should be there to greet it in Christ's name.

The city is cohabitation, participation – not, however, that humans reach up to the skies; it is God who reaches down to earth. This implies that a Church that ministers to homogenous groups in the city should find ways and means of ministering to the multicultural people of the world as well. The time is ripe, and the Church cannot afford the luxury of not responding faithfully to God’s call in urban centres. To ignore the plight of urban masses or refuse to grapple with the trial and complexities of city life is worse than merely a strategic error (see Linthicum, 1991:17).

#### 2.8.2 Cities are important to God because He is going for nations

Cities are important to God because He is going for nations, and the backbone of a nation is its cities. God refers to Jerusalem in endearing terms, and His love includes other cities, even sinful ones such as Nineveh, which the prophet Jonah wanted, destroyed. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of cities, comparing them to baby chicks in danger, and referred to himself as the mother hen spreading her wings to provide much needed protection (see Matt. 23:37).

#### 2.8.3 The Bible views the cities as strategically important for the spread of the Gospel

The Bible views the cities as strategically important because they group together so many people. As has been emphasised in modern missiological writing, they are important biblically, and formed the framework of the strategy of the Apostle Paul as he sought to unite the people and fill the world with the Church of Christ. Thus, cities have spiritual gates, and in the psalms we are told to speak lovingly to a city, inviting her to open those gates for her King of glory to come in (see Ps.24:7-10).

#### 2.8.4 The Bible views the city as a place where Spiritual warfare is going on

Cities are not evil because they are cities. Rather, cities maximise human potential for both good and evil. There is much that is beautiful and good in cities. By their schools, hospitals and productivity, cities enhance the quality of human life. Simply put God intends the city to be a place of shelter, a place of communion and place of personal liberation as its citizens practice a division of labour according to their own

unique gifts. Therefore, God wants cities to be places where systems are developed to benefit people.

However, at the same time, the power of evil is evident. Sin expresses itself not only in the wrongdoing of individuals, but also in institutions whose policies and actions exploit and oppress, as well as in the wrong use of the systems by which cities are managed. In Genesis 10, we find that Nimrod was a “mighty one” who built cities. However these cities were not serving their intended purpose. That is why the people of Babylon were scattered. Moreover, God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because they were well off but failed to tend to the welfare of their people. To keep ourselves from both excessive optimism as to what we can accomplish and from depression when setbacks come, urban workers must possess biblical awareness of the spiritual warfare going on.

## 2.9 CONCLUSION

The biblical theology of urban ministry was discussed in this chapter. It was quite clear in this chapter that God from the Old Testament perspective, showed great concern for many cities, for example, the city of Jericho, Nineveh, the city of Sodom and the city of Jerusalem. From the New Testament perspective, Jesus Christ also showed great concern for cities. He preached in cities, he sent his disciples to preach in cities; he wept over the city of Jerusalem; he showed great concern for the Church of God in the city.

What transpired from this chapter was that the Apostle Paul was also a city person. In his strategies for urban ministry he focussed on urban centres. The cities which figured prominently in Paul’s ministry were centres of administration, commerce and trade. Throughout the history of the Church, the three lines were continued: the city was regarded as the place of rebellion against God; she was viewed as the place where God is worshipped; and last the city was regarded as the place where many people are reached.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE CHALLENGES OF URBANISATION, ESPECIALLY REGARDING MORAL DECAY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on South African urban challenges especially regarding moral decay. First, the researcher defines the concept urbanisation. Second, the researcher will outline the dynamics of urban demographics. Third, the birth of the modern cities will be highlighted, in particular; the city of Johannesburg will be used as a case study. The causes of urban growth vary from one city to another. The reality concerning urban growth is that the more urban growth occurs, the more the challenges in urban areas increases as well. The researcher ends the chapter by highlighting the profile and the manifestation of moral decay in the urban setting.

#### **3.2 DEFINITION OF URBANISATION**

According to Beall & Fox (2009:7), urbanisation refers to the unique social, cultural, economic and political dynamics that arise in densely populated human settlements. Tonna (1982:5) describes urbanisation as the phenomenon by which millions of men and women move en mass from rural to metropolitan areas, and – more importantly – which transforms their life-style. Pierli & Abeledo (2002:61) are of the opinion that by urbanisation is meant the process where people acquire material and non-material elements of culture, behaviour patterns and ideas that originated in, or are distinctive of, the city. They mention further that urban growth, on the other hand, is the physical aspect of urbanisation. The term refers to the numbers of people actually living in urban areas, the increase of urban populations and the multiplication of towns.

There is no doubt that this is a relatively recent phenomenon: before the industrial revolution the overwhelming majority of people lived in rural areas, resorting to “nerve centres” only for specific requirements. It is also an impersonal phenomenon: it has not been willed expressly by any individual or group. However, it was initiated by

developments apparently independent of it; it then proceeds under its own momentum, in most cases escaping subsequent control by human calculation.

### 3.3 THE DYNAMICS OF URBAN DEMOGRAPHICS

In Africa today, although physically the level of urban dwelling is low in comparison with other continents, the rate of urban growth is extraordinarily high. This situation brings about a continuous interaction between town and country, and it also means that African rural dwellers are being socially urbanised to an ever-increasing degree (see Pierli & Abeledo, 2002:61). Greenway & Mashau (2007:7) support the above-mentioned notions by saying there is a clear urban explosion in Africa today, for example, major cities in Africa such as Lagos (Nigeria), Nairobi (Kenya), Cairo (Egypt) and Johannesburg (South Africa), are densely populated because of people who move to these cities for one reason or another.

The above-mentioned statistics bear out the assertion that the day of the big city has arrived: while the total world population doubled during the first half of the present century that of cities with populations of more than 100. 000 quadrupled (Linthicum, 1999:18). It is also true to say that in Africa today towns are no longer alien places for most people. This implies that an African is increasingly at home with town life. In some instances they even feel physically more secure in the town than in the country side.

According to Sookhdeo (1987:165), the phenomenon of world-class cities, of international character and influence, is new in its strategic pervasiveness. As international centres they rise above local influence and transform values and lifestyle to a degree that makes them the most significant feature of the future landscape of human life. To them, and through them, flows not only the goods and service used, but migratory and refugee movements; and these, in the sovereignty of God, constitute a moulding force of such power that it must form one of the two bases for understanding what God is about and how we should work for Him. In connection to this, it is true to say cities determine the destiny of nations. To remove the cities is to excise the central



nervous system of South African society. There is, then, a very practical mandate to serve the city.

### 3.4 THE BIRTH OF MODERN CITIES

Archaeologists place the birth of cities around six thousand years ago in the Sumer regions of Mesopotamia: the famous Ur, Babylon and Seleucia on the plains that lie between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, where fertile soil and access to waterways for irrigation and transport facilitated surplus agricultural production (cf. Tonna, 1982:8-9). According to Hiebert & Meneses (1995:259) they (modern cities) were centres of economic activities such as manufacturing and trade. Business, not government or religion, was their driving force. Richardson (2007:44) notes that the seeds of reform, sown by John Wycliffe (1330-84), flowered at the Reformation. Cities expanded, and there was a gradual shift from an agricultural society to a commerce-based social order in the towns.

The standard narrative, then, is that agriculture made modern cities possible, which in turn gave rise to socio – economic differentiation, socio-technical innovation, and eventually the first civilisations. As Meeks (1983:14) puts it as the cities grew in number and power, the relations within the countryside became more and more ambivalent. Each depended upon the others, but by every measure of physical and social advantage the symbiosis was one-sided in favour of the city. Stevenson (2003:14) supports the above-mentioned views by saying that with the industrial revolution, predominantly agrarian societies (comprised of a rural peasantry living in small settlements) were transformed into societies that were overwhelmingly urban, and urbanism became the core residential experience and way of life of the majority of the population.

This urbanism involved the advent of new forms of sociality, changed power relations and, in the view of some commentators, the development of a distinctly urban sensibility. The most dramatic aspect of this new phase was precisely the very rapid displacement of populations from rural areas and their concentration in the cities, where the new means of production, factories, were sited, capable of exploiting the new

energy sources- carboniferous minerals at first and later petroleum and electricity (Tonna, 1982:9; cf. Greenway, 1979:26).

This phenomenon (Industrial Revolution), not only changed the nature of work, but also dramatically transformed the organisation of society, gender and kinship relationships, and the dominant form of human settlement. In particular, the composition of, and link between, the rural and urban was completely overturned as a result of the large-scale migration of potential industrial workers from the countryside to the cities where the factories of the emerging manufacturing bourgeoisie were located (Turley, 2005:57).

Urbanisation in South Africa caused a sudden and radical split in its historical development. This process gathered momentum with the discovery of diamonds (in 1871), at Kimberley and gold (in 1886, on the Witwatersrand), which introduced the Industrial Revolution to the South (Biko: 2013:17). However, urbanisation accelerated in pace about 1920, when the then Prime Minister, General J.B.M Hertzog started implementing policies aimed at industrialising South Africa. World War II also further stimulated industrial development and, after the war, the country experienced an unprecedented period of economic prosperity (Popenoe et al., 1998:422). The researcher believes that to understand the advent of urbanisation in South Africa one needs to know something about the historical processes that have shaped South African cities, in particular the city of Johannesburg.

#### 3.4.1 The city of Johannesburg in the pre-1994 era

Shorter (1991:14) observes that Johannesburg, one of Africa's greatest cities, was originally a mining town, and the mining compounds with their great mountains of excavated yellow sand still surround the city. Hence, it was known in the vernacular as "Egoli" – the city of gold, money, and opportunities. It stood in the centre of the richest goldfield ever discovered, a reef stretching for some forty miles along the line of a rocky ridge named by an Afrikaner farmer "the Witwatersrand," the Ridge of White Waters. It is beyond reasonable doubt that Johannesburg is the pulsating heart of the modern South African economy, and a city where wealth and poverty are often found side by side.

For example, wealthy whites lived over the crest of the ridge in grand mansions in Parktown, with views stretching away to the Magaliesburg Mountains to the north, protected from the noise and dust of the mine workings and ore dumps since northerly winds blew it all southwards. The middle classes went north and east, to suburbs like Hillbrow, Yeoville and Bellevue. The working class suburbs sprang up in Jeppe, Troyville and Belgravia in the east and Fordsburg to the west. And a location for the poorest whites, mainly unskilled Afrikaners driven out of the Transvaal countryside by poverty and war, was specially established in Vrededorp to the west.

To avoid municipal controls, many Africans preferred to live in the freehold areas of Sophiatown, four miles west of the city centre, and Alexandra, nine miles to the north, lying just outside the municipal boundary, where blacks had been allowed to buy and own land since the early years of the century. Both were densely populated, full of dilapidated buildings, disease-ridden, rife with crime, violence and prostitution, but home for an ever-increasing black community.

By 1940, Johannesburg's total African population had risen to a quarter of a million. Closer to the centre, scattered throughout the western, central and eastern districts of Johannesburg, a network of "slum yards" proliferated, properties controlled by white landlords who crammed as many tenants as possible into shanties and single rooms at exorbitant rents. Slum yard life revolved around the illicit liquor trade and the "incessant relentless war" that police fought to suppress it (cf. Meredith, 2010:24-26).

#### 3.4.1.1 Racial classification in the city of Johannesburg

The official government attitude towards South Africa's black urban population was based on the Stallard commission of inquiry into local government in the Transvaal, published in 1922, which asserted that black men, women and children should only be permitted within municipal areas in so far and for so long as their presence was demanded by the wants of the white population and should depart from there from when they cease to minister to the needs of the white man (cf. Meredith, 2010:26).

In an effort that black South Africans remained in the rural reserves, influx control was introduced. According to Popenoe *et al*, (1998:423), influx control refers to the

legislation and concomitant administrative institutions and measures that were applied to restrict the freedom of movement and settlement of black South Africans within the country and which made it extremely difficult for them to become permanently urbanised.

To ensure this policy worked, a system of pass laws was employed. African men were required to carry passes recording permission to work and live in an urban area. They needed passes for travel, for taxes, for curfews, and these were frequently demanded for inspection by police. Mass police raids in the locations were regularly organised to ensure that the pass laws and liquor regulations were being enforced and as a police commission of inquiry noted in 1937, the methods used were often violent (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:252). This system was practised until 1986, when it was formally scrapped.

#### 3.4.1.2 Ecological segregation

The process by which different areas of the city become increasingly specialised with regard to land use, services or population is called ecological segregation. The most obvious example was the formation of group areas –areas defined by apartheid law as set aside for the use and settlement of a particular racial or ethnic group or ghettos areas of a city in which members of a particular ethnic group are concentrated (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:432). In the old dispensation, urban ecological segregation was ensured by the Native Urban Act of 1923. This law separated the so-called ‘location’ from the white town through the establishment of a separate, self-balancing, and native revenue account.

Further, having established a separate account, the state proceeded to argue that Africans could be excluded from white-funded amenities in white areas for which they had not contributed. Moreover, under the terms of the urban ecological segregation, Africans were not permitted to occupy business premises in the city without ministerial consent (cf. Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:88). There could be no banks, clothing stores or supermarkets. Restrictions were even placed on dry-cleaners, garages and petrol stations. Africans were not allowed to establish companies or partnerships in

urban areas, or to construct their own buildings. These had to be built and leased from the local authority (Venter, 1998:195).

#### 3.4.1.3 Slums clearance in the city of Johannesburg

In the mid-1930s, in an attempt to make urban segregation more effective, Johannesburg's municipality destroyed many of these slum yards, moving the population to a new location twelve miles to the south-west, in the vicinity of Kipspruit. It was named Orlando, after the chairman of the municipal Native Affairs Committee at the time, Councillor Edwin Orlando Leake. By 1940, nearly 6, 000 houses had been built there. Orlando was the prototype for modern-day Soweto: monotonous rows of identical houses stretching across the barren Highveld, with few facilities provided other than municipal beer halls.

#### 3.4.1.4 The removal of Sophiatown

Sophiatown was one of the most vibrant African communities in South Africa. It was the home of writers, musicians, journalists and politicians such as the former ANC leader Dr Xuma. In its narrow, crowded streets were schools, Churches, cinemas, shops and nightclubs and the only swimming pool for African children in the whole of Johannesburg. However, in reality, much of Sophiatown had degenerated into a slum. Though some impressive houses remained, like Dr Xuma's most buildings were decaying and decrepit, their yards packed tightly with shacks and hovels in which whole families struggled to survive. Landlords crammed as many tenants as possible into one property, often charging them exorbitant rents; as many as eight people lived on one stand, sharing a single tap and single toilet. Much of the area was a health hazard.

Despite the squalor, Sophiatown retained a strong sense of community. With the growth of Johannesburg; however, Sophiatown became encircled by white suburbs. Only a narrow stretch of open veldt separated it from the prim white suburb of Westdene. The residents there soon began to agitate for the removal of this "black spot". Bowing to white pressure, in June 1953 the government moved the entire population to a new site under municipal control called Meadowlands, nine miles from Johannesburg, close to the existing township of Orlando (cf. Meredith, 2010:113-114).

### 3.4.2 The city of Johannesburg post 1994

One important perspective of the country's contemporary urban landscape points to the continuities with the pre-1994 era, of the persistence of apartheid geography dominated by spatial segregation based on class and race. For example, the black townships around the city of Johannesburg, including their new informal and RDP-complex hinterlands, have remained poor and under resourced, while suburban areas have benefited disproportionately from massive private investment over the past couple of decades, reflected in the unprecedented housing boom and retail development.

Similarly, this reality of the new urban space is not easily understood in terms of conventional conceptual frameworks, for example in the large swathes of townhouse complexes on the western periphery of Johannesburg. They are usually construed as sequestered space to which the white middle class has been treated to escape the realities of the new South African. The majority of complexes in this region comprises of quiet modest units and are occupied by aspirant young people. Many are single parents or couples with young children. A significant and growing number are black.

Furthermore, the researcher observes similar developments in the Southern suburbs of Johannesburg, albeit with important differences. Here, a historically white working class area has been transformed into an eclectic mix of expansive gated Eco states inhabited by the very wealthy and enclaves consisting of clusters of ethnic, religious and racial groups drawn from neighbouring black areas (such as Soweto, Eldorado Park, Lenasia, Mayfair and Fordsburg), as well as immigrants from other parts of Africa and Asia. The reconfiguration of these spaces has engendered new forms of urban syncretism, but the spectre of xenophobia constantly lurks beneath the surface (cf. Ramphele, 2012:131).

### 3.4.3 The inner city of Johannesburg

Though some impressive buildings remained, like the Carlton Centre, Mining houses, the Gauteng Provincial Government Office, and the big banks in the inner city of Johannesburg. The reality is that the inner city of Johannesburg has decaying tenements and houses in what were once good middle and upper-class

neighbourhoods. Grigg (1990:12) describes these areas as “slums of despair,” where those who have lost the will to try and those who cannot cope gravitate.

Furthermore, dilapidated blocks of flats in the inner city are dens for criminals. The most dangerous inner city slums in Johannesburg are: Hillbrow and Berea. Both are densely populated, full of dilapidated buildings, disease ridden, rife with crime, violence, prostitution and drugs. Here too are recent immigrants who have come to be near employment opportunities and students in their hundreds of thousands, seeking the upward mobility of education.

Moreover, it would appear that there are many self-destruction pattern of behaviour in the city of Johannesburg that point to a lack of civic pride. For example, the city is so filthy that one can hardly recognise the Eloff Street that used to be its pride. In the same vein the parking garage near Park Station become a dumping site in full view of anyone entering the city from Braamfontein, including the major of the metropolis. In connection to this, pavements are congested with garbage and merchandise of informal traders, but neither rules nor urban by-laws are enforced (cf. Ramphela, 2013:169).

Furthermore, many of the poorest of the poor have no home at all. Thousand people live on the streets of Johannesburg, occupying a few square yards of a sidewalk or roadside and building cardboard and tin shelters to protect themselves from the weather. Thousands of children roam the streets of Johannesburg, living by odds jobs, beginning, and petty theft. Street children often form gangs for mutual support and side-walk dwellers aid one another when they can, but there is little formal organisation among them that would enable them to mobilise political pressure on the government or society or to form cooperatives to keep their costs down. These people are truly marginal, living their lives outside the formal social, political, and economic structures of the city. Unfortunately, they are also marginal to the Church. With some exceptions, city Churches are not involved in ministries to them (Hiebert & Meneses, 1995:300).

### 3.5 CAUSES OF URBANISATION

Why did South African cities grow so dramatically yet unevenly over the past years despite widespread anti-urban sentiments? As Greenway & Mashau (2007:10) put it “if



one walks in the streets of Johannesburg one is exposed to vast conglomerations of different races, tribes, cultures and language. Johannesburg is swarmed by more than fifty ethnic groups coming from the outskirts of our cities and from the international community". The researcher is of the opinion that, in general, the factors behind the relentless growth of South African cities are the following:

### 3.5.1 Desegregation of South African cities

As it was already suggested, the process of desegregation of cities in South Africa has unfolded with the ending of the influx control in 1986. The process started some years before the actual scrapping of the Group Areas Act by the apartheid government itself, which made a number of incremental adjustments to the Act and the supporting legislation. These adjustments allowed for certain exceptions to the provisions of the Act and its supporting legislation which made it possible for members of different population groups to share public amenities and residential areas under certain conditions. Business areas were also desegregated. Government also stopped prosecuting contraventions of the Act (cf. Popenoe, Cunninham & Boulton, 1998:438; compare Roberts, 2001:93).

Furthermore, following the 1976 uprisings (which started in Soweto and spread across the country) the business sector took an active interest in urban affairs and established the Urban Foundation as a private sector lobbying body to change public opinion and policy regarding urbanisation. It also initiated development projects to improve living conditions and economic prospects in the cities. A major tenet of the Urban Foundation's philosophy was that the cities of South Africa are the motor of the country's economic growth. The government responded favourably to these proposals in 1986 when it accepted its new comprehensive policy document on Orderly Urbanisation and scrapped all influx control measures (see Stott, 2006:277).

As a result of the above-mentioned events and increasing inefficiencies and inequities caused by state intervention into urban residential patterns, blacks (including coloureds and Asians) entered areas that were still officially designated for white persons only. Reasons for this included the lack of Township accommodation, availability and size of



accommodation and aspirations for a better life and lifestyle. Moving into these areas also enabled employees to be nearer to their workplaces.

### 3.5.2 South Africa's integrated development plans

According to Beall & Fox (2009:216), following the end of apartheid and the induction of democracy in 1994, South Africa sought to consolidate the governing of cities by establishing new metropolitan authorities in the country's major urban centres, which had previously been characterised by multiple uncoordinated municipal government structures. Alongside the creation of these new metropolitan entities a legacy of racially fragmented urban planning and governance had to be overcome. This was done through the introduction of the integrated development plan (IDP).

This is the chief local planning instrument in South Africa, which espouses 'developmental local government'. Combine this with a new government promising houses for all, by 1997, the new city authorities had begun to make plans for housing development and 'de-densification', the polite word for getting rid of shacks. To do it, they had to 'de-densify' Alexandra's informal settlements, and others who could lay no claim to residence there and who were not eligible for the housing subsidies being mobilised to fund building.

It seems far more plausible that the relative discomfort felt by shack dwellers on the fringes of prosperous neighbourhood drives communities to action. The success of building houses for 11 million people has formed a culture of dependency on RDP housing, creating an additional pull factor away from rural areas towards urban slums as a way to join the national queue for free houses. This has replaced a long-standing tradition within the black community of building one's own houses as part of a male rite of passage. This only serves to further emasculate males in poor communities feeding a vicious cycle of social humiliation and violence (cf. Biko, 2013:212).

That fact is fundamental to Diepsloot north of Johannesburg. In 1994, Diepsloot was a semi-rural farming and leisure area, wide open and sparsely populated. By 2005, the official figure was 23 000 families, which would make it more like 90 000 people, but this is undoubtedly undercounting. Official city estimates are 150 000 to 200 000 but the

figures used by NGOs are at the top limit of that rage. It is a phenomenon of the new era, conceived in the old era, born on the very cusp of change from apartheid to democracy, in that period of transition and uncertainty, a period which began in universal fear and ended in unbridled hope. People have come and still come here to claim their place in the new order, to pursue the promises made by a new democratic government, and to seize the opportunities of freedom (cf. Harber, 2011:19).

### 3.5.3 Displaced agricultural workers affected by a weakening sector

South African agriculture has historically been divided into a highly successful commercial farming sector, dominated by whites, and an inefficient subsistence sector, managed often on a communal basis by black farmers. However, this broad division has changed in recent years as a number of black entrepreneurial farmers have moved into commercial farming, and an increasing number of farms were transferred to black syndicates under the government's land-reform process.

Of real concern was that rural migrants were pouring into urban areas, not only because of the abolition of farm subsidies and a large body of counterproductive labour legislation which caused farmers to cut their workforces wherever possible, but also because of land reform and land restitution (Vorster, 2007:23; Johnson, 2009:440; Mbeki, 2011:7). This sad but almost invariable truth of such schemes was that the research into the key concerns of black South Africans in 2001 indicated that only 9 per cent of respondents had any interest in farming. On a scale of national priorities, only 2 per cent of respondents marked land reform as their number one issue. By far the greatest concerns were jobs, housing and urban-related service, which is not surprising when one considers that 60 per cent of the population live in urban areas (Pottinger, 2007:190).

Moreover, those people who live in villages near major cities migrate to the city with their entire families because the expansion of urbanisation absorbs their land and livelihood. Left with no possible means of support in their village, and having no other option, they take shelter in the city. Men, women, and even children begin a struggle for

survival as they move into the city. Many women and children, then, must also work in the city (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:148).

#### 3.5.4 Industrialisation revolution

Industrial is considered a “pull” factor that attracts thousands of people to the city. Cities offer numerous options for employment, primarily in industry. Many educated and skilled people tend to move to the city. In the period before the discovery of diamonds and gold, South Africa was a predominantly rural and agricultural society. However, with the onset of large-scale mining and more particularly, with industrialisation, a massive migration into urban regions began, primarily motivated by the quest for employment opportunities, which has resulted in a nation whose population is today more than 50% urban (Popenoe et al., 1998:418; Troy, 1995:128; Joslin, 1982:23; Stevens, 2003:13).

Along with the growth of industrial cities came a number of far-reaching social and cultural changes. Public education became more accessible and also more necessary, leading to improved levels of literacy and a more highly skilled work force. Immigrants, people from the countryside and ethnic and regional minorities were all at least partially absorbed into a single urban culture. It is probably true to say that, cities continued to grow because they became centres of industry, transportation, and communication, entertainment, information, health care, government, and warfare. In short, they became the nerve centres of society (Winter & Hawthorne, 1999:553; see Greenway, 1989:110; compare Claerbaut, 1983:31).

### 3.6 SOUTH AFRICAN URBAN CHALLENGES WITH REGARD TO MORAL DECAY

#### 3.6.1 Introduction

Historically most observers have described cities in overwhelmingly negative terms. Writing more than a hundred years ago, social critic and reformist minister in America, Josiah Strong, sounded themes that seem entirely modern except for the slightly quaint language in which they are expressed:

Here is heaped the social dynamite; here roughs, gamblers, thieves, robbers, lawless and desperate men of all sorts congregate; men who are ready on any pretext to raise riots for the purpose of destruction and

plunder; here gather foreigners and wage-workers; here scepticism and irreligion abound; here inequality is the greatest and most obvious, and the contrast between opulence and penury the most striking (cf. Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:418).

Numerous nineteenth and twentieth century writers, including some in South Africa (see for example Harber (2011:4), voiced similar sentiments, condemning the city as the incubator of every dark and sinful impulse in the human soul: Dirty, disarray, riots, danger, diseases, crime and corruption. These appear to be the essence of urban life as viewed by generation after generation of social commentators. However, despite these negative concepts about the city of Johannesburg, the stream of new arrivals grew ever greater.

As it was already noted, Egoli was viewed as the city of gold, of money, of opportunity. 'All roads lead to Johannesburg,' wrote Alan Paton in his novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*: 'If you are white or black they lead to Johannesburg. If the crops fail, there is work in Johannesburg. If there are taxes to be paid, there is work in Johannesburg. If the farm is too small to be divided further, some must go to Johannesburg. If there is a small child to be born that must be delivered in secret, it can be delivered in Johannesburg' (Meredith, 2010:27).

This causes immense pressures on the ability of the city of Johannesburg to provide for the social and economic needs of the new migrants. Of concern, the management of urban growth is often inadequate, a problem made worse by the lack of internal financial controls, incompetence and indifference of councillors, corruption in awarding of tenders, indifferences to the protests of the public, and infrastructural collapse. However, one of the major and the most pressing challenges faced by the South African urban community today is the issue of moral decay. There is total moral degeneration and perversion in the South African urban areas today. From the foregoing it is quite clear that a nightmare picture is presented of a 'city without a master', a cancerous growth that cannot be halted or brought under control.

Here are some of the contemporary social challenges facing the South African urban community:

### 3.6.1.1 Poor housing

Some of the worst suffering is found among people who have recently arrived in cities. People from rural peasant classes are seldom prepared for the difficulties they encounter. They lack the skills required for the jobs that are available. They cannot afford to buy property or pay high rent. They are forced to live in squatter settlements, in shacks built of discarded wood, tin, and tar paper, usually located on the fringes of the city (see Winter & Hawthorne, 1999:554; compare Greenway, 1999:116).

As mentioned, the towns were regarded essentially as white preserves; Africans living there were treated as 'temporary sojourners', a convenient reservoir of labour for use when required, but whose real homes were in rural reserves. Hence there was no need for the authorities to make anything more than the minimum provision for them. As a result of gross neglect of the provision of essential services the African population dwelt in squatter settlements, scattered slums, and ghettos scattered around the South African big cities (Grigg (1990:11; Richardson, 2007:2007:55; Greenway, 1989:460; Shorter, 1991:49; cf. Venter, 1998:195). Harber (2011:169) remarks that Johannesburg has 182 informal settlements involving 180 000 households. These settlements are undesirable, often miserable places to live – severely overcrowded and lacking in such basic services as running water, waste disposal and electricity.

Biko (2013:212) observes that the irony of current national housing schemes is how closely they resemble Apartheid-era town planning and racially segmented development strategies. Poor people are given terrible trade-offs in exchange for RDP houses, often involving moving far-flung developments which significantly increases their transportation costs to well above one third of their income. Gumede (2005:98) concurs with Biko's view that the so-called RDP houses are tiny, unhealthy matchboxes on the urban periphery, far from the workplace and often inaccessible to public transport. Just as under apartheid, they have by and large been constructed on barren stretches of land in areas devoid of public libraries parks or community. In a similar way, the site of each RDP house is so small that when one extends the house she/he is virtually left without any space for a vegetable garden, flowers or decorative shrubs.

Related to the housing is the provision of the basic services including proper school buildings, clinics, and shops, consequently illegal “spaza” shops have mushroomed more or less in every street. The infrastructures are not provided simply because the poor people have nothing to give to the ruling elite except their vote when required to do so (Kabanyane, 2005:14; Johnson, 2009:559). The problem is serious because it touches on one of the essential needs of every human being. The basic question for the RCSA to ask is: What has these done to human beings? Some of the common ethical and moral challenges posed by the informal settlements in the urban areas are:

- High population density

The researcher believes that a home is much more than a physical shelter. It is the place where families the mainstay of a community live. However, as it was already mentioned, the urban poor are often concentrated in areas of substandard, usually overcrowded housing. According to Bringham (1995:509), high population density has a strong impact on human behaviour. For example, the more people there are in a given area, the greater the infant mortality, delinquency, sickness, and more need of a welfare system. Most important is how many people are forced to live in the same room or building in a given area (interpersonal density). Interpersonal density may be related to poor mental health, poor social relationships in the home, poor child care, poor physical health, and poor relationships outside the home.

- Insanitary living conditions

As it was already noted, these settlements surrounding large cities are undesirable, often miserable places to live. This is because many Shanty dwellers live with rubbish and to some extent, depend on it for building materials. Street children even scavenge in the refuse heaps for food or saleable items of scrap (Shorter, 1991:50). This is a key to the Diepsloot story North of Johannesburg. The sewage system created for a few thousand people overflowed constantly, and 7, 5 kilometres of what they call ‘daylight sewage’ runs largely through the streets. Toilets for 80 houses per hectare were put into the reception area, but by 2010 there were about 270 houses per hectare and so

the toilets were overused, abused, and quickly became a health hazard (see Harber, 2011:19).

- Squatter settlements make raising healthy families extremely difficult

The problem with informal settlements is not just that they create the potential for crime in the here and now, but this kind of environment makes raising healthy families extremely difficult. This means that informal settlements are but one example of the many ways in which the structure of our society makes a healthy family life harder to achieve. This, is especially true of overcrowded living conditions where it is difficult for growing children to develop a sense of the inviolability of their own bodies, much less of the bodies of those around them (see Altbeker, 2007:164).

In the backyards this situation becomes unbearable. In the shacks and single rooms children grow up with no respect for privacy. This has ruinous effects on sexual behaviour. For example, rape and juvenile pregnancy have become part of township culture. Furthermore, lack of space and the constant threat of eviction make disciplined, secure and normal family life almost impossible. Children have no choice but to turn to the streets: family life is exchanged for a street culture where the peer group dictates. Communities built on such a structure have the potential to turn into a boiling pot of violence at any time (Winter & Hawthorne, 1999:554). From what has been said above it is clear that shelter is part of the security needed for human existence and stable community life.

- Squatter areas are considered illegal by local governments

Urban shantytown developments cause increasing problems for authorities in large cities, not least because they can be a deterrent to trade and tourism. Most of these developments are considered illegal by local governments, giving justification for their removal (Richardson, 2007:55). Greenway correctly states that squatter communities are open to eviction and sudden loss of their homes because the land does not belong to them (1999:116). More recently the idea of urbanite has been used to describe the removal of illegal settlements around the cities. Urbancide can include instances of

pernicious urban planning, forced evictions, involuntary resettlements and ‘the deliberate destruction of urban infrastructures for political purposes.’

One example was Operation Murambatsvina in Zimbabwe, which translates literally from Shona as ‘drive out the rubbish’ or more euphemistically, “restore order.” Within six weeks an estimated two million urban residents lost their homes and livelihoods, with up to 2.4 million people affected overall. Overnight self-help housing and informal structures were declared illegitimate as bulldozers and demolition squads run by youth militia led the assault, which resulted in injury and even death (Johnson, 2009:35; Beally & Fox, 2009:187). Despite such conditions, squatter settlements do serve an important function by easing migrants’ transition from rural to urban life.

- Informal settlement residents remain vulnerable to corrupt government officials

Squatter and tenants remain vulnerable to corrupt officials, to expropriation by land speculators, developers, corrupt councillors, and government agents. In urban development for blacks in South Africa the trend has been that developers from the already strong part of the economy make yet more money out of the development of housing for blacks in the township, and corruption is rife. If the after effects of apartheid are to be broken, this situation must change. One of the main features of apartheid has been that it has kept blacks out of the system –both political and socio-economic. It seems as if a loan from the bank to the poor for a home built by the rich on land developed by the already rich is not the solution to this problem.

This system results in the accumulation of debt for the poor, underlines dependence and entrenches the widening gap between rich and poor. In the poor’s struggle for survival, the known system of loans by banks is but another device to underscore powerlessness instead of stimulating growth towards self-sufficiency (cf. Monsma *et al.*, 1991:35; Tonna, 1982:81). Despite the above-mentioned ethical and moral challenges, informal settlements house newcomers to the city; their level of optimism regarding the future is generally high. They are drawn to the cities as though by invisible magnets. They have great hopes and dreams for the future despite the poverty and suffering they



experience now. They firmly believe that if not the parents, certainly the children will enjoy better lives in the city.

Unfortunately, however, these areas have become traps for many disadvantaged people. Lack of employment opportunities and educational often prevent these people from saving enough money to leave. And even when they acquire the means to do so, they frequently experience discrimination when they attempt to rent or purchase housing. For the longer term, squatters need to be incorporated into the formal economy with better-paying and more stable jobs.

- Common features in the inner city

Claebaut (1983:35) describes the inner city as a poverty area in which there is much government activity and control but little activity by the private sector. Tenants in these building are generally craftspeople, small-business entrepreneurs, and manual labourers. However, the usual urban amenities, such as dry cleaners, barber shops, camera stores, appliance shops, are in limited supply. Similarly, governmental agencies, public housing, and social institutions are visible. Type of inner city poor are found in old tenements, housed in decaying building around the inner city and exploited by slumlords who prey on their need for shelter.

As it was already noted, some are ethnic immigrants from other cities around the world who start in the inner city and work their way up to better neighbourhoods. However, many have lived in the inner city for generations and have little hope of ever leaving their slums. Another type of inner city poor is drug addicts and prostitutes. For example, there are many prostitutes and many drug addicts in Johannesburg. One kind of inner city poor has multiplied in recent years is refugees near the city of Johannesburg. As it was already indicated, many are confined to camps that breed hatred and militancy.

Besides poverty there are a number of other synonyms for the city: Over-crowdedness, decaying tenements and housing, omnipresence of noise from stereos, cars, and people, fiscal dysfunction (Tonna, 1982:79). Joslin (1982:39) concludes by saying the inner city is noisy for a variety of reason. There is high volume of road traffic through

these areas. Rush-hour traffic clogs our roads and pollutes our air. A gang of youths sit astride their motor cycles joking and arguing until they all decide it is time for another 'burn up'. He notes further that young children have little or no safe place to play. A young mother's choice is a difficult one. Should she keep her energetic child cooped up at ground level where she has no way of seeing what he/she is doing or where he/she is going. A garden is luxury in the inner city. Most families' have to live without one.

From the foregoing points it is clear that Churches in the city have had to respond to both the decline of the city and the emergence of inner areas. As such, it is of the utmost importance that all pastors learn as much as possible about the policies and processes attendant to high density. In addition, the researcher is of the opinion that without concerted action on the part of the municipal authorities, national government, civil society actors and the international community, the number of slum dwellers is likely to increase in most developing countries.

#### 3.6.1.2 Sexual immorality

According to Vorster (2007:71), South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis with regard to sexual mores. Recent statistics from Love Life show that 42% of South African teenagers engage in sex. 51% of those had sex before the age of 15 and 20 per cent before 12. Prostitution and other sectors of the sex industry have been on the increase since 1994. Turley (2005:215) also observes that there are many kinds of organised deviant sex groups in almost every large city, from exotic dance clubs, bondage or dungeon clubs, massage parlours, sadomasochism clubs, to swingers clubs. Sexual immorality in the urban areas manifests itself on the following immoral acts:

##### ➤ Swingers clubs

Swinger clubs was also referred to as group sex, open marriage, or wife swapping clubs in the 1960s and 1970s. This culture emerged in the 1990s to serve a growing segment of the married population who wanted to explore alternative relationships in marriage. Most often, as it was noted, swingers are married couples who desire to go beyond the traditional confines of marriage by bringing other people into their sexual lives, either individuals or other couples. Those who participate in this subculture refer to it as "The

Lifestyle,” and explain to outsiders that they do not feel their extramarital activity could be classified as adultery, because they participate in these extra sexual relationships with the full knowledge and support of their spouses.

➤ Prostitution

Shorter (1999:51) maintains that commercial sex is common in urban centres, since illicit sex provides an easy and substantial source of income. He notes further that the preponderance of male migrants, the need for female economic independence, the phenomenon of street children and the reality of crowded living conditions all favour it. Furthermore, the absence of normal family relationships and the morally disorienting experience of the shantytown favour sexual promiscuity.

In a similar way, the mass migration of youthful males to cities promotes the breakdown of the traditional way of life. The youthful male migrants, alone in cities and removed from familial controls, many of them with money available to them for the first time, seek out prostitutes. With such a lucrative market for prostitutes, many women choose or are forced into careers of prostitution (Shelley, 1981:46; Garland & Blyth, 2004:143). Turley (2005:209) observes that the city makes prostitution easier to organise for both workers and consumers for a variety of reasons.

That stratification of prostitutes (from streetwalkers to high-priced call girls) exists is evidence of a city’s need for several types of sex workers; the different class and group members in the city will desire different price structures and different services from its sex workers. Only a city could organise enough of a fringe group of “consumers” for there to be a stratified diversity among prostitutes and services.

According to Vorster (2007:71) the following social factors contributed to this behaviour in urban centres:

Sexual economy, in which women often feel their continued economic well-being is dependent on the provision of sex, provides a major incentive for the continual growth of the sex industry in urban areas.

- Social mobility in contemporary society makes long- term relationships obsolete. It changes the general orientation in society away from permanent relationships toward short and intermediate relationships. In this environment all personal relationships become short- term contracts, even sexual relationships.
- Since 1994 legislation on immoral sexual practices has softened a great deal. For example, Prostitution has been decriminalised, while pornography, abortion and the same sex marriage have been legalised. More flexible legislation makes it easier for the sex industry in South African cities to expand rapidly.
- The mass media has become the major source of sex information in modern society. It is easily accessible for all, including children, and devotes a disproportionate of time to sex, mostly for reasons of profit.

#### ➤ HIV/AIDS

Mention was already made that commercial sex is high in urban centres; this also means that the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases is high. Today, these include HIV infections and the disease AIDS. Theoretically, prostitutes are both vulnerable to infection and instrumental in its bilateral transmission. Although politically sensitive, the thesis that urbanisation and urban growth creates an increased potential for AIDS is plausible (Shorter, 1991:8; Beall & Fox (2009:116).

To make things worse, cramped and overcrowded housing conditions significantly increase the probability of falling prey to a secondary illness that can result in death. For instance, those infected with HIV are already 100 times more likely to contract tuberculosis than the non-infected (Feinstein, 2007:128; Nürnberger (2005:295). Moreover, poverty, lack of education opportunities and low skills levels heightens vulnerability to HIV infection, with HIV prevalence falling sharply as skill levels rise. However, it goes deeper than this, including, stigmatisation, lack of political will to tackle AIDS head-on, the racial stereotyping that characterised HIV/AIDS, denials, and delaying of the provision of ARV by the ruling elite ( Gevisser, 2009:278; Gumedé, 2005:173; Meredith, 2010:572).

➤ Teenage pregnancies

As it is elsewhere in the society, sex is free and cheap in the inner city. The ‘who-cares?’ mentality seems to be gaining ground (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:13). There are a number of symptoms or indicators that confirms that “youth crisis” is real in urban areas. Among others the following can be mentioned. There are a number of girls involved in pre-marital and teenage pregnancies. These are those children who chose to become sexually active at an early stage of their lives. Gouws & Kruger (2000:131) detailed the following statistics:

- Girls of 16 and younger give birth to about 50 000 babies each year. This implies that in South Africa more than 30% of all babies born each year are the result of premarital sex.

For males, sexual conquests are measures of achievement and fathering a child is a sign of manhood. For females, sex and especially giving birth out of wedlock – affirms desirability and maturity in an atmosphere in which there is little positive reinforcement. Although they long for more genuine forms of love, sexual attention provides some compensatory value (de Bruyn, 1998:28; Britten & Britten, 1999:64; Everett, 1995:2). Reasons why teenage pregnancy is on the rise in urban areas are:

❖ Lack of future orientation

One reason for having children out of wed-lock is lack of future orientation, especially for the unwed mother. This lack of future orientation according to Claerbaut (1998:118) was illustrated in the case of a fifteen-year-old girl who was a truant on a regular basis. On examination it was determined that she was making a very lucrative living as a prostitute, bringing in about five hundred dollars per week. When confronted with her truancy by the high school principal, the girl pointed out that school didn’t pay; after all, she was making money comparable to that of the principal who was administrating the school. The principal’s response was in the form of a question: ‘What will happen in ten years, when your flesh will no longer be fresh and salvable?’ This implies that the young prostitute had never projected very far ahead.

❖ Lack of appreciation for time-oriented routines

An instructive experience for the uninitiated is to drive through an inner-city neighbourhood relatively late in the evening. What will amaze many is the number of children – even small children – playing out on the street well after dark. Some of this street-centeredness can be accounted for by a vacuum in parental attention, but much of it results from a lack of playthings and an overcrowded apartment. The youth live on the streets and only come home to sleep, if they do. When youngsters are not on the street, they may stay up late watching television and sleep well into the morning. This late-to-bed, late-to-rise syndrome desensitises them to the notion of a time oriented routine (Kritzinger *et al.*, 1994:93).

❖ Lack of role models

Young people who move to the cities often lose the restraining influence of village life. Their parents, relations, and elders are hardly involved in their lives. No one is around to encourage them to do what is right, and no one seems to care if they do what they know is wrong. The values they once knew now seem far away and unimportant (Boikanyo & Donnell, 1998:50-7). Hence, there is a sexual revolution among the youth in the cities today. The ‘who-cares?’ mentality seems to be gaining ground.

Furthermore, many youths in urban communities are from welfare families - youth find it difficult to develop an appreciation for dependability in work and time. This is not to suggest that their parents do not work in their domestic roles, but rather that this type of work is not congruent with the kind of demand expected in the employment market at large. As consequence of this limited contact with parents and other adults, along with the absence of success models, a peer culture develops (Claerbaut, 1983:114).

❖ Lack of recreational life

Everett (1995:2) remarks that the majority of South African youth live in bleak townships and attend overcrowded schools with poor resources where classes have been disrupted continuously since the early 1980s. As a result many of them feel despair and a sense of powerlessness about their lives. They have low aspirations and poor self-

esteem, and to relieve their boredom and frustration they turn to sex. Hence, Mashau believes that boredom is a contributing factor towards the crisis our youth are facing today. They tend to have too much time. Their energies should therefore be channelled properly by engaging them with meaningful activity (Mashau, 2005:6). The researcher is of the view that recreation, particularly sport, and (sub) cultural activities are important in young people's lives. They encourage creativity, team participation and striving for achievement, a sense of belonging to a peer group and the meaningful use of leisure time.

#### ❖ Publicity

Media coverage is more and more sensational and sensual at the same time. It is an undeniable fact that the majority of urban youths are exposed to sex and related matters through the medium of newspaper, television, pornographic videos, internet, radio and various magazines. As Garland & Blyth (2004:144) put it, the lifestyles shown in these mediums look glamorous. On television and video, having many sexual partners seems to cause no serious problems. The recent reports that school children exchange pornographic or nude images of their school friends and also of their teachers indicate a moral and social decay that poses a serious threat to the future of South African urban communities. It does not only affect the moral fibre of urban communities, but also puts a severe strain on our economic social transformation process (see de Bruin, 1996:219; Moore, 1996:236; Hessian, 2002:13).

#### 3.6.1.3 Gangs

As it was already noted, in many urban neighbourhoods, youths organise themselves into gangs. As Shorter (1991:113) puts it the lack of normal family life in urban areas means that youths must reinvent the family. They do this through their gang life. The first feature of a gang structure is that gangs provide the adolescent with a sense of identity and belonging as well as a network through which opportunities and excitement can be shared. This means that the gang members' care for one another and the weaker ones are protected by the stronger, provided they accept their authority. Many

of these gangs are not violent to any appreciable extent, but they will become so if a member of a rival gang “picks on” one of their own members.

The second feature of gang structure itself militates against educational excellence. Whenever adolescents run up against a challenge too formidable for them, they tend to reject and belittle that challenge as not meaningful for them. In that vein, school in general and academics in particular are disparaged in the streets. The compensatory behaviour often takes the form of gang activity, in which turf is ruled and others are manipulated. School can be a frightening experience for many youngsters, as school gangs often extract “protection money” from those who are not members of a gang in exchange for not being attacked or harassed on the way to school.

A third feature of gang involvement is the tendency to elevate collective gang values and depress the more individual, competitive values. For many youngsters, the gang or clique is the primary source of acceptance, attention, and identity, so a youth’s stature in the group and integration into its activities and interest are vital. Furthermore, the gang is run like a business company, with its own rules and its own discipline (Claerbaut, 1983:115).

#### 3.6.1.4 Drug abuse

Johannesburg is a haven for drug pushers, but not only is Johannesburg a vital transit point for drugs destined for Europe and the United States, it is also a burgeoning consumer market, with drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and mandrax flooding onto the streets in unprecedented quantities. Moreover, recent police statistics reveals that these categories of crime which strike terror in the hearts of all South Africans have increased (Searll, 2002:16). Plaut & Holden (2012:291) mention that South Africa has plenty of home-grown gangs, including some Nigerian crime syndicates, who dominate the illicit cocaine trade in South Africa. They established themselves in Johannesburg during the 1980s and have since established a countrywide network. The cocaine is brought in from South America using Nigerian expatriates, but also using Nigerian contacts in Austria, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Japan and Switzerland.



From this perspective, it is clear from the underlying traits that urban ministry to the inner city and township should be sensitive towards the needs of young people for positive reinforcement and genuine caring and love. Youth leaders, parents and the church as a whole should organise workshops, seminars and conferences to talk about these issues, lest our youth perish (Van der Walt & Swanepoel, 1997:22; Mashau, 2007:48).

### 3.6.1.5 Poverty and urbanisation

Although South Africa has done an excellent job with very scarce resources in creating a social safety net that seeks to catch those who are unable to provide for themselves, specifically the most vulnerable members of society. However, Greenway (1989:45) observes that nearly 50 percent of the world's population now live in cities and the majority of them are poor and outside the Christian faith. South Africa is no exception. Depending on the definition used, the proportion of the population classified as poor ranged from a third to almost half (Gumede, 2005:82; see Vorster, 2007:63).

Biko (2013:203) observes that the conditions have even worsened. In another publication he offers the following information:

In its crudest, most basic form, and individual's ability to satisfy his or her nutritional requirements, one of the most basic of Man's needs, is deemed to indicate whether or not that individual is poor. Poverty lines constructed on the basis of nutritional requirements are known as food poverty lines (FPL) and are classified as absolute poverty lines. . . Given the structure of expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages of the reference group, it was estimated that the daily intake of 2 230 calories per capita would cost between R226 and R273 per month. . . However, food or caloric intake is only one basic need that individuals should be able to fulfil. There are a number of other basic needs which need to be fulfilled, including shelter, healthcare, clothing and education. This yields a range of lower bound poverty lines between R364 per capita per month (revised total expenditure, original food spending) and R442 per capita per month (total expenditure, adjusted food spending). These lines provides estimate of poverty rates of between 45.3 per cent (total expenditure, original food spending) and 56.9 per cent.

What is so shocking about this analysis is the fact that it estimates that 50 per cent of South Africans lives below the poverty line according to this modified formula (of roughly R400 per capita, per month). That is close to 25 million people who cannot make ends

meet. No society can remain stable, free of repression and peaceful over a long period with these types of statistical realities. Hence, Gumede (2005:120) observes that the crippling extent of poverty, inequality is a huge crisis that calls for drastic steps before a political and social explosion can occur.

According to Williams (1998:3), poverty is never simple. It is a complex amalgam of physical and spiritual pain, which robs the person and the communities of dignity and meaning as much as it deprives the body of nourishment, shelter and beauty. In the same vein, poverty is about exclusion and power, about relationships and loss of self-respect, it is also about the lack of choice and limitation of freedom.

Beal & Fox (2009:113) summarise the key characteristics of urban poverty and vulnerability as follows:

#### **Key characteristics of urban poverty and vulnerability**

- Reliance on a monetised economy
- Reliance on employment in the informal economy
- Poor quality housing
- Insecurity of tenure (for both owners and tenants)
- Lack of access to basic infrastructure and affordable services
- Susceptibility to diseases and accidents
- Environmental hazards, including the impacts of natural and man-made disaster

According to this analysis it is clear that in cities, vulnerability is first and foremost linked to people's reliance on a monetised economy. In other words, urban residents need money to acquire such basic necessities as food, water, shelter and clothing. This implies that absolute reliance on a monetised economy is one of the key differences between urban as compared to rural poverty – rural residents can also rely on subsistence farming, or even foraging, while urban residents cannot. It is essential that the country reduces poverty. The government cannot do it alone and needs the private sector and the Churches to get involved.

Kinds of poverty that affect the South African urban community are:

Economically speaking, there are the indigent poor, who are deprived of the basic necessities of life. Second, and behaviourally speaking, there are the indolent poor, who are responsible for becoming impoverished because of their own behaviour. Third, and sociologically speaking, there are the powerless poor, who are oppressed victims of human injustice. Fourth, and spiritually speaking, there are the humble poor, who acknowledge their helplessness and look to God alone for salvation (Stott, 2006:301). As it was already noted, the medium for determining whether a person is poor will differ from place to place, Richardson (2007:58) concurs indirectly with Stott that various terms have been introduced to describe poverty in the urban areas as we find it today:

- ❖ Cyclical Poverty is used to describe the effect of temporary phenomena such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts causing food shortages, which can adversely affect the poor. Severe price fluctuations and rapid inflation also contribute to Cyclical Poverty.
- ❖ Collective Poverty describes the condition where there is permanent poverty in a society, which may continue from one generation to the next. There are few if any means to improve the wealth of the poor so they remain living at subsistence level. Its main characteristic is malnutrition, and this lead to poor health, low life expectancy, and high infant mortality. Conditions of Collective Poverty are rarely a focus for the media. Unless one makes an effort to be informed, one is left unaware of the problems.
- ❖ Case Poverty is where an individual or family lacks the ability to manage themselves adequately. The chronically ill, the mentally handicapped, the blind and the helpless aged would fall into this category. As with Collective Poverty, we can easily be in ignorance unless we are directly or personally affected.

Why do these communities of the poor and disenfranchised exist surrounded by the great riches of the city? Some argue that these are defective communities of people who do not want to work and live off government dole (benefit). With few exceptions, this view is false. Other argues that the rich and powerful exploit the poor for their own

gain. This is true to some extent, but it is not the whole picture either. The most apparent causes of poverty in South African urban society today are:

➤ Unemployment

According to Tonna (1982:17), unemployment is often the first harsh reality that dissipates the hopes of the immigrant newly arrived in the Third World metropolis. South Africa's formal unemployment rate sits at around 25% and there is a huge pool of unemployment graduates. Only about half of the economical active population had formal sector jobs. Several million more earned a living in the informal sector –hawkers, small traders, domestic and backyard businesses (Meredith, 2010:520). Ramphele (2012:3) points out that few South Africans have employment, especially amongst the youth.

For example, when the Centre for Development and Enterprise surveyed unemployment among 15-24 age group in July-November 2006 (that was, after several years of rapid economic growth) it found that in Johannesburg 56 per cent of young men and 65 per cent of young women were unemployed (Johnson, 2009:439). This is undoubtedly true, particularly when one takes into account the higher crime rates, higher prostitution levels and higher HIV incidence which such figures imply – let alone the fact that a young person of 24 who has never worked is unlikely to find employment thereafter. These mountainous levels of unemployment were the product of several factors.

First, the South African economy has become skills intensive and those with appropriate qualifications are in great demand, but owing to the levels of literacy and numeracy there is a lack of skilled workers in South African cities. Hence, businesses struggle to find the employees with the correct skills. A high proportion of the estimated 5 million unemployment possessed no skills or training and had little prospects of ever finding a job (see Gumede, 2005:102).

Second, there is a direct correlation between the performance of our education and training systems and the level of skills shortages and unemployment amongst the youth. As Ramphele (2012:142-143) puts it, the continuing underperformance of our education

system has a disproportionate effect on poor people. For examples, the majority of the 40 per cent of young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years who are unskilled and unemployed are black and poor. They are the drop-outs from our wasteful school system which has shed almost two-thirds of each age cohort of close to 1.5 million who start Grade 1 each year for much of the last decade or so.

Biko (2013:191) correctly states that in South Africa, the poorer the family one comes from, the worse school one is likely to attend, which ensures that one will be taught by teachers who have poorer maths and science skills, giving one a slimmer chance of being able to pursue higher value skills in the national and global economy. This is a failure in policy making, but also a failure of successive ANC-led administrations to understand education as a 'competitive world sport' in which all countries are trying to out compete each other in the preparation of their children for the global workplace of the future. The attempts at increasing South Africa's industrial capacity will by definition be challenged by the country's lack of competitiveness. There is little evidence that the ruling elite has embraced the connection between the quality of education provided to the majority of South Africans and the competitiveness of the economy (Mbeki, 2011:110; cf. Pottinger, 2007:136).

The inescapable conclusion is that the most basic service most governments are expected to offer their people is education. Hence, one of the largest international organisations, the World Bank, invests a large sum of money annually in education projects in developing countries. This is because they are convinced that the improvement of education in these countries can help to alleviate poverty, either directly or indirectly (cf. Haralambos & Holborn, 1995:727; compare Shively, 1997:74).

Third, the government had got rid of the Bantustans and the large subsidies to them which were a major source of rural jobs and income –and it put very little in their place. However, farm employment also fell sharply not only because of the abolition of farm subsidies and a large body of counterproductive labour legislation which causes farmers to cut their workforces whenever possible, but also because of land reform and land restitution (Johnson, 2009:440).

Fourth, South Africa's restrictive labour policies and strong unions are limiting the number of lower skilled individuals that can be absorbed into the workforce. This situation was exacerbated during the latter half of 2008 and 2009 when South Africa, like most other countries around the world, slipped into economic recession. Business failure accelerated with a resultant loss of jobs, and large companies slowed their employment rate of new staff considerably (cf. Mbeki, 2011:115). Five, the ruling elite, unconsciously though energetically, followed a policy of de-industrialisation. This is already beginning to show with the growing de-industrialisation of the country's economy. For example, manufacturing, which had constituted around a quarter of the economy in 1990, fell back to 19 per cent by 2000 and to 16 per cent by 2005.

Five, globalisation can also be mentioned as one of the greatest influences with regard to poverty on the macro level. This in turn influences the poverty that is experienced on the meso level. The term globalisation describes the modern process of the integration of international economic structures across national borders and political entities. This is the new imperialism, an economy as distinct from the political and economic imperialism of the past and representing, in fact, the domination of politics by rich countries (Bauckham, 2007:94; Vorster, 2007:64).

Six, another factor why poverty is so huge in the urban areas is because of an economic strategy that is predominantly driven by wealth redistribution. According to Gumede (2005:222), after independence, many of Africa's new leaders embraced a bold vision of transferring their countries' economic asserts from the former colonial power to local citizens. Hence, Mbeki (2011:6) observes that the current ruling upper middle class that became South Africa's dominant political elite in 1994 was a class of intellectuals rather than of property owners. Its main objective was to bring about equality between the races and to redistribute some of the existing, white-owned wealth to blacks.

To achieve economic equality, it adopted a policy of wealth redistribution or Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE). Balshaw & Goldberg (2005:16) define this BBBEE as follows: It is a government initiative to promote economic transformation in order to enable meaningful participation in the economy by black people. BBBEE is

aimed at effecting a more equitable distribution of economic wealth and has been branded as the essential second wave of transformation after democratisation and political miracle (Johnson, 2009:396; see Gevisser, 2009:220).

However, what has happened in recent years is that it is primarily people close to the ANC who are seen to be the main beneficiaries of this necessary strategy. The picture created is of the massive personal enrichment of a select few, and, in what is one of the most unequal societies on the planet; this is then perceived as being at the expense of 'the masses' (see Feinstein, 2007:246). The fact that there has been the emergence of a well-heeled black middle class and empowerment elite in the context of growing inequality and the crippling extent of poverty has only compounded public perception that Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment has not only empowered a small group of well-connected businessmen, but also actively contributed to the widening of income gaps in the economy (Plaut & Holden, 2012:232; cf. Meredith, 21:520; Vorster, 2007:64).

From the foregoing it is clear that if the desired outcome behind BBBEE as a policy was broad-based economic empowerment of previously disadvantaged South Africans, then so far it has failed. To reverse the de-industrialisation currently taking place in South Africa while attempting to address the many sources of inequity within the society requires a powerful social re-engineering mechanism (Biko, 2013:4-5).

Seven, poverty can also originate as a result of states of emergency that can affect a country or community. One state of emergence that hampers poverty alleviation in South Africa today is the current HIV/AIDS pandemic. Great parts of the economically active workforce are infected. AIDS orphans and the cost related to their care and AIDS deaths in general decrease the means available for poverty alleviation (Garland & Bilyth, 2004:143). Hence, in July 2003 a World Bank report suggested that AIDS could lead to complete economic collapse once the cumulative generational effects were added in. 'If nothing is done to avert the epidemic then countries like South Africa . . . could suffer a 50 per cent decline in their per capita GDP over three generations – a verdict immediately attacked in South Africa.' In the same way, an IMF report estimated that South African life expectancy would drop from 64 to 37 (Johnson, 2009:206).

From the foregoing it is clear that poverty, lack of education opportunities and low skills levels heighten vulnerability to HIV infection, with HIV prevalence falling sharply as skill levels. Findings such as these highlight education and economic development as important components of an integrated approach to poverty alleviation. Thus, the ruling elite will need to identify where the skills shortages are and focus on increasing the labour supply accordingly. Most importantly, the economy has to be transformed quickly into one that benefits rather than relying on production of primary commodities for the world markets. Some ways to decrease poverty in the urban centres include:

- Providing quality education in all schools, but with special emphasis on poor communities.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship through businesses training and mentoring entrepreneurs.
- Improving infrastructure and services in poor communities.
- Increasing employment through economic growth.
- Increasing skills levels in the country, by introducing more training programmes and apprenticeships to develop skills.
- Last, unions need to recognise that they have performed dismally by the index of job creation. They have to take responsibility for their role in creating the jobless growth model that the country currently has (cf. Chanderdeo et al., 2011:108; see Biko, 2013:2013:8).

In conclusion it is clear that the government is not going to deal with unemployment and poverty overnight. According to estimates, 50 per cent of the South Africans lives in poverty. This means that another generation will know nothing else. How are they going to get through school in poverty – stricken environment, with low nutrition and parents unable to pay for basic health needs? What about the social costs, school dropouts, more jobless youths unprepared for the job market?

### 3.6.2 Corruption

According to Feinstein (2007:248), corruption is inimical to development; it perpetuates inequality. It produces conditions of underdevelopment and poverty (cf. Vorster,



2007:36; Ackerman, 199:2; Robinson, 1998:1; Heywood, 1997:9; Monsma, 2006:77; Lilley, 2000:7). Corruption in the South African urban community manifests itself in the municipalities. Pottinger provides the following information from his research on corruption:

By 2006, 136 out of 284 municipalities were determined by the government to be unable to fulfil their basic functions and had to be helped by external interventions. Put simply, little more than a decade of ANC rule had reduced very nearly half of South Africa's local authorities and millions of citizens to a situation of semi-administered rule, not so very distant in principle (though very different in style) from the way black townships had been administered in the apartheid era (Pottinger, 2008:110).

Across the country these institutions (municipalities) had collapsed, one after the other in a surge of corruption, destructive internal politicking involving party factions, incompetence, nepotism and indifferences. As a result delivery of services had been affected. The urban community had responded initially by petition and representation, but as these failed to bring about results, protest began to escalate to street level and even violence.

In 2004/5 there were 881 illegal demonstrations against 'service delivery' and 5085 legal protests across 90 per cent of the country's municipalities. The government argued that a number of these protests were incited by political factions within the towns seeking to advance their own programmes of self-enrichment. This was undoubtedly true, even if they were factions within the local ANC, but this could still not camouflage the fact that a growing wave of public anger was afoot (see Johnson, 2009:588-589).

### 3.6.3 Family violence

Pierli & Abeledo (1999:54) lament that family violence is rampant in the urban areas. Rogers et al., (1999:41) concur with the above-mentioned views in that every day thousands of young children experience family violence, either as direct victims of brutality or as observers of violence to family members. According to a family violence expert, "in our society, people are more likely to be killed and physically assaulted, abused and neglected, and sexually assaulted and molested in their own homes and by other family members than anywhere else or by anyone else" (Altbeker, 2007:85; cf. Berry, 1996:109).

A chilling police statistic is that 89 per cent of people assaulted in South Africa are the victims of someone they know. More than 81 per cent of those murdered were killed by someone known to them. The figure for rape by someone known to the victim was 76 per cent. There is no doubt that these numbers suggest a dreadfully suppressed tumult of anger, violence and indiscipline just waiting to boil over – often when inflamed by excessive alcohol or drug usage. The fact that family violence occurs in what the police call a social fabric environment makes it even more difficult to combat (cf. Pottinger, 2007:121).

There are number of effects that have been associated with the apparent extent and seriousness of domestic violence:

- Deviant behaviour

There is no denying that domestic violence is the breeding ground of moral decay in the urban setting. Perhaps the most disturbing effect of family violence is the way in which it teaches children that this is the way a family functions and that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems and that men should dominate and abuse women, and women should submit (Baikanyo & O' Donnell, 1997:98).

Simply put, it is in the use of violence by men against women in the domestic set up that their children, in particular boys, frequently first become familiarised with violence as a means for conflict management. For example, if a person has been abused by someone powerful like a parent or relative, they want to inflict the pain back. A common threat through all types of rape was that perpetrators had experienced trauma during childhood, such as sexual abuse or other violence (Lauer, 1995:444; Smyke, 1993:54; Weiten & Lloyd, 1997:273).

- Psychological disorder

Chronic exposure to family violence can have serious developmental consequences for children including psychological disorder, grief and loss reactions, impaired intellectual development, school problems, truncated moral development, and pathological adaptation to violence, identification with the aggressor (Rogers et al., 1999:46). This

means that watching and listening to abused family members leaves emotional scars. This kind of emotional scars produces anti-social behaviour (such as aggression and bullying), insecurity, over conformity to one's peers, a tendency to withdraw from relationships, difficulties in relating to others, and problems with one's personal identity where people want to project their pain on someone else ... they find relief in seeing others suffer (Nevid, 1994:531; Bray, 1997:67; Smyke, 1993:54).

It is clear from the foregoing that the effects of family violence are far reaching and long lasting. Throughout their lives, children are likely to suffer the consequences of emotional and physical damage from abuse. Some children die. Many grow up to become abusive adults. Society pays a high price in violence, legal fees, lost creativity, and expensive social service programs. Prevention programs work and they cost far less than the social and economic price paid after abuse has happened. Successful preventive programs include:

- Prenatal support and education;
- Education on parenting for family members;
- Accessible, high-quality child care;
- Stress-management skills and impulse control;
- Self-help groups, including family support groups;
- Home health visitors and foster grandparents;
- Religious and community programs (Rogers et al., 1999:50).

#### 3.6.4 Disintegration of the nuclear family

Sociologically, there is no more critical institution than the family. It is the chief agent of socialisation and the transmitter of basic values. Brigham (1991:277) defines socialisation as “the process of moulding’s child social behaviour to fit the expectation of the culture in which he/she lives”. Socially, the child is equipped to live responsibly in society because through the influence of the home he/she is led to conform, in the main, to the mores and tradition of society (Butler & Roberts, 1997:41; Moore 1996:121; Baron & Byrne 1994:143; Greathead *et al.*, 1998:45).

Parents are, of course, crucial factors in the socialisation process through their social power (reward, coercive, legitimate and expert); their ability to teach their children desired behaviour and their status as models. Generally these include moral principles, interpersonal skills, dress code, grooming standards, appropriate manners and speech, and suitable educational or career goals, Prinsloo et al., 1996:149; Schiffmen & Kanuk, 2000:277; Walker, 1996:46; Maxwell, 1996:187-8; O' Donnell 1997:534; Webster, 1990:87).

However, despite this important role of the nuclear family, Vorster (2007:169) is of the opinion that the last four decades witnessed tremendous and wide-ranging changes in the nuclear family. Among these changes are phenomena such as growing divorce rates, out-of wedlock births, households headed by unmarried partners, cohabitation, households headed single mothers, and father absence due to globalisation (cf. Wenham et al., 2006:19; Lutzer, 2004:26; Dobson, 2001:142).

Moreover, Black people have experienced the erosion of family connection due to urbanisation, especially traumatic during the Apartheid years, when black men were forced to leave their families in designated homelands, in order to labour in the industries and mine in the cities (Vorster, 2007:71). As Meredith puts it African mineworkers were confined to mine compounds, living in primitive barracks, sleeping on narrow concrete shelves, cut off from family and social life on average for periods of nine to twelve months before returning to their homes at the end of the contracts (Meredith, 2010:25).

Ryan (1990:48) correctly states that the break-up of family life and the prospects for a settled African urban society as a result of all this was terrible. As a whole, nearly 50 percent of poor South African urban communities are characterised by father absence. In a nation in which adult males are customarily the chief breadwinners, poor children are often robbed of models of how the ordinary South African family system works. In such homes there are no flesh-and-blood examples of employed adult males who are succeeding in the occupational and economic market. This deficit of males can have real implications for the urban Church, for it makes many become decidedly female-dominated.

Moreover, male children may be difficult to motivate along traditional lines as they see no real examples of successfully educated male adults living in their community (see Claerbaut, 1983:77). From the above one is led to believe that there is no doubt that no programme of moral regeneration in South African urban community can bear much fruit without also focusing its energy on promoting the resurgence of the respect and integrity that nuclear family deserves. In general, the challenge facing the Church in the city is to revisit its purpose from the biblical point of view to be able to interact accordingly with the above-mentioned issues.

### 3.6.5 Crime

Altbeker (2007:54) observes that it is a common cause among criminologists that people who live in cities are much more likely to be robbed than are people who live in the rural hinterland. According to Beall & Fox (2009:171), crime, endemic violence, war and terrorism are among the most dramatic and disturbing manifestations of vulnerability in cities. This is not because the rural hinterlands are better, more moral people than those who live in the city. It is because cities are uniquely prone to these threats given their economic, political and cultural significance (Turley, 2005:224; Joslin (1982:40; Shelley, 1981:8).

For example, crime in Hilbrow is growing tremendously. An average of 190 suicide attempts is reported monthly; an average of 37 people actually succeeds in taking their own lives. 1 200 incidents of rape occur monthly, one murder is reported every day (Mutavhatsindi, 2008:122). According to Sekhalelo (2007:12) Sandton was named as South Africans most dangerous suburb. Three hundred and forty three families were been attacked at gunpoint in their homes between April 2006 and March 2007. Sandton was also named as one of the highest risk areas for three other categories of crimes: hijacking, business robbery and general aggravated robbery. Making matters more complicated is that criminals are now indiscriminate about the race of the victim, their age or sex. In fact the elderly, children and the disabled are being targeted. The 2012 Crime Statistics produced by the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) has the following chilling commentary on violent crimes committed against children:

Among the dominantly social contact crimes committed against children, 51 per cent were sexual offences, while only 18.7 per cent of the social contact crimes committed against adult women were sexual offences. However, it is disturbing to note that in the case of the most sexual offences recorded during 2008/2009 in this regard, 60.5 per cent were committed against children below the age of 15 years. It is even more disturbing to note that 29.4 per cent of these sexual offences involved children aged 0 -10 years (cf. Biko, 2013:207).

### 3.6.5.1 The nature and causes of crime in urban areas

There are several factors that have contributed to the current levels of violent crime in the urban areas today. The structural argument, dear to the heart of the present government, remains that crime is a consequences of poverty and unequal society. This may be partly true, but it fails to explain why societies with far greater poverty and even greater inequality experience less crime. This implies that poverty cannot be a sole or even sufficient reason for explaining South African's astronomical violent crime. The most apparent reasons for violent crimes in South African urban community today are.

#### 3.6.5.1.1 Ineffectiveness of the justice system

Crime in the urban areas is able to flourish because the penal system lacks sufficient deterrent value. According to Pottinger (2007:129), South Africa has an extraordinarily high rate of recidivism. He notes further that various researchers put it at between 85 per cent and 94 per cent, which means that virtually every prisoner released is likely to offend again. These releases, then, could lead at the very best to only a continuance of high levels of crime, and at the very worst to another surge, which seems to have been the case.

Factors contributing to this situation include: bad preparation, deficient documentation, inept prosecution or simply the absence of the correct witnesses. In a fine piece of journalism, Jonny Steinberg wrote about a murder in an informal settlement in Johannesburg and the refusal of the witnesses to talk to the investigators, because they were afraid they might be reported to the perpetrators by corrupt policemen (cf. Altbeker, 2007:143).

### 3.6.5.1.2 A programme of redistribution and entitlement

There is also a socio-political dimension to the debate. The underlying philosophy of the present government (ANC) in power has been a programme of redistribution and entitlement. Election promises and government freebies have also given rise to a culture of entitlement. “Better life for all” was a campaign slogan of the ruling party alliance during the 1994-election campaign. The reckless manner in which this has been propagated by some political leaders can only have the impact of inciting a generalised view among young people in the urban centres that appropriation by crime is affirmative action by other means. It is not too far a stretch to suggest that the violent attacks of foreigners in May 2008 were merely a very extreme expression of this culture of enrichment by expropriation (cf. Du Preez & Rossouw, 2009:28).

### 3.6.5.1.3 Demographics argument

There are also demographics dimension to the levels of violent crime in urban settings. Applied to South Africa, this argument offers some important insights about the crime wave we have gone through. The demographics arguments include the following:

- ❖ Age structure of the population

According to Beall & Fox (2009:184), apart from the rapid growth of cities, another demographic phenomenon is often cited as contributing to urban security threats. Poor urban populations tend to be young, and youthful populations have long been linked to increased levels of crime and violence, especially where unemployment is rife. Unemployed youth represents a particular threat in the context of the public security vacuum, which can result from the breakdown of conventional social structures and/or the ineffectiveness of formal institutions of governance to contain or manage social discord. The situation is most acute in low-income areas, which are often virtually abandoned by public security services.

The insight that underpins this is that crime, especially violent crime, is committed almost exclusively by young men. More than two-thirds of those accused of committing crime against foreign residents are under the age of twenty and thirty years old (Huber,

1996:2). As a consequence, societies with relatively large numbers of young people tend to be more violent than others, and societies become more violent as the population bubble passes through the dangerous years between its late teens and late twenties. This is partly a simple fact of demographics – more young men equals more violent crime – but changes in population structures are not just demographic facts (Altbeker, 2007:116).

❖ Social disorganisation

Social disorganisation theory applies to urban neighbourhoods affected by intense internal immigration where common values are not held by members of the particular community. It is clear that the city is attractive to the most crime-prone age group of youthful males who, because of their lack of responsibilities, possess increased personal mobility. These young males, relieved of traditional family responsibilities and removed from the usual constraints of close family life, are more prone to misconduct than individuals more established in the community. Moreover, many of these young males are poorly educated and ill prepared for the demands of the more developed area, are incapable of finding employment, and must resort to illicit means to support themselves.

❖ Illegal immigrants

If cohorts of young people and the lack of norms and values are two key demographic variables which may affect crime levels, a third is illegal immigrants in the urban centres. Given this situation the new political dispensation in South Africa has opened up its borders to international trade. This has created the tendency for individuals and groups from abroad to build links with individuals and groups within South Africa (Popenoe *et al.*, 1998:151). It is a fact that South Africa has become the target of major international criminal syndicates, notable from Nigeria, but also as far afield as Russia and China (see Bayart *et al.*, 1999:50).

This was particularly true of Dewani's case, who was accused of murdering his 28 year old wife of two weeks, Anni, by staging a fake hijacking while the couple were on honeymoon in Cape Town. There is no doubt that foreigners commit crimes – some of them



spectacular and vicious – in South Africa. Nigerians, for instance, dominate some of the key niches in the criminal economy, especially the importing of cocaine and heroin, and the street trade in hard drugs in our inner cities.

This has led to their involvement in other forms of crime because their clients seldom command stable incomes and many finance their habits through theft and robbery, creating a market opportunity for dealers. Zimbabweans and Mozambicans – are also involved in some of the high-profile robberies like cash-in transit heist and chain-store robberies, and there is more than enough anecdotal evidence to conclude that they also break into houses and steal cars (Pottinger, 2007:121).

❖ The relaxed adult supervision that accompanies city life

According to Shelley (1981:12), the urban environment and parental employment outside of the home have contributed to the development of youth crime that is frequently peer oriented and, therefore, conducive to delinquency subcultures. There is, for instance, something approaching a million domestic workers in South Africa, a substantial proportion of whom spend most of their time apart from their children. As the researcher has already noted, there are also hundreds of thousands of men in hostels on mines and townships near industrial areas.

#### 3.6.5.1.4 Lack of proper housing

Apart from the abstraction involved in building a more decent society, there are other interventions which might impact on how much crime is committed. The most important of these revolves around the form of our cities, the human settlements in which most of our crime is committed. From a policing point of view, settlements like these are a black hole: patrol work is dangerous where it isn't physically impossible; police can seldom enter these areas without their suspects being alerted; and, when they do, the lack of street names and house numbers makes finding victims and witnesses time-consuming and difficult (Altbeker, 2007:165).

Beall & Fox (2009:181) also note that in Johannesburg, some former hostels built to house migrant labours working on mines and in manufacturing enterprises now operate

as low-income private gated communities. Initially formed by ethnic minorities for protection, these 'fortified' hostels now in some cases cloak shady and illicit activities such as crime. There is no doubt that careful, vigorous urban redevelopment in these areas could make a big difference to crime.

#### 3.6.5.1.5 The old dispensation and its atrocities

According to Vorster (2007:36), the old dispensation and its atrocities eroded the moral fibre of South African society. Parallel with the rise of criminality at a time of transition, public morality also seems to have degenerated. Plaut & Holden (2012:267) correctly states that rapid industrial development and urbanisation after the Second World War created an environment in which urban criminality flourished. In the township on the outskirts of the cities, young boys formed gangs that were mainly involved in petty crime.

For example, during the 1950s, the Msomi gang operated from Alexandra, outside Johannesburg. They were responsible for an organised reign of terror involving numerous armed robberies, murders, protection rackets and the fleecing of ordinary residents. Their local rivals were Spoilers, a 250-strong gang known for their violence. Among the Spoilers members was Joe Modise, the former Minister of defence, and of later Arms Deal fame. The previous government itself could be said to have precipitated violence by banning certain political parties including the SACP in 1950 and the ANC in 1960, at a time when neither of these organisations had adopted a policy of armed struggle.

For instance, the Sharpeville massacre was perpetrated by the police in 1960, over a year before the ANC's own turn to violence. However, it is both one-sided and superficial to attach the main responsibility for the spread of a popular culture of violence to the previous government. The researcher believes that if apartheid was premised on pervasive violence, both implicit and explicit, resistance to apartheid, by taking millions of children out of school and putting them on the frontline of the struggle, by legitimating the use of violence and teaching many its techniques, poisoned the same well.

Of course, South Africa was indeed at war between the early 1960s and the early 1990s. For instance, the formal outbreak of guerrilla war in South Africa in 1961 took the form of an urban sabotage campaign organised by an underground ANC and SACP leadership based in the cities. Thus, many of the social groups which participated in the struggle for South Africa continue to pursue their factional interests by violence. Today, this is generally labelled as criminal rather than political violence, but the change of vocabulary should not blind us to the fact that the actors remain largely the same (Bayart et al., 1999:54-60).

#### 3.6.5.1.6 Instrumentality

Guns are another matter which encourage or causes crime in the urban areas. The trouble is that in a country in which a large proportion of violence occurs between people who know each other, and where conviction rates are too low to be sure that criminal records are an accurate census of who is dangerous and who is not, there can be no bright line separating 'ordinary, law-abiding citizens' from 'criminals'. There is little doubt that too many people with anger management issues have access to a firearm or that this means that when they do explode, the incident tends to be more lethal than it would otherwise be (Altbeker, 2007:108).

#### 3.6.5.1.7 Drugs and alcohol

Apart from guns, there are more prosaic features of the South African landscape that are sometimes invoked by people seeking to explain violence. Two of the more common of these are alcohol and drugs. There is a great deal of evidence that alcohol and drugs are implicated somehow in this country's crime problems. Drunkenness is commonly associated with violence and sexual misdemeanours. For example, alcohol effect is to suppress the neurotransmitters in a drinker's brain that would normally generate the anxiety and fear that inhibits aggression (Shorter, 1991:50). According to the SAPS (South Africa Police Service), alcohol abuse is behind a large number of 198 602 cases of assault with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm. This is the third most frequent criminal offence in South Africa behind petty theft (369 095) and burglary at

residential premises (which happened a staggering 247 630 times in 2010/11 (see Biko, 2013:206).

Moreover, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) has been testing the link between drugs and crime. The study was conducted in police holding cells and the finding proved that more than 50 per cent of persons arrested for crimes such as house-breaking, motor-vehicle theft, rape, and other violent offences tested positive for at least one drug (Searll, 2002:105; Shelley ((1981:46). This is quite true because drugs are expensive, and the costliness makes them all the more attractive. As a result, mugging, stealing, prostitution, lower-level drug pushing, and various forms of petty crime are engaged in to raise the necessary funds (cf. Claerbaut, 1983:116; Mwamwenda, 1995:489). What is the impact of crime?

Apart from its direct impact on the daily life of the South African urban community, the current level of crime has other far reaching adverse ramifications for the country's future economic development. Terreblanche (2002:121) remarks that in a series of surveys undertaken in 1999 by the World Bank in conjunction with Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Council, 94 per cent of the large firms interviewed identified crime as the most important obstacle to investment and growth.

Furthermore, crime has also changed the lifestyle for most South African urban communities. For example, in the 2003 survey, one- third of the residents of Johannesburg said they did not walk, play, and let their children play on the streets or rest in public places. In addition, a survey carried out in Johannesburg in September 2007, showed that the percentage of households that felt unsafe in Alexandra, Sandton and Johannesburg had risen from 27 per cent in 2006 to 41 per cent a year later (Pottinger, 2007:118).

According to George (1999:319) crime in South Africa is very turbulent and internationally can affect tourism and hospitality market's planning almost instantaneously. For example, no one will visit a city if they believe that it is dangerous and the same goes for tourists. This means that safety is important and it can influence a tourists' decision about whether to visit a town, city, region or country.

### 3.7 CONCLUSION

It was clearly demonstrated in this chapter that as a result of the end of the influx control legislation and administrative measures, South Africa is experiencing an increased flow of people to urban areas. The historical process that has shaped the SA cities, in particular, the city of Johannesburg was clearly illustrated in this chapter. The factors behind the relentless growth of cities in South Africa have been extensively discussed in this chapter.

It was also clear in this chapter that the more people who move to South African cities in great numbers the more problems occur in the urban community. Vincent (2000:3) emphasises that the Church must not be discouraged by life in the earthly city: 'in our inner city street, seeds get everywhere, unwanted and unplanned. Yet the seeds in the streets are sign of hope. They are signs of life in the concrete city. They hold the promise that the future could be wholesome, humane and satisfying.'

What does this mean to the urban Church? This means that the time is ripe, and the Church cannot afford the luxury of not responding faithfully to these challenges. Biblical strategies for growing city churches must be sought and city workers must be trained for this purpose. The next logical step is to understand how can the Reformed Church respond to these challenges?

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE RESPONSE OF THE RCSA TO THE MORAL DECAY POSED BY URBANISATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The face of the South African urban society has changed and new challenges have arisen. New situations obviously bring with them new problems and questions, which require new solutions and answers. One issue which is at the centre of debate at the moment is the issue of moral decay in the South African urban community. During the last decade or two this theme has been the topic of many discussions in our country: Can the city be made liveable? Can we achieve a truly human community in an urban, technological age? How should the Church respond to moral decay posed by urbanisation?

The main objective of this chapter is to outline the responses of the RCSA towards moral decay in the South African urban community, particularly, Johannesburg. In order to reach this objective, the author will deal with the following aspects:

- The Kingdom of God and its significance for moral renewal.
- The role of the Church in the perspective of the Kingdom.
- Specific urban problems facing the RCSA.
- The response of the RCSA to moral decay involved with urbanisation.

#### **4.2 THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR MORAL RENEWAL**

The Kingdom of God is important for the debate on the moral regeneration of South African urban communities for three reasons: First, the concept of the Kingdom expresses the cosmological and soteriological dimension of Christ's rule. In the coming of His Kingdom God reinstates His glory on earth, renews man and transforms His creation. This implies that Christ's kingship extends not only to the Church, but His redemptive work has implications for the entire cosmos.

Second, the concept of the Kingdom gives a missionary dimension to the life of the Christian on earth. For example, Matthew grounds the missionary mandate of the Church in the fact that “all power in heaven and on earth belongs to Christ.” In connection to this, the Kingdom is a present reality that relativizes all earthly power in the light of Christ’s kingship. It does not have the Church as the goal, but claims the entire world for God. Christians should therefore be witnesses to the redemptive work of God in history by promoting moral renewal in urban settings.

Third, the Kingdom of God determines the eschatological destination of man. Put it simply, the Kingdom is not only a present reality, but also a future one. Hence, the early Christians often saw themselves as belonging to a kind of counterculture which was quite distinct from the early society in which they found themselves and which in a real sense anticipated the coming Kingdom. Man therefore has the right to future. Thus, the rights of future generations should be protected by preserving the ecology and developing in a sustainable manner (cf. Vorster, 2007: 28-9; cf. Forrester, 1997:6; Van der Walt, 2007:84; Senkhane 2002:32; Monsma, 2006:110; compare, Maimela & Könic, 1998:19).

#### 4.3 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE KINGDOM

The Kingdom of God outlines the scope for our ministry, which should include preaching the good news of salvation, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, educating the ignorant, and seeking to transform the structures of society that oppress people and keep them poor. Hence, when Jesus came announcing the gospel of the Kingdom he said, quoting a prophecy of Isaiah:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19).

Mark describes the relationship between Jesus’ preaching the gospel and his preaching the Kingdom of God in somewhat more detail in Mark 1:14-15: Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’ .

It is in any event clear that the proclamation of the imminent reign of God stood at the centre of Jesus' preaching and ministry and that in Jesus' mouth this was the message of salvation, that is good news (cf. Mark 1:15, Matt 4:17 Luke 10:9). From the foregoing it is clear that the role of the Church in the perspective of the Kingdom must begin with Christ. His incarnation among the poor, his miracles, and his suffering model for us what our ministries should look like. Simply put, this theology must also proclaim the Kingdom of God that has invaded the cities of the earth wherever God's people gather to worship him and live together in peace and reconciliation (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012:37; cf. Hiebert & Meneses, 1995:354; Klaiber, 1997:29).

This passage sets forth the inseparable relationship between the Church and the Kingdom, but not their identity. Simply put, it is confusing to say that "the Church is the form of the Kingdom of God" which it bears between the departure and the return of Jesus. Van der Walt (1991:355) is correct in saying that should we place the Church on an equal footing with the Kingdom, we do wrong to both the Church and the Kingdom of God. We inflate the Church, so that it interferes in everything, and strives to "Churchify" everything, and deflate the Kingdom, so that it loses its all-encompassing character (Ande, 2010:10; Greenway, 1989:80).

In view of these, the role of the RCSA in the perspective of the Kingdom will thus be investigated under the following elements:

- Worship (adoration to God).
- Evangelism (reaching those on the outside with the gospel).
- Discipleship (developing mature followers of Christ).
- Prayer (response to God's initiative).
- Stewardship (responsible earthly citizens aimed at advancing justice).
- Fellowship (care and intimacy among the members).
- Service (addressing immediate physical, social, and spiritual needs of those within the Church).



These eight facets are stressed in different proportions in various Churches. Traditional Churches have tended to envelop all eight ministries. Growing Churches, however, tend to focus primarily on one or two of the facets, thus developing a distinctive identity.

#### 4.3.1 Worship (adoration to God)

According to Young (1978:85), the Christian's first responsibility to God is to worship him in a genuine personal response of humility, confession, repentance, devotion, and praise. Such true worship may involve singing, Bible reading, prayer, testifying, and preaching, each in its own way a response to God. Since worship is in part a response to what God has done in Christ one of its keynotes is praise or adoration (Davies, 1966:118). One element of worship for the role of the Church is praise and this is recorded in (Exodus 15:1-21 and Isaiah 12:1-6). In addition to this element, numerous other roles carried by the Church can be noticed, such as the ministry of the sacraments in which the community of God's people is fully manifested.

The Lord's supper for examples, demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sister in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life. All kinds of injustice, racism, separation, prejudices and inequality are radically challenged when one shares in the body and blood of Christ (Eckhart, 2010:147).

Thus, in worship we receive a new identity and we are formed morally. By encountering God we learn how to be disciples. We learn to love by being loved, we learn to forgive by being forgiven; we learn generosity by being treated generously. Therefore, worship expresses and creates community, *koinonia*, and in worship one finds ethics, a life-style, embodied and sustained (Forrester, 1997:45; Greenlee, 2003:23; cf. Meeks, 1983:157; Brown, 1989:53; Nümberger, 2005:195).

#### 4.3.2 Evangelism

The researcher is of the opinion that there has never been a moral regeneration without aggressive evangelism. According to Shibley (1989:90), evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Christ, the only Redeemer of men, according to

the Scriptures, with the purpose of persuading condemned and lost sinners to put their trust in God by receiving and accepting Christ as Saviour through the power of the Holy Spirit, and to serve Christ as Lord in every calling of life and in the fellowship of his Church, looking toward the day of his coming.

The Greek word *kerygma* can best be translated as proclamation, and is usually linked to the gospel or good news. With the *kerygmatic* dimension one is therefore referring to all the various forms of the ministry of the word in mission: preaching, witnessing, providing literature, theological education, etc. The content of this ministry is the good news that “God, Creator and Lord” of the universe has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour and Liberator (Boff, 1990:23; Claerbaut, 1983:18; Stott, 2006:24; Basu, 2005:187; see Sookhdeo, 1987:115; Schreck & Barrett, 1987:7; McKee, 1989:40).

#### 4.3.2.1 Theological foundation of evangelism

Kuiper (1966:13) remarks that evangelism has its roots in eternity. This means that the evangelist must not only have a concept of human nature and behavioural patterns of the people, but it is absolutely essential (in order to give a proper biblical message) that she/he has a solid theological foundation. This leads to a crucial subject that affects everything to be said about urban evangelisation. God expects His people to analyse and interpret the city theistically. That is, Christians must look at the city in the light of God’s revelation and understand its needs and problems as God in His word leads them to understand them.

It is true that principle is naturally ignored in secular urban studies, but the Church is the one institution that should be expected to maintain it. Seeing, interpreting, and announcing to the city its God-defined condition is fundamental to urban Christian mission. Therefore, the Church has a twofold task in the city, for the Scriptures contain both the words of the prophets denouncing the sins of the city and the words of the evangelists calling to repentance and salvation (Greenway, 1979:96).

#### 4.3.2.2 Priority of evangelism

An evangelist is a person whose primary role is to persuade nonbelievers to become believers. Hence, Paul encouraged his protégé Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5), and we can see this as a general admonition for all believers to become effective witnesses for Christ (Green, 2005:148-149). Sookhdeo (1987:178) also observes that evangelism, including the verbal proclamation of Jesus Christ and the planting and perfecting of Churches, has a priority since it is concerned with the eternal condition of men and women.

Klaiber (1997:21) correctly states that evangelism is a part of preaching, part of *kerygma*: It is the fundamental testimony of God’s salvific act in Jesus Christ. To be aware that the gospel which the Church shares is the gospel of the Kingdom is to recognise that the concern of the Church in evangelism is as broad and as deep as God’s concern for humanity (Shenk, 1993:103). Greenway (1989:80) echoed the same sentiments by saying that the goal of this coordinated effort is the winning and discipline of urban ethnics, building Churches within each linguistic, cultural, and ethnic community, helping young Christians mature in the faith, and raising the masses out of poverty, isolation, and marginal positions to an active Christian role in society and increased contribution to the welfare of the city.

#### 4.3.2.3 Motive of evangelism

There are many other motives associated with evangelising, but the greatest is the personal joy of seeing someone come into a relationship with Christ. Another motive that should prompt us to aggressive evangelism is the love for our neighbour; the desire to see our neighbours, friends and relatives saved from sin and eternal damnation (cf. Viola, 2008:50). In the same vein, Young (1978:154) mentions that evangelism is the application of Christian insights to social, economic, or political problems of the day in some concerted way to effect a beneficial change in the pattern of society.

Thus, Christian has a witness to bear both concerning personal salvation and standards of right and wrong in society. The insistence that each of these dimensions must be related to the others makes it clear that even a doctrine as personal as “salvation”

cannot avoid the social structural aspects of the Gospel. The Church in the working out of salvation becomes the heart of the divine plan. The key point of this plan is that God reveals himself to be a Father who loves the world of humankind so much that He sends His Son, with the mission of saving those human beings (cf. Tonna, 1982:7).

Thus, the Gospels clearly reveals the authority of Christ over man's bodily and spiritual condition; over the relationship of man to his family and wider society; over man's religious traditions and his political, economic and social structures; and over the created earth (cf. Sookhdeo, 1987:178; Brown, 1978:47). Therefore, it is a binding role of the RCSA today to call people in SA cities to the salvation of God. This call should take form in different ways, such as:

- Regeneration

The researcher believes that moral renewal without regeneration is impossible. Horton (1992:32) also observes that regeneration inevitably results in a changed of life. Van der Walt (1994:97) concurs with Horton in that regeneration or rebirth means new heart, which has the implication that people have to begin to live anew in a personal relationship with Christ and should also be involved in the needs of their fellow men, regardless of race or culture (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Rom. 10:13-15; Eph. 2:8; Titus 2; 11; 3;5-7; Rom. 8:16; Eph. 4:24; Titus 2:12).

- Conversion

One could call conversion and moral regeneration the inside and the outside of the same issue. Moral restoration without awareness of sin and confession of guilt (towards God and fellow human beings) is excluded. By "conversion to God" is meant a transformation of the soul and not merely of outward actions. The transformation consists in "putting away what it had been" or making a new heart for oneself, or circumcising one's heart (see Parker, 1995:85).

Hence, Jesus message was not only corporate: 'The Kingdom of God is at hand, but also personal, 'repent and believe in the good news' (Mark 1; 15) (Dake, 1992:615; Schroeder, 2008:24). This implies that public announcements of God's action in the

urban areas are a call to conversion, to turning around, to giving up an immoral life, and to placing one's loyalty in the one true God and God's reign.

- Sanctification

Sanctification is an act of separation from that which is evil, and of dedication unto God (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:12). By the power of the Holy Ghost one is able to obey the command: "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Sanctification is realised in the believer by recognising his/her identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, and by faith reckoning daily upon the fact of that union, and by offering every faculty continually to the dominion of the Holy Spirit (see Lewis, 1992:182).

#### 4.3.3 Barriers to urban evangelism

Almost everyone agrees that urban evangelism on a large scale is needed urgently. However, powerful forces still militate against it. Here are factors which divert Christians' attention away from city population and urban evangelism:

##### 4.3.3.1 Cultural barriers

One of the greatest challenges the RCSA faces in the urban areas today is due to cultural barriers. After only 19 years of democracy South Africa has attained economic stability and tremendous growth which has been a major attracting force for foreigners. Greenway & Mashau (2007:10) correctly state that languages and cultural barriers are, without doubt, still challenges for the RCSA mission in the city. Moreover, cultural barriers separate people and make it difficult for the message of Christ to move from one group to another (cf. Elmer, 2006:83).

It is therefore a great challenge for every Church in the city to become a Church for others by ministering faithfully to these people. Churches that minister to homogeneous groups in the city should find ways and means of ministering to the multicultural peoples of the world as well. With technological development, language differences can no longer be used as an excuse for not ministering to these people.

##### 4.3.3.2 Ambivalence toward immigrants

Venter (1998:320) notes that South Africa attracts many illegal immigrants who are seeking what they regard as their “human rights”, namely to escape from misery and poverty. Yet their rights clash with those of South African citizens who view the immigrants as a threat to employment, security and social service. Since ethnic newcomers generally settle in poor urban neighbourhoods, hostility and even violence between the established residents and the immigrants is common. The attention and benefits extended by government agencies to immigrant refugees are viewed very negatively by South African urban community members who are trying desperately to pull themselves out of poverty (Johnson, 2009:630-31).

According to Greenway (1989:73), Christians find themselves with the same kind of ambivalence. Christians hold the basic conviction that all are equal before God and thus we owe it to our neighbours to be open and hospitable. Yet one is also torn by the common fears about jobs, competition, and the unseen effects new comers may have on our lives. One knows that one should love them, but one would rather do so from a distance.

#### 4.3.3.3 The question of relevance and credibility

Ambivalence towards immigrants is not, of course, the only barrier that keeps people from faith. Interviews with secular people reveal other barriers. For example, there is the question of relevance and credibility issues. The Church historically has been wrong so many times on issues of science and human freedom that secular people question its intellectual credibility (Snyder, 2001:89). Hence, many people believe that the RCSA does not seem to relate naturally to the concerns of other groups. Or they think of the Church as being irrelevant, okay for little children and “elderly people of both sexes”. Furthermore, many people in the townships think that the RCSA with its very “bookish liturgy” does not seem to relate naturally to the concerns of the poor in the urban community.

As a result independent black-led churches have sprung up to fill this vacuum. In a similar way, the charismatic movement is making inroads into working class areas, being able to relate better to their experiential needs. According to Biko (2013:244),

often these Churches are driven by the personality of one spiritual leader, creating an additional danger of cult of personality. By promoting false hope about the prospects for overnight success through prayer and tithing, some of these Churches take advantage of a vulnerable local congregations of the RCSA that are often desperate for an improvement in their economic circumstances. The author has already touched upon some of the prevalent weaknesses and shortcomings within the Church that has created barriers in reaching out to every tribe, language and people. If the Gospel is to be preached to all nations with all the urgency it calls for, then the Church will need to take the initiative to equip her to fulfil the Great Commission.

#### 4.3.3.4 The Negative Image of the city

A negative view of the city has been lodged for a long time in the evangelical subconscious as was demonstrated in previous sections of this study. Hence, the RCSA is much more comfortable sending missionaries from suburban Churches to the rural villages of Africa or South Africa. Moreover, many Christians feel alienated by the city and see it only as a dark and evil place to be avoided. The researcher believes that this goes hand in hand with RCSA dismal record for assimilating the waves of new immigrants settling in urban areas. When changes come in the racial or social constituency or when social blight and deterioration sets in, some Reformed Churches in the inner city prefer to move out to a more congenial turf. As Kyle (1988:76) puts it, many of us fled the city just when God brought the whole world there.

In some instances the Church's physical presence in the form of its building remains in the inner city. However, it is only a token presence because the members no longer live there, and the building used for meeting is like a lonely island visited regularly by people who live far away (Greenway, 1979:61). Studying the history of Reformed Churches today, mostly Afrikaans speaking in places like Sunnyside in (Pretoria), Hillbrow, Yeoville, Jeppe, Roodepoort, and Braanfontein in (Johannesburg), one discovers that from 1994, countless Church building were abandoned when the members moved away from the foreign immigrants pouring into the old neighbourhoods.

#### 4.3.3.5 Disunity of the Church

The New Testament authors depict the Church with a variety of different images; their favourite image is the family. Regrettably, the Reformed Church's family has been profoundly broken in some way. It may be intact outwardly, but it is damaged inwardly. As a result the RCSA can no longer voice in unity distinctive biblical answers to the problems that beset urban areas. These kinds of divisions are harder to pin down, but they can be just as important in impeding the evangelism of the Church and its response to God's call to become a sign and instrument of moral renewal of the urban community. Why disunity of the Church impedes evangelism in the SA cities today?

First, the evangelism of the Church is seriously affected when competing groups go to the same area or community to scramble for members, occasionally by preaching against the other group. Their claim to belong to the same Lord cannot convince the community that the same Lord has sent both groups.

Second, disunity hinders and destroys fellowship. In any given locality, whatever their denominations and background; Christians ought to live together in unity (Ps.133.1). However, when there is division within the Church, fellowship, prayer, evangelism and encouragement are destroyed.

Third, disunity is an offence to God. Since it was God's expectation and Christ's prayer to see his family united (John 17), disunity is a constant offence to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ. It gives the Holy Spirit, who has come not only to dwell within us but also to produce the gifts and the fruit which are necessary for a truly united Church.

Fourth, disunity dilutes the message of the Church. These divisions from synod to class levels are making the biblical message of unity a fast-growing issue which will be difficult to overcome. Unless the whole RCSA has the courage to speak with one voice, it cannot exert a strong impact on urban community. Ryan (1990:51) correctly states that without a united Church or the united standing of the Christian community, there is no possibility of making any impact on the world with regard to Church's message or mission. He notes further that it was the mission of the whole Church to the whole world not as one Church to a small number of people around them.



Sookhdeo (1987:93) concurs with Ryan in that Christians differ from each other not only in their natural make-up but also in the spiritual gifts distributed to each one. However, Paul goes out of his way to remind Christians that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are meant for the building of the body of Christ and should not be used for bringing divisions within the Church. Of course, the reverse is also true; evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as disunity undermines our Gospel of reconciliation (Shibley, 1989:35).

According to Greenlee (2003:156), in God's kingdom, relationships are fundamental. That is why Paul instructs us to "make every effort" to maintain peaceful unity. Hence, Calvin was willing to cross the seven oceans to reunite Churches and Christians who had been separated from each other. From the foregoing it is clear that restoring unity between our cities Churches is an important part or strategy for moral regeneration (cf. Dawson, 1989:82).

From the preceding it is clear that there are plenty of good reasons to work for unity: it makes us more effective, more efficient, more credible, and more coherent; but ultimately there is only one really important reason –the brokenness of the Church is offensive, it grieves God's heart. And our unity is His will, His longing desire. It is therefore, the inescapable duty of the RCSA to overcome these differences and to realise more fully the actual unity inherent in the Church. Spiritual unity must be visibly demonstrated if such words as "love", "peace" and "unity" are not to be devalued.

#### 4.3.3.6 Financial constraint

Evangelism in the urban cities is costly, not just in terms of lives, but also in terms of money. There is no doubt that a major practical issue facing the RCSA is the higher financial cost of urban workers, stands, and property. Furthermore, living and working in the SA cities costs a lot more than working in rural areas or villages. For instance, a piece of land for a Church building often costs little or nothing in the rural areas, and local believers can erect their own places of worship. However, the property in SA cities is very expensive. Moreover, there are building codes to follow, and higher wages to pay. These and other factors tempt the RCSA to avoid cities in favour of rural areas.

#### 4.3.3.7 Prejudice

The last force which militates against urban evangelism is prejudice. According to Hui (2004:138), prejudice is inborn in human beings. It is a sin that affects mission. Some Reformed Churches in the urban areas have preferences. They would rather reach their own kind with the gospel. For example, some Churches argue that reaching out to other tribes or groups with the gospel will only cause problems. “Can you not tell by their culture and behaviour?” Also, “can you not see there has been animosity and differences between us?” This kind of behaviour does not tally with the gospel of unconditional love.

Hence, Jesus abhorred this kind of behaviour (prejudice) and so did Paul. If we think this does not happen in the Church, then we are probably not on the same planet. What would happen if a destitute beggar, the street alcoholic, the drug addict, the homeless, and the tramp were to walk into our Church? The researcher believes that some members of the Church would have a mild heart attack. Some would feel awkward and would not know how to relate to them. There will certainly be murmurs within the congregation. From the foregoing it is clear that prejudice is one of the forces that militate against evangelism in the urban areas, and it is sin that breeds easily among Christians. However, the good news is that it is possible for Christians to unlearn prejudice.

#### 4.3.4 Discipleship (teaching)

Greenlee (2003:176) notes that evangelism and discipleship complement each other. Neither can be healthy without the other. According to Basu (2005:350), discipleship is a process of training and developing young Christian into more mature Christians (cf. 1 Tim. 4:16; Titus, 2:1). The whole purpose of this programme is to help young men and women (and older people for that matter) to grow spiritually, and so that they can do the work of Jesus Christ and destroy the work of the devil and win souls for the kingdom of God (Malphurs, 2007:80).

Jesus was called “Teacher” and trained his disciples to walk in his footsteps. Jesus qualification to teach others derived from the spiritual, intellectual and practical insights

and experiences of his life. His method of teaching bears a similarity to an apprenticeship: the disciples learned at first from his teaching and from the example of his life. Then the disciples learned by doing: both with Jesus and on their own until they shared increasingly in his ministry. Later the Holy Spirit descended on them and they were sent out in his power to the ends of the earth, able to disciple others.

According to Van Engen & Tiersma (1994:65), one of the greatest challenges to Christian discipleship in the urban context comes from the inescapable encounters city people experience with other religions. They noted further that Christians are pressed daily to define what they believe and the source of religious authority on which they draw. Besides this, they are constrained to engage actively in the kind of religious apologetic that interacts with other religions, spell out the relationship between the Christian way and the many other ways people choose, and invites them boldly and winsomely to follow Jesus.

This means that it is not enough to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, but the greatest witness and testimony of the believer is, his/her being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and attaining the stature and fullness of Jesus Christ. Through this process the believer is trained to reflect Jesus, so that the people around can see Jesus in and through the believers; and seeing the difference in the believer's life, would also have a desire to accept Jesus as their saviour (Coalter & Cruz 1995:48; Silvos (2007:42).

From the above it is clear that the RCSA in the urban community today needs solid Christian education programmes. Exposure to good Bible teaching through Church schools, Church Bible study, and personal and family devotions are essential for living as God intended (cf. 2 Chronicles 17:7-9; Deut. 6:1-12; Psalm 78:5). In this regard the Church has to acquire education from the great teacher, Jesus (Matt. 22:36).

#### 4.3.5 Prayer

Prayer for the city is spiritual warfare against all the hostile forces that militate against peace and well-being in the city. By their prayers, God's people distinguish themselves from those who delight in evil. Moreover, prayer is the most important thing they can do for the city. Like priests, Christians intercede that the city be spared, that its good be

promoted, that its sins be forgiven, and that all citizens come to know the fullness of shalom (Linthicum, 1991:148; Davies, 1966:114).

Hence, Jeremiah instructed the Hebrew exiles in Babylon to pray for the city: 'Seek the peace of the city ... and pray to the Lord' for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper'. This is not the first in the Bible that one finds prayers offered for sinful cities. For example, in Genesis 18 one reads that Abraham interceded for the wicked city of Sodom (Genesis 18:22-23). Six times he asked God to spare Sodom, and each time God granted his petition (Prime, 1986:82). From the above-said it is clear that a city can be a wise steward of its wealth, equitably distributing its resources, eliminating its poverty and building for the "common wealth" of the city. God is concerned about the economic health for all the citizens of the city, and so should Christians be concerned.

#### 4.3.6 Stewardship

The Greek *oikonomos*, which is something rendered steward is related to the English word economy, and can be found in several places in the New Testament (Matt. 20:8; Luk. 6:3; 16:1; Romans 16:23; Peter 4:10). For de Bruyn (1993:227) a steward is someone appointed to look after someone else's possessions. Thus we are not owners of anything not even of ourselves. Simply put, a steward may not use what has been entrusted to him in any way that he/she wishes, rather he must follow the directions of the owner of the resources (Lev. 25:23, Matt. 25:14-30).

Claerbaut (1983:13) describes stewardship as responsible earthly citizenship aimed at advancing justice and improving the quality of life in the neighbourhood, city and world. A crucial way for the Church is to recognise that the Church is not foreign to the city. It has been placed by God in the city to be its primary steward. Put another way, the city is a massive investment made both by God and by humanity. Humanity provides for the stewardship of that city's political, economic, social, and material investment through the systems and structures of that city (Vorster, 2007:189; cf. Van der Walt, 2007:84; see also Berkley, 2000:12).

In addition to these actions of the institutional Church, Christians have a calling to work individually and in cooperation with others for the relief of the poor and the elimination of

the causes of poverty. As stewards of the resources that God has entrusted to them they must always ask themselves how God would have them use these resources, and then act in accordance with the guidance God has given them by his Word and by His Spirit. This implies that they will always have to keep the needs of others, particularly the needs of the poor in SA cities, in mind when they are making their consumption decisions.

However, stewardship involves more than just consumption behaviour. We should also use our time and talents and the other resources that God has instructed us to use productively, and when we do so we should not just seek to maximise our incomes from our work and investments, but should seek to use them in ways which help our neighbours as well, especially our poor neighbours. Moreover, Christians should work through existing institutions (including businesses) to help the poor meet their needs and should be active in the creation of new institutions that do this, as well as in individual acts towards this end (Hui, 2004:148; Monsma, 1991:17).

While a Church leader bears individual responsibility to be a steward personally, he also carries an even greater responsibility to manage well the stewardship incumbent on a leader of the Church. Such responsibility includes:

- Teaching and preaching about stewardship. If the members of the Church will be sound stewards a great responsibility lies on the leaders that happen. There is no doubt that stewardship, for most people, arises not from their nature but from a heart turned toward God and God's ways.
- Developing and executing wise fiscal plans and sometimes making hard decisions. For planning, Jesus uses the example of a man who sets out to build a tower but first sits down to estimate the cost to see if he can finish it, or the king who counts his troops before he contemplates going to battle (cf. Luke 14:28-25). Thus, Church leaders must plan for appropriate and significant uses of the money that is entrusted to the Church.

In terms of this concept (stewardship) the RCSA has to adhere to the following guidelines:

#### 4.3.6.1 Self-denial

Stewardship can be effective only when it is accompanied by the attitude of self-denial. For example, in Romans 12:2 Paul instructs believers: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God and what is good and acceptable and perfect” . Paul defines this life as a process of becoming transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Jesus himself also told his disciples; “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34). This nonconformity to the world and conformity to Christ was part of what the New Testament means by the church’s being “holy.” To be holy is to be set apart, separated on behalf of God. Thus, the Church must be holy as God is holy (Guder, 1998:117).

#### 4.3.6.2 Openness to outsiders

Tonna (1982:179) is of the opinion that the arrival of an outsider in the urban areas represents a threat to that equilibrium. Guder (1998:178) concurs with the above sentiments in that strangers not only challenge and subvert our familiar worlds; they can enhance and even transform our way of life and our most intimate relationships. Therefore, the most important virtue any urban Church can embody is the virtue of openness. Because God has welcomed us, Churches in the urban settings are also called to welcome others, and not because it is the nice and polite thing to do, but because it is the holy and just thing to do (Elmer, 2006:43).

#### 4.3.6.3 Humility

The leadership of Jesus was marked by his humility. One also learns what true humility is, not only through his teaching, but through his living example. His character was exemplified by his gentleness and meekness. Nevertheless, on the basis of Christ’s voluntary humility and poverty; his followers are called to responsible use of their resources within the worldwide family of God. The Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 8:8-15 urges

those with resources to share with those without. In a world which presents such terrible needs, both spiritually and physically, the Church must define its priority as well as recognise the need of balance in allocating funds to these needs (Sookhdeo, 1987:186).

#### 4.4.6.4 Sphere of love

The foundation of the Christian faith is the sacrificial love Jesus showed us. Demonstrating that kind of love is the way others recognise us as his followers: “As new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:34-35).

Believers often memorise John 3:16, “For God so loved the world . . .” However, right after they do, they should probably memorise 1 John 3:16 as well: “We know love by this that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for brethren.” Colossians 3:14 offers a related insight: “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (cf. Bernard, 2004:41; Van der Walt, 2007:124; Mbamalu, 2004:146; cf. Viola, 2008:99).

#### 4.3.7 The fellowship

God designed the Church to reflect His character as believers relate to one another in a loving community. Hence, Joyner (2009:104) observes that one of the most descriptive words used to describe the Church in the New Testament was fellowship. The English word fellowship is derived from the phrase “two fellows in a ship,” implying that for them to go anywhere, they would have to work together. That is a good metaphor, but the Greek word used for fellowship was *koinonia*, which indicated a deeper interweaving of one another (cf. Swindoll, 1988:19). Another English word used when translating *koinonia* is communion, or common-union. In order to grasp fully the very important urban missionary implications of Christian *koinonia*, it is necessary to understand the Church as the pilgrim people of God, for whom ‘there is no permanent city here on earth’, but who are ‘looking for the city which is to come’ (Heb. 13:14) (Kritzinger et al., (1994:38)

It is true that in every society, humans crave fellowship in some form. The researcher believes that fellowship is much more than coffee and donuts before Sunday school class or after a Church service. However, fellowship signifies a strong human relationship or, better or deep friendship that is reflected in the use of the word together (Acts 2:44-46). Hence, the fellowship of the saints in the New Testament was such a deep, interconnecting weaving of their lives together that their identity with the 'holy nation' of the Church was greater than any other national or cultural identity, this was the true sense of what family was intended to be (Malphurs, 2007:81).

As Swindoll (1988:19) puts it, the New Testament Church not only had things in common together, they were together. Not like a bunch of isolated marbles that made a lot of noise and scattered in all directions, but like a cluster of grapes. And when the winepress of persecution came squeezing down on them, this close body of believers bled together. Out of this painful, crushing experience came the sweet wine of fellowship. Greenway (1989:29) also believes that in cities people crave the kind of interpersonal relationship that the biblical word *koinonia* ("fellowship") conveys.

Believers and unbelievers' in the cities, especially younger ones in the urban areas yearn for this kind of relationship and look for it within the Church. And if they don't find it in the Church they will look for it in other places outside the Church, such as the workplace, sports, clubs, and bars. From the foregoing it is clear that Churches that desire to reach people and minister to them, especially younger believers, need to develop ministries that address this deeply felt need for fellowship.

#### 4.3.8 Service

According to Boff (1991:90), any Church community must exist for service to others. This is its urban ministry. Thus, the Church's urban ministry derives its meaning from the mission of Christ: to bring life and life overflowing (John 10:10). The word which the apostle used in this regard is the word *diakoneo*, that is, practical service (Acts 6:2). This is the charisma which should be understood within the broader perspective, to refer to the rendering of practical service (Mashau, 1999:76).



Nürnbergger (2005:149) correctly stipulated that the Greek word diakoneo is a word which is deeply concerned with a personal ministry in the service of other people, i.e. poverty alleviation, disease, violence, drug addiction, old age, cultural breakdown, and illiteracy. In this regard the love of Christ is reflected (see Malphurs, 2007:83; Claerbaut, 1983:133; compare Kritzinger *et al*, 1994:37; William, 1988:67). This was also evident in the prophets (Isa. 1:12-17; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8).

Basu concludes by saying “that the words minister and ministry referred to service in general, which may be of a temporary or permanent nature, by either a male or female person, in an ecclesiastical or non-ecclesiastical capacity. He indicated further that even secular government officials were regarded as ministers of God, as they were holding officials they were regarded as ministers of God, as they were holding their positions only according to the will of God” (Basu, 2005:147).

With the above-mentioned eight basic objectives a Church may build a well-rounded program of Christian service. The Churches that have become great Churches have in their own way adopted and followed these objectives. A Church without any one of the eight elements is like a table with a missing leg. Its effectiveness is quite limited (cf. Young, 1978:38).

#### 4.4 THE RCSA AND THE URBAN CHALLENGES

The Church has always faced problems, but the scope and intensity of its problems now seem to be greater than at any previous time in its history (Cairns, 1996:528). Senkhane (2002:29) concurs with Cairns in that the Church both in the Old and the New Testament addressed biblically some ethical and community issues that were found in some early communities with similar problems prevalent in South African urban community today.

##### 4.4.1 Specific challenges facing the RCSA in urban areas

According to Monsma (1979:24), a description of urban complexity would not be complete without some reference to urban problems. Physicians must know how the human body ought to function. They must also know why sometimes things go wrong.

In similar way, Church leaders, who are physicians of the sport, must also know the things that can go wrong in the city. Perhaps the most formidable contemporary challenge facing the Church is the awakening, or re-awakening of the moral conscience of the South African urban community, which, by many accounts, finds itself on the slippery slope of widespread moral decay.

With the present and increasingly desperate ethical and moral challenges facing urban centres and the Church, there is no doubt that the teaching ministry of the RCSA is going to be subjected to one of its greatest tests, namely that of shaping sound moral character amongst its own constituencies. However, in church history one can also find the cause or reasons, as well as the solutions for many of these crises. The researcher does not claim to be invested with infallible gifts of analysis, but the following can be mentioned with regard to the issue under reflection:

#### 4.4.1.1 HIV/AIDS

Chikane (2012:134) remarks that South Africa has comprehensive policies and programmes to address the AIDS epidemic. However, despite the government's education and awareness campaigns and efforts to alleviate society's suffering and eradication of HIV/AIDS, its stigmatisation still remains a challenge for many living with the incurable virus and their families. Especially in the reformed Churches within the black communities it is still a taboo subject and it is a shame and embarrassment for Church members to go public with their status. This makes it difficult for people to disclose their status and risk becoming a laughing stock.

Moreover, AIDS is a sensitive issue and it touches upon many different aspects of conscience and morality. For example, in some Reformed Churches the moral dilemma is acute, especially during the celebration of Holy Communion. Because of the fact that the AIDS virus is transmittable, people tend to avoid contact with a sufferer or to share the cup for fear of contamination. Furthermore, most people are uncomfortable with the prospect of facing an AIDS sufferer because of fears for their own mortality (see Nürnberger, 2005:295).

From the proceeding it is clear that the task of stopping the spread of HIV/AIDS and of providing counselling to those infected and affected by it is a massive challenge to all Churches and city works. However, the researcher notes with great concern that this cannot happen unless there is a paradigm shift in terms of the RCSA's response to other structural issues, such as addressing the migrant labour system.

#### 4.4.1.2 Crime and violence

The current levels of crime have other far reaching adverse ramifications for the RCSA's urban ministry. Hence, the researcher is of the opinion that pasturing the Reformed Church in the urban areas, in particularly in the township can be a dangerous occupation. Violent attacks have been made in recent years against Reformed Churches, and many pastors in the urban areas have experienced crime and violence. This is given weight by the fact that many Reformed Churches in the urban areas are using security companies to fill the first responsibility of the state, the protection of ministers and their families and the property.

Sometimes fencing, both literal and figurative, provides the means for a congregation to do both. Before we too quickly condemn the Church behind the fence, it is important to understand the need for fences in a changing urban context. In the city there are very real reasons why a Church might put up a fence around the property. Drug needles are in the bushes. Human excrement is on the lawn. There is a constant need to replace security lights smashed by the homeless because the light keeps them from sleeping. In addition, there are safety and insurance concerns for the children who attend school on the property each day. These are the realities, even for a Church with a great concern for its homeless neighbours (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:107).

Another reason provides by Altbeker (2007:54) why many Churches in urban society experience a high incidence of crime it is that the anonymity that flows from living in a mass society of modern cities means that it is far, far easier for city-dwelling robbers to get away with their crime. In small communities, by contract, people tend to know each other better, and the chances that a knife-wielding mugger will be caught are much higher.

In conclusion, it is clear that the high incidence of violence in the present democratic South African society does not only pose a serious challenge to the government but also to theology and the Churches. The Churches are carriers of the peace message of Jesus Christ and have the responsibility to respond to conflict and violence in personal and social life. Theology has the responsibility to critically reflect on the implications of this peace message for situations of conflict and violence in all spheres of life. There is no doubt that at this point of time one strongly needs clear theological thinking and guidance on the violence in our urban communities.

#### 4.4.1.3 Systemic poverty

The problem of systemic poverty threatens the RCSA's urban ministry. Systemic poverty is different from personal poverty in that it is something that most people are born into and their fate is dictated and controlled by it. Those who are not born into it are targets to be brought into it. That is why it must be eliminated – because it reflects a scheme that is diabolical in design and evil in its implementation. It deprives masses of people of their daily bread by stealing the fruit of their labour and keeping them in social misery (cf. Philips & Coote, 1993:324).

Silvoso (2007:117) defines systemic poverty as follows: It is an all-encompassing socioeconomic structure that keeps people deprived. He indicates further that it exists because of an institutionalised attitude that legitimises its twin evil premises that (1) some people deserve more opportunity than others, and that (2) there is not much that can or should be done about this prevailing social injustice (similar to how slavery was justified in the past).

Because this evil is systemic, it will not be eradicated by simply taking care of individuals at the micro level or providing massive aid at the macro level. Poverty is also understood as the lack of material resources, such as food, safe drinking water, and shelter, or social resources, such as access to information, education, health care, social status, political power, or the opportunity to develop meaningful connections with other people in society (Williams, 1998:9).

- Consequences of systemic poverty

According to Grigg (1990:31), poverty causes drunkenness. The first thing one will notice in areas of poverty is drunken men. Everywhere there are groups of men drinking at all times from morning to night. Drunkenness and alcoholism cause destitution, but most drunkenness among the squatters is a result of the poverty in which the men find themselves. Moreover, poverty provides an environment not only for drunkenness, but also for immorality.

In the immediate cluster of houses in SA cities, the researcher has observed that very few couples were legally married. For example, many of the women have lived with two or three husbands and on the other hand, a number of men had a second wife. Squatter areas seem to be the ultimate collecting point for the moral outcasts of society. Perhaps this is because they are areas where social norms and values have broken down almost totally, with immorality and infidelity running unchecked and unashamed.

- Causes of systemic poverty

The researcher is of the view that the following things can cause systemic poverty in urban areas. First, poverty is caused by a divine judgment as a result of sin. This kind of poverty afflicts those who do not know that God is their father. Hence, throughout the Old Testament the penalty for idolatry took the form of famine, pestilence or drought. The brunt of such judgment was always felt in the marketplace and particularly in the stomachs of the people.

Food became scarce and eventually insufficient. On the other hand, 2 Chronicles 7:14 teaches that if we get it right with God, He will, after granting forgiveness for our sins, heal the land. The implication is impossible to miss: The land that produced insufficiently will once again produce abundant food. To resolve this kind of poverty requires personal and corporate repentance, which opens the door for God to intervene.

Second, a political system that enables a few to hoard resources at the expense of many causes poverty. South Africa's first democratic government was elected in 1994 with a clear mandate to redress the inequalities of the past in every sphere: political, social and economic. Given the socioeconomic imbalances that have existed for decades (even centuries), the need for reform, greater ethical conscience and

“ploughing back” have become crucial to the long-term survival of the new democracy (Vorster, 2007:27; compare Balshaw & Jonathan, 2005:16).

As it was already indicated, what has happened in recent years is that it is primarily people close to the ANC who are seen to be the main beneficiaries of this necessary strategy. A real difficulty in the South African context is that a significant majority of the previously disadvantaged have historical links to the ANC, which has been the dominant force in South African liberation and post-liberation politics for so long. It would be unfair to exclude people on the basis of a relationship with what was the pre-eminent liberation force (Feinstein, 2007:246).

The ruling elite must resolve this problem, and is not only possible but also desirable. God wants it to happen, and the leaders of nations are wide open to it since poverty is not only a bane to those who suffer it, but it is also blight on those who have not been able to resolve it. Third, social inequality and social stratification are very crucial in South Africa and this has precipitated the current levels of poverty in urban areas.

As it was already noted, there has been a steady growth of black elites who have accumulated wealth through government policies, but the majority of people in SA cities are disillusioned that only handfuls of well-connected elitists are amassing vast fortunes while the majority live in continued economic deprivation (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995:125; cf. Plaut & Holden, 2012:232; Terreblanche, 2002:391-392; Gumede (2005:120). The RCSA pastors in the cities are therefore, being encouraged to expose and reprove the sin and corruption that pervades the social and economic fabric of society; even against the crippling extent of social inequality and social stratification in the urban centres.

Four, greed also is the source of poverty in the urban areas. The researcher is of the view that one reason that poor people are kept poor is because those who control the marketplace live in emotional and spiritual poverty themselves, even though they are materially rich. Enough is never enough for them, and the resulting fear causes moral paucity. The result is that the rich get richer, through hoarding, but not happier or more fulfilled, and the poor are then chained to hopelessness. As a result, the future of the

nation is mortgaged because its main asset –its people have been bridled (cf. Silviso, 2007:120).

Five, poverty is also caused by the exclusion of the poor by the rich people from the economy. One of the many crises Nehemiah confronted was an internal crisis (Neh. 5:1-13) among the Jews who were involved in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. There was an outcry (the word used was hara: “burn with anger”) against exploitation by the nobles. These nobles were exacting interest in a time of dire need. As a result, the poor had to mortgage their land, go into debt, and subject their sons and daughters to slavery (5:3-5). In this context, the exploitation of the poor did not come as a surprise. It was a result of the nobles excluding the poor from their community.

#### 4.4.1.4 Inequalities within the RCSA

The symbiotic bond between the rich and the poor has always been observable in Christendom from Early Church times. Yet, reality shows that class distinction is very much evident in many spheres of life today, especially where wealth is concerned. Evidence of this is found in the various name tags given to these periods, such as rich-man, poor man, beggar-man, thief and young Churches. RCSA is not an exception.

Most Christians within the RCSA, at a personal level, practice Kingdom economics. They are honest, hard-working people. They care for the needy in their own sphere of influence. They donate time and expertise to help the disadvantaged. The South African urban community would be a terrible place without such life-giving involvement. Moreover, throughout the history of RCSA, we find that there was a beautiful harmony and understanding between black Churches and white Churches.

Although, they were not governed by any central hierarchy or ecclesiastical order, they had a bond of unity, cared for each other and shared their sufferings to the extent of sacrificial giving. Despite this beautiful harmony between white Churches and black Churches, the researcher observed that there is shocking inequalities in the distribution

of resources between poor Churches and rich Churches a few miles away in the suburbs; and even between a poor pastor and his rich brother (pastor) only a few feet away in the same congregation. The same inequalities may also be found among mission agencies and among Christian workers (see Sookhdeo, 1987:186).

Since 1994, it has been disheartening to see many white Churches withdrawing their financial assistance from those Churches within the black community. In a similar way, some Church leaders from the so called sister Churches are totally ineffective in upholding social and economical issues on Christian moral and ethical principles. As far as the “haves” are concerned, if we could do it [changed our material fortunes] then the poor Churches can also do so.

In many cases, an indigenous pastor in the South African urban community is only a part-time professional, spending most of his time working in a factory or as a chaplain in the neighbourhood. Moreover, they spend their time looking at ways to supplement their incomes while some have resorted to studying so they can leave the Church. Hence, the Reformed Churches within the black community are declining because African pastors are struggling financially.

Although the General Synod of RCSA in 2009 has in the light of Church Order art 13 and 20 considered the establishment of a fund that would provide assistance to retired black clergymen and their dependents but which will also in future provide assistance to retired black clergymen whose pension from RCSA Pension Fund is too low to ensure dignified subsistence. However, the reality of today is that there can never be guarantees about the source of income, including the pension that a person may get when he retires, due to the inherent uncertainty that exists within the Church. This is the worst case scenario for the RCSA, one that is increasingly in epidemic proportions, which increased the angst, wounded, and resentment of black clergymen.

Instead of addressing the inequality within the Church, there is a prevalent call proposing that the only way forward is to hire uneducated local people. ‘Why are we using valuable, highly educated pastor/missionary personnel to do jobs that perhaps could be done by non-Christian for relatively low cost?’ The researcher is convinced



that in certain cities and villages some people are gathering up workers who have no call from God –by paying them a small salary to do Christian work. They simply need a job; there is massive unemployment in the urban centres, and so they line up to get involved. They often don't have enough training, and their lives often go out of control. After they get married and have children, there is no longer enough money to support them, and resentment, hurt, and confusion results (Verwer, 2000:99). These are things that we cannot afford in this great task of nation-building.

The Bible teaches that serving God faithfully here on earth includes adversity. Moreover, history shows that mission work has always been accompanied by suffering (Greenlee, 2003:61). Of course, the reverse is not true, for instance, in 1 Corinthians 9 the Bible teaches that religious workers have the right to material support; nowhere does it suggest that gospel workers have to go around begging for support, nor be forced into “tent-making” because the congregations they serve are unable to support him. This teaching was based on the laws of the Old Testament.

God commanded that priests and Levites should be supported by the offerings of the people (see Leviticus 7:28-36; Numbers 18:8-21). In the same vein Jesus sent his disciples to the “lost sheep of Israel” and told them not to take with them money or extra clothing in light of the teaching of the Old Testament (Matt. 10:10). The Jews, who knew the Old Testament, understood that religious workers deserved to be supported (cf. Greenway, 1999:140). From the above-mentioned Scriptural references it is clear that Reformed Church pastors could also expect to receive food and lodging when they worked within the black community.

#### 4.4.2 Causes of this undesirable state of inequality

##### 4.4.2.1 Religious factors

These factors emanate from the inadequate teaching, if there was any, particular in tithing, of the founder members within the black community; i.e. missionaries. While most of their efforts are to be appreciated, some of them cannot. The Old Testament principle of tithing personal incomes for religious purposes and to help the poor was

adopted by the Christian Church, and became obligatory in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Membership of some Churches still requires a commitment to regular tithing.

However, one missionary with whom the author discussed the problem gave him (the author) another view. He gave a scenario where he found abject poverty and people struggling with putting food on the table. He told the researcher that actually people were expecting something from the missionary and not vice versa. How could they have been able to teach tithing under such conditions? Their teaching includes a custom of 'flat rates' when it came to tithing. This resulted in these being implemented even on people who could contribute more according to how God has blessed them.

#### 4.4.2.2 Political factor

This factor is intertwined with the former one, in the sense that the political system of the past, namely Apartheid strived to make one ethnic group dependent on the other, creating what was called paternalism. As Greenway & Mashau (2007:12) put it these socio-economic inequalities were particularly marked by the affluence of many white communities, and the underdevelopment of the former native reserves and homelands inhabited by the majority of black people. Biko (2013:2) concurs with the Greenway and Mashau on that Apartheid was a tool used by previous government to divide scarce resources amongst South Africa's white people at the expense of the indigenous majority.

This duality spilled over to the Church where one found white Churches creating this dependence with the result that everything had to be asked from the white Church. To a large extent the impasse in relationship between white Reformed Churches and black Reformed Churches came about because of (at least) two false assumptions: First, the white Churches could only give, while black Churches could only receive.

Second, evangelism and mission therefore, implied 'one way traffic' from whites to blacks. The result was that black Churches could not do anything for itself with the view that everything will come from the white Churches. As Greenlee (2003:113) said, the background of colonialism and the power of money have created an inferior complex from poor communities. The feelings of inferiority led to the mentality "I need help" and

“I cannot do it”. Such a situation was undesirable, as genuine adult relationships among people can only come about when both sides can give as well as receive, and where both sides can learn as well as teach.

Greenway (2009:66-67) also believes that this kind of dependency on other people is damaging Churches in many places. Missionaries who want to control the indigenous churches cause this dependency syndrome. He notes further that at other times the cause lies with the local believers who have not learned to give generously to the work of the Lord. It is very often due to a lack of trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to provide what is needed spiritually and materially for every ministry that is the will of God and has His blessing.

This sense of an inferiority complex, manifesting among the poor, leads them to vent their anger wrongly against one another, and treat each other as scum. In addition, causes bitterness and blaming others, even God. Some pastors within the black community despair to the point of hopelessness and even suicide. It is due to this weakness that Kabanyana, quoting Cone declares that: “Theology has to rise out of the oppressed community as they seek to understand their place in the history of salvation” (Kabanyana, 2006:27).

The researcher is of the opinion that the above political factors may well come to haunt the RCSA for a generation or more. Reason being: First, structural unity proposed by the RCSA is held by some to be more economical. It will, it is argued, be able to address the issue of inequality within the Church, and be able to do God’s will much more effective than a Church consisting of many denominations (cf. McGavran, 1988:104).

This concept fostered the expectation, especially among poor Churches that are unable to fulfil their missionary calling because they are suffering from the deep bondage of a culture of dependency. The important test is to see whether the newly structured general Synod will meet the above-mentioned expectations.

Second, there are some white ministers and missionaries within the RCSA that still perceive Apartheid as a well-meaning, benign, though paternalistic, attempt to regulate

racial conflict and to “Christianise”, “educate” and “develop” the black tribes of South Africa (cf. Venter, 1998:18; cf. Roberts, 2001:41; see Biko, 2013:31). This confirmed the mentality of superiority and inferiority, which was not a good foundation for building a healthy Reformed Church in the black community. There is no doubt that this mentality (attitude) will keep the black Churches dependent for decades.

#### 4.4.2.3 Paternalism

Reformed Churches within the black community were established as part of the fruits of the mission work done by the white Reformed Churches. This mission started in the late 50s by the South African missionary enterprise and was done with great weakness as well as under very difficult circumstances. Moreover, the white Reformed Churches missionary approach in the townships was paternalistic. Simply put, it involved a constant struggle to build healthy and responsible young Churches within the black community.

In fairness towards the RCSA it should be stated that its missionary fervour led to the contribution of large sums of money from the members of the RCSA which was used to establish a number of ethnically separated theological schools. However, this fervour and the substantial contributions which were thus made have led to a situation of the young (black) Churches being imprisoned in financial dependence which leads to all other forms of oppression. Again, this inherited structure led to dependence, inferior, and submissive black Reformed Churches (cf. Ryan, 1990:174).

Paternalism does not allow the inferior part to say no, once the inferior part starts being frank; it is said that one is kicking the hand that gives. There is nothing new the inferior part can bring or implement. The only thing one does is to receive and accept. The friendship is based on materialism. Hence, the custom of accepting without question is prevalent at our synod meetings where the African delegates would accept everything, and raise questions later on their way back home.

Numerous examples are available where black ministers have been threatened, intimidated, victimised or even have lost their livelihood when they dared to express publicly their opposition to and rejection of certain decisions on the basis of the Gospel.

From the proceeding it is clear that the great challenge facing the RCSA is to overcome paternalism within its ranks. It is also clear that this custom of pretending to be willing to do something and then not really doing it is a great drawback in the spreading of the gospel and it also stalls growth and progress (Stinton, 2010:37).

#### 4.4.2.4 The old problem of man

One should be careful to speak about the past and blaming everything on the past without referring to Man's condition as such. The researcher knows Churches who began teaching people as early as then, but people continue disregarding the teaching. Who then is to blame? Certainly are not the missionaries, or Apartheid, the problem lies with people themselves. And the problem that the researcher sees is the problem of sin.

It is clear from the Bible that everyone must show their gratitude to God by contributing towards the work of the Church (cf. Leviticus 27:30-32; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Proverbs 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). In some Bible translations this is called a tithe (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:26; Matthew 23:23). However, some Church members learn to live with sin, because not giving tithes is disobedient to God's Word, disregarding the consequences thereof (Malachi 3:10).

Although the RCSA deals with the phenomena of poverty and wealth in terms of provision from the Bible, the Church order and the forms (especially with regard to the office of the deacons) in an ecclesiastically manner and not by means of political statement in the way it is done in Liberation Theology. However, the researcher is of the opinion that the Church needs to consider the ethical aspects of inequality and poverty within its ranks.

The Bible is clear that money is not the primary prerequisite for mission. However, the reality of the need for financial support becomes a major reason why many Reformed Churches within the black community are unable to fulfil their missionary calling. The researcher believes that the RCSA must deal with inequality and financial matters in a Christian way, because everything which we possess comes from God. Therefore, we must use it with responsibility towards God and other people (cf. Psalm 24:1; 1 Corinthians 4:7).

In addition, it is essential to accept the fact that a large investment is needed for the efficient preparation of pastors within the poor community. We also need to understand that if we think supporting African pastors is some kind of miracle shortcut towards getting the job done, the RCSA may be making a serious mistake. There is no simple cheap, discount shortcut to Church ministry, although there are ways in which the Church can economise and be more diligent.

The implication for this is that single, comprehensive, economic support for poor Churches involving the General Synod is necessary, be it in knowledge, self-esteem or financial resources. Paul also told the young Timothy to remind his wealthy congregants to invest in lasting riches:

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

However, genuine help means to see long-term results which do not create dependency (mission imperialism) but rather a mutual interdependency. This means that the help which weaker brothers and sisters need is to understand their capacity and to grow in maturity in fulfilling God's purpose for this world (cf. Greenlee, 2003:114). The researcher is of the opinion that when one has the support and encouragement of the General Synod the resources for poor Churches can easily be mobilised.

However, if Church leadership remains unmotivated or, worse, prejudicial about Synod involvement, time needs to be invested to help influence a change in this attitude, before sustainable action is expected from the Church or good Samaritans. From the foregoing it is clear that the RCSA must define its priority as well as recognise the need of balance in allocating funds to these needs. The main element of this argument is that if the Church cannot demonstrate justice, mercy towards the helpless, and above all love within itself a life of progressive liberation from sin and sinful human relations and a life of *diakonia*, its proclamation and service to the urban community will lose all credibility and will become fruitless.

#### 4.4.2.5 Disintegration of nuclear families

According to Van der Walt (1994:392), family life to a large extent determines what society will look like in the cultural, political, economic, educational and religious spheres, as the family is the source or the origin of any society. However, gradually, the notion of a family with a father, mother and children, all living under the same roof, becomes something of a relic of a bygone era, in the South African urban community (Fowler & House, 1988:9; Jones & Yarhouse, 2000:160; Mashau, 2005:11; Phillips & Coote, 1993:100). Disintegration of the nuclear family, in the urban areas, therefore, manifests itself in many forms or ways. The following can serve as examples of the breakdown of nuclear families in SA cities:

##### 4.4.2.5.1 Elderly and lonely people in the urban community

The function of community within the social order is changing. The context of modernity, with its philosophy of individualism and personal freedom, assumed that person shared some sense of communal identity. This condition no longer exists for most people as a primary framework for understanding life. The structures that previously shaped such a community have eroded and with this erosion, people find themselves very lonely and alone.

Hiebert & Meneses (1995:347) remark that although inner city areas today are teeming with people, paradoxically, this is also where one finds very old lonely members of the RCSEA. According to Collins (1988:92) loneliness has been called 'the world's most common mental health problem' one of the most universal sources of human suffering an almost permanent condition for millions of old people, regardless of class, race, or sex. It involves a feeling of inner emptiness, isolation, and intense longing. Even when they are surrounded by others, lonely old people often feel left out, unwanted, rejected, or misunderstood (Savage & Warder, 1993:100). There are numbers of reasons why urban areas contain so many lonely old people:

According to Vincent (2000:13), many of the vital pieces of human connectedness, which sustain a community, were destroyed. The disappearance of the extended family in the South African urban community now means that an elderly parent may live a

lonely life after losing a partner. Last, people in the urban areas have little time to make strong social relationships for they are rooted up or move themselves on every few years to what is thought to be great material comfort, but which in fact tends to lead to loneliness, a loss of identity and a great inner emptiness and lack of purpose.

From the above one is led to believe that many elderly people crave a sense of belonging and family solidarity. Therefore, mission to the aging is another area that requires new thinking. We cannot take it for granted that everyone who grows old has a religious commitment. Our concerns usually centre on the needs of the elderly for health care and adequate housing, but there is also a large mission field among elderly persons who have never committed their lives to Christ and those who have failed to develop a mature faith. One particular way in which RCSA can help in meeting this kind of need is by participation in the activities of a tenant's association. This would, in a very natural way bring RCSA into contact with fellow residents living in a block of flats or residents in town houses.

#### 4.4.2.5.2 The tramp

It is likely that most of the urban Churches are familiar with the sudden appearance of tramps at Church. Most tramps have the common characteristic that they have opted out of society and are homeless. They live a life of vagrancy and depend on charity. Invariably many Christians are at first at a loss as what to do. He can be an immediate embarrassment, especially if he is filthy and smells. Church folk may be reluctant to sit anywhere near him, and the whole congregation is affected, more so if the Church is small. Moreover, many Church leaders worry about the effect the tramp may have on newcomers and children at the meeting (Richardson, 2007:71).

The scriptures call Christians to practise hospitality to strangers. The tramp may be no angel but he is a person in need (cf. Heb. 13:1-2; 1 Pet. 4:9). Jesus always had time and space for the stranger and the sudden request, and Christians must be prepared to do the same, even though it might inconvenience them. A number of Reformed Churches in the urban areas provide a limited service for tramps such as showers, a change of clothing and food. However, as in the case of the street alcoholic and drug



addict, specialist training to help tramps might be the best course of action in the long run.

#### 4.4.2.5.3 The street children

The most grievous of all social injustice is demonstrated by the existence of over a 100 million street children across the poor continents of the world at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main cause of the existence of the enormous number of street children is the population explosion coupled with the rapid spread of urbanisation across the world. Moreover, family breakdown, particularly amongst the poor in the urban centres, the death of parents due to HIV/AIDS, and a greater tolerance of vice have contributed to the rising numbers of street children in the cities. Many are forced onto the streets by feckless parents to get money by any means possible. Many do this by shining shoes, collecting recyclable refuse, selling small items, or just to clean windscreens as cars wait for the lights to turn green in the hope of being given some money.

Those who work with street children have a superhuman task and desire to share this task with Churches that can help. Street children lack the parental supervision and family care to which they are entitled. In addition, commonly marginalised or ignored by society, street children lack moral scruples, and emerge from adolescence without the skills to integrate into society. Their survival skills, however, may be well developed and this may be a resource that could be put to excellent use, if properly channelled (cf. Richardson, 2007:72). This means that not only are finances required but also emotional resources of a loving and caring commitment are essential. We need a biblical response to the plight of these children.

#### 4.4.2.5.4 The growing number of single parents

The breakdown of the family, particularly in cities, has laid heavy burdens on single parents, has threatened the cohesion of the community and in many cases has led to a sense of alienation among young people. In a similar way, the fast pace of existence coupled with the erosion of love from the family and economic compulsions have kept men (fathers) away from their children (cf. Stott, 2006:23). According to Ramphela (2013:22), absent fathers leave a void in young men's lives that mothers often ignore or

are unable to address. According to the 2010/11 Child Gauge, in 2009 only 34 per cent of children were living with both parents.

In the same vein, Elkim & Handel (1989:142) note that many men in urban centres observe their children from a distance, and as the relationship between the mother and the child grows, the father moves constantly backwards, abandoning his parental responsibility and leaving the mother to develop a relationship with children. According to Marshall and Herman (1998:69), the absence of men in parenting has become a dangerous contributory factor to social violence as many family units operate with men as “outside parties”.

The wound that this absent parent situation inflicts on the majority of children growing up in South Africa needs to be acknowledged and addressed. As Dobson (2002:142) puts it where there are children without father figures there is increased social decay and a high crime rate. For example, almost 50 000 schoolgirls fell pregnant in 2007 and the majority of them were from families with problems. Simultaneously there has been on-going State concern about the growing number of women-headed families, where children are raised without fathers. This concern has been expressed in policies supported by all political parties aimed at reducing State expenditure and particularly, the cost of supporting “single parents” through social grants (cf. Plaut & Holden, 2012:232).

Chief among Reformed Churches within the black community concerns is the absence of masculine role modelling and mentoring that fathers should be providing. As a result boys are in serious trouble today and that many of them are experiencing emotional pressure that contributes to violence, drug abuse, early sexual activity, and other forms of rebellious behaviour. Scripture also shows that fathers are expected to play a leading role in this by providing the training and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4).

The challenge facing the RCSA today is: How will the Church witness to the growing number of single parents, and where children are raised without fathers? Or to single-parent families in which the child or children were born after the mother was artificially inseminated, and how can we make them feel at home in the Church? An even more

difficult group for the Church to deal with are gay and homosexual couples raising children together. The RCSA must examine its responsibility to witness to Christ in such situations.

#### 4.4.2.5.5 Divorce

According to Murray (1961:1), the question of divorce is one that perennially interests and agitates the Church. This is true whether one thinks of the Church in the most restricted sense as the local congregation or whether one thinks in terms of the Church universal. The faithful pastor of the local Church may consider himself happy indeed if he does not find himself embroiled in the complications associated with divorce and marital separation. In essence, the old taboos against divorce and cohabitation are disappearing and the culture is abandoning its commitment to lifelong marriage.

Hiebert & Meneses (1995:277) content that divorce and remarriage are more common than in most peasant societies. The result is single-parent families and blended families made up of husbands and wives who bring with them children from previous marriages. Stott (2006:361) indicates that divorce can be correlated with many factors including income, education and religiosity, but among the reasons one must include the fact that women can now often support themselves financially and so are not dependent on their husbands. However, undoubtedly the greatest single reason is the decline of Christian faith in the urban community, together with the loss of commitment to a Christian understanding of the sanctity and permanence of marriage, and the growing non-Christian assault on traditional concepts of sex, marriage and family.

#### 4.4.2.5.6 Same sex marriage

The same-sex controversy is, at its core, a controversy over the authority and interpretation of the Bible. Throughout the history of the Church, marriage was meant for two people of the opposite sex, male and female. Jones & Yarhouse (2000:21) also recognised that the traditional perspective has been that God created us as embodied physical beings, male and female and that God created our capacity for sexual union in intercourse.

It is crystal clear from the preceding that the natural family throughout history has been male and female. In other words, in same-sex marriage the procreative possibility and ability to raise children according to the traditional and universal recognised concept of marriage are virtually non-existent (Smedes, 1983:167; McCauley & Steel, 1996:55; Geisler, 1989:267). Today, however, we are being told that moral opposition to same sex marriage, based in and upon Scripture, is actually a rather recent phenomenon (see White & Niell, 2002:15; cf. Eckman, 2004:51). At this point in our struggle, coming to grips with issues of social cohesion stability and immense decay in SA cities, one also wonders whether it would be wise to experiment with a new legal formulation that seeks to alter drastically what natural marriage is.

If marriage is no longer the union of one man and one woman but rather any two persons who want to cohabit, who is to say that it must be limited to two people? Why not a trio of three men or women? And why not one man with two wives or ten? After all, one must extend “equal rights” to all individuals to live according to any arrangement they wish. In addition, Kafka (2006:47) observes that there are many variations of the gay family. Two gay fathers; two lesbians mothers; families resulting from adoption; children conceived from the egg of one parent and donor sperm; or the sperm of one parent and a surrogate mother.

In the same vein, there are families with children from previous marriages, single parent families, and families with three or more parents when gay couples and lesbian couples who are also friends cooperate to conceive and raise each other’s children. The one factor that is common to gay families, however, is that they all include at least one, if not two gay parents. The end result is the destruction of the nuclear family as one knows it with children the losers (cf. Lutzer, 2004:62). Arguments about whether children raised in gay or lesbian households will be normal fuel the debates about whether these households should be granted the same legal protections and rights as the nuclear families.

There is no doubt that one is witnessing a cultural revolution that if successful, will have on-going repercussion for children and the family. There is a reason to believe that this revolution to remake the family has the potential to destroy the very concept of

marriage. The family, however, was to be God's means of propagating the truth of His Word from one generation to another (cf. Deut. 6:6-9).

#### 4.4.2.5.7 Sexual immorality

The anonymity of the city also affects the family. According to Lutzer (2004:51), today millions of couples are cohabiting without the benefit of a marriage covenant. In many instances this arrangement serves as a back door of escape, just in case the relationship does not work out. However, this arrangement communicates a confusing dual message. On the one hand the partners are saying to each other, "I love you so much I want to be sexually intimate with you."

On the other hand the second message is, "I don't want to get too close to you so that I have the option of escaping in case you don't meet all of my needs." The result of this double message is an inbred lack of confidence in the relationship (Hui, 2004:30). In connection to this, in the tertiary institutions (universities, technikons, and Colleges) many unmarried students have sex in their rooms and as a result many young girls do not finish school because of pregnancies resulting from premarital sex (Mashau, 2005:3; Britten, 1999:64; Evertt, 1995:2).

According to de Bruyn (1996:98), these influences have also penetrated into the Church. The result has been that premarital sex was also practised among Church members, and they are not ashamed to acknowledge that openly. While some Christians choose to live in denial on this subject, others over-react. For them, the best way is drastic surgery. If TV is the problem, get rid of it. If the Internet is the problem, disconnect the computer. If one is afraid that his/her children will be exposed to such unhealthy influence, one must shield them.

Christians must learn to be frank, open and yet biblical on this subject. Furthermore, they need to do this in order to pass on the correct teaching and values to the next generation. One of the challenges facing the Church in the city is to stand up against all bad publicity regarding human sexuality (see Greenway & Mashau, 2007:14; Claerbaut, 1983:117; Bruce & Britten, 2001:66).

#### 4.4.2.6 Leadership crisis

One of the most difficult problems facing the RCSA in urban areas today is that of finding qualified people who are clearly called and spiritually equipped to initiate new Christian work among unreached people groups. There is a crisis of spiritual leadership and crying need for leaders with a vision. It is a serious problem confronting many Reformed Churches in the urban community today. Christians may often criticise the quality of Church leadership in one of two ways. Sometimes they say it is not effective in today's urban societies because leaders do not understand the contemporary challenges facing SA cities (Ande, 2010:6).

According to Eckhardt (2010:150), Churches often overlook character because of gifting, but the true character of a minister will eventually come, forth; if the character is bad, the Church will suffer. One cannot hide character. It will be revealed under pressure. Character cannot be ignored. To ignore character at the expense of gifting will have disastrous results. Character includes integrity, honesty, honour, courage, strength, respectability, uprightness, morality, goodness, truthfulness, and sincerity (Hui, 2004:104; Basu, 2005:193).

Echoing the same sentiments, Malphurs (2005:97) contents that godly character is the foundation of any leadership. It is essential element that qualifies Christians to lead others. It earns people's respect and produces trust –the most essential factor in all relationships. A leader must be trusted to be followed. Since character forms the very foundation for ministry, if something goes wrong here, then the entire ministry will suffer the consequences.

The challenge facing the RCSA, however, is to recruit and prepare new generations to lead with sustained excellence, especially in planting churches, including complicated matters such as moral decay, urban ministry, health care, education, fractured communities and families. Simply put, for the Churches to be strong and healthy, they need leaders who are called by God, gifted by the Holy Spirit, respected in the community for their moral living, and committed to serving the Lord and his Church (Greenway, 1999: 186). It is not going to help the RCSA in any way, if she will only

reform the offices and leave the officers, it will be like the Kings of Israel who cleansed the temple but left the high places untouched (Viola, 2008:125; McGrath, 1992:106).

#### 4.4.1.7 Unemployment

Another factor, which also contributes to the decay of morality in the South African urban community today, is unemployment. Unemployment implies hunger, misery and loss of self-esteem, for those who are jobless. It may even result in anger and resentment against the system that had led to their inability to find a meaningful job. In the same vein, unemployment incurs multiple traumas and challenges the ability of individuals, families to cope with the stress it engenders. It is a shocking experience to be declared “redundant”, and many members of the RCSA in the urban areas live in fear of it happening to them. Thus, unemployment is not just a problem of statistics but is also psychological.

Psychologists have likened the following three psychological ramifications with unemployment: The first is shock. A young unemployed man in the Reformed congregation where the researcher is serving as the pastor spoke of his “humiliation”, and an unemployed woman of her “disbelief”, since she had been given assurance that her jobs was safe. In a similar way, on hearing that they have been sacked or made redundant, some people are angry, others feel rejected and demeaned.

The second stage is depression and pessimism. Their savings, if they had any to start with, are exhausted and their prospects look increasingly bleak. The third psychological ramification is fatalism. After remaining unemployed for several months and being repeatedly disappointed in their applications for jobs, their struggle and hope declines, their spirit becomes bitter and broken, and they are thoroughly demoralised and dehumanised (cf. Stott, 2006:229).

The Church should be a place where such people feel accepted and loved as well as being helped practically in their search for work. Furthermore, in addressing the issues that arise in unemployment, it is important for the Church to affirm the importance of work, to understand the needs of those who are stressed at work and to support those

who are unemployed. It will be difficult for the Church to reach out to people pastorally or in mission if this vital area of life is neglected.

#### 4.4.2.8 Social disruption among youth/ children

Social disruption among youth in the RCSA within the black community is multidimensional. An indication of their frustration has manifested itself in alarming rates of crime, teenage pregnancy, high-risk sexual behaviour, substance abuse, gender violence, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, low economic and civic participation, low Further Education and Training admission, skills deficiency, food security and poverty. Recent figures from Statistics South Africa indicates that more than three million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years are not in school, not in training nor at work. Many of these young people come from poor urban peripheries where a significant proportion have grown up in homes in which there is no working adult (cf. Ramphela, 2013:24).

It is clear that the fruits of liberation have not all been sweet. Hence, everyone from the ruling elite down warns that we are sitting on a ticking time bomb if we continue to let our youth deteriorate on dusty street corners (Altbeker, 2007:100). It is evident that the youth feel totally disregarded, under-valued and are without vocal representatives to convey their frustration to the local, provincial and national government.

Furthermore, many adults within the Church believe that their children can make their own decisions about what they want or do not want to learn in life. These parents tend to give more attention to their own needs, problems and plans than they do to the development of their children. Additional, our society tends to discount the concerns and contributions of children in its allocation of goods and resources (Sanders, 1997:77). Thus, children are treated as though they need no Spiritual guidance. Jesus, however, saw children as little ones growing in faith, who must be nurtured into fruitfulness. Hence, he invited them to come to him so that he could place his hands on them, pray for them, and bless them (Mt. 18:15-17; Mt. 19:14).

Moreover, the standards set by Christians and the Church are so high – they seem to be unattainable even for mature Christians, let alone the youth. For example, as mature



as one is in Christ, the author can more or less figure out most of what Reformed authors write, even when they talk about the deeper life. The problem is it leaves young Christian starting out in their Christian life high and dry. As Hui (2004:34) puts it when writers write about the deeper meaning of life, one gets the impression that they are referring to some white haired old saints dispensing mystical truth.

This means that the problem for the younger generation within the RCSA today is not so much whether Christianity is true, but whether it is relevant. Simply put, young people are rejecting the Gospel not because they think that all that is recorded is false, but because the message no longer resonates with them (Basu, 2005:97). This feeling of remoteness, obsolescence and irrelevance of Christianity among the youth is widespread. Thus, the local pastors in the city need to restate their fundamental message, God continues to speak through what He has spoken. His word belongs to the city (market place), not the museum.

Without sounding over-simplistic about the Christian life, the researcher suggest that our relationship with the Lord and the Son Jesus, is meant to be simply, uncluttered, undistracting, direct, informal, personal, intimate and strait forward. Even the prayer Jesus taught his disciples was straightforward (Mt. 6:9-13), Jesus himself said we should not be long-winded and boring in our conversation with him (Mt. 6:7, he even used children to demonstrate powerfully what he meant by simple faith (MK. 10:15).

Jesus also warns his disciples of the dire consequences of causing “one of these little ones who believe in me to sin” (Lingenfelter, 1996:258). However, this is not to infer that Ministers of the Word should get lazy in reading and meditating on the word of God; the researcher believes that God is easier to know (and live with) than is purported by authors and speakers. In the light of this argument, there is enough evidence to conclude that urban youth are not the greatest social, moral and religious challenge of our time.

Instead of condemning their music or the way they dress, we should be reaching out to them in grace and love. We should not compare what we think their strong points are with their weak points, but rather we should face our own weak areas more realistically

and learn to let love cover their weakness. In this way one may begin to recognise the tremendous energy and commitment that they are able to bring to the work of taking the gospel to those in need (Verwer, 2000:23).

There is no doubt that the family is recognised as the first community in which a person is educated, but the reverse is also true “the total learning environment of the church is an important factor in motivating children to grow in their faith.” The ecclesiastical community not only provides opportunities for formal training of its members but also welcomes its young people into an environment where they can live as fully as possible the ideals, values, and beliefs which they share with the community (Barker, 1981:204-205).

#### 4.4.2.9 Legalism and Syncretism

The last challenge facing the RCSA in the urban communities is legalism and syncretism. Syncretism, according to Greenway & Mashau (2007:20), is the mingling of more than one religion or religious practice into one package. Among black people, syncretism always stood in the way of fulfilling the missionary mandate. Many Churches are extremely weak with regard to unfaithful Christians who still walk with one leg in paganism and cling to traditional beliefs like the veneration of ancestral spirits and consultation of witch doctors (sangomas). For the Church to become a true witness of Christ in the city, it should be in a position to discard syncretism as misrepresentation of true Christian faith and commitment.

On the other hand, Hui (2004:29) states that legalism over-emphasis forms. Legalists control others with rules. Their style is characterised by rigidity, inflexibility and often intolerance. He notes further that legalism is a cousin of inconsistency. As Meyer (2004:304) puts it ‘a legalistic mentality says that everybody has to do exactly the same thing, the same way.’ It is impossible to do what a legalist says 100 per cent. Jesus called such people hypocrites. Here is an illustration of how legalism works in the Church. Normally it starts with some strong personalities. Throw in some lopsided teaching from the Bible-this means an imbalanced teaching of one aspect of the Bible at

the expense of the whole counsel of God. Strong personalities and excessive emphasis, one gets control.

Control is often enforced with rules and regulations. For example, dress length, sleeve length, whether or not it is proper to wear jewellery or makeup, whether a Christian should own a television set or go to the movies, or swim in mixed company, or swim at all (cf. Yandian, 1985:33). If this is still not enough, which is the case these rules quickly become doctrines. Within the RCSA no one argues with doctrine. The result is that one has a controlled, stifled, restricted group of Christians. People are hurt and damaged as a result.

Paul knew all this. That is why he wrote this strongly worded letter to the Churches in Galatia (cf. Gal. 1:2-14), as he told the Corinthians that the letter of the law killeth but the spirit giveth life (2 Cor. 3:6). The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of grace, of hope, love forgiveness, and acceptance. These are three complete opposites of legalism. The Church must not exchange this fantastic for anything less. From the foregoing it is clear that local congregations in the city must not harp on rules or forms.

Reason being: Christians which major on law soon lose their zeal for evangelism. They become so engrossed in themselves and their rules and codes, they cut themselves off from the very people they need to be meeting and witnessing to and winning. As a result, they eventually dry up from within. There is no doubt that legalism takes our eyes off God and others and onto ourselves. We become so concerned with our thoughts, our words, and our actions that we lose sight of the Lord and others. We begin to do what we do out of a sense of obligation rather than out of a heart of love and concern. Even witnessing, for example, can become legalistic, if we do it because we feel we have to instead of doing it because we love people. And that is exactly what the devil wants us to do, to start looking either at our own self-righteousness or at our own shortcoming and failures. Once we start doing that, he has us trapped, because we will no longer reach out to bless and win others (Yandian, 1985:33).

#### 4.5 THE RESPONSE OF THE RCSA TO URBAN CHALLENGES

##### 4.5.1 God does not exclude his Church from hardship

God does not exclude his Church from hardships in the world but leads them through. This means that in suffering and through difficulties the Churches meet the man of sorrows and learn to experience and express the nature of the living God. Matthew 24 and 25 deals with the responsibility of the Church towards a world in massive suffering – which is nothing less than a strategy for urban mission (cf. Greenlee, 2003:138-139). Moreover, the Bible has much to say about alcohol, sex, honesty, dress, personal relations with others, and attitude. In connection to this, six of the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mt. Sinai deals with social issues (cf. Young, 1978:161).

How should the RCSA respond to the specific urban challenges which the author has highlighted?

#### 4.5.2 RCSA and HIV/AIDS

Although HIV/AIDS touches upon many different aspects of conscience and morality, the researcher observed that this deadly, incurable disease was not high on the agenda of the two previous RCSA General Synods (2009 and 2012). Perhaps this is because AIDS forces people to face three issues with which the modern Church feels profoundly uncomfortable to preach or to talk about: death, sexuality, and disease. Nobody wants to face questions about death, diseases, and sexuality except perhaps those involved in care and those working through these particular issues themselves (Nicholson, 1996:19).

If this is so, reason would dictate that the Church has a vital role to play in creating spiritual awareness, as well as addressing the moral dilemmas that present themselves in different cultures and nations. In addition, the RCSA has an opportunity through HIV/AIDS prevention education to practically express the love of Christ for the ostracised and despised people, and for all in the community living under the threat of AIDS (cf. Dixon, 2012:115; Sunderland & Shelp, 1990:88).

The researcher is of the opinion that the response of the RCSA to the crisis of HIV/AIDS today can be explained along the lines of the following mandate: theological, prophetic, the servant Church, and educational.

#### 4.5.2.1 A Theological response

As with every aspect of our theology, AIDS also makes us rethink our theology of the Church. From that base, addressing HIV/AIDS prevention education should form part of a more comprehensive teaching of life skills (cf. Bowman, 1998:46). Unless people know the truth about AIDS and accept it as a fact of life in our present day society, they will continue to harbour all kinds of myths about the diseases and thereby build barriers, inhibiting acts of love and compassion (Stott, 2006:172; cf. Basu, 2005:244). This is partly the reason why AIDS must impact upon theology. If it does not, if the sheer scale and horror of the pandemic does not make Christians rethink how they conceive of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit, of the Church, then Reformed theology is on the way to extinction.

#### 4.5.2.2 Prophetic

The Church is called upon to exercise a prophetic ministry in society of which it is a part. This implies that Church leaders assuming the role of prophets have a duty to remind the rulers that the authority they have, comes from God (Rom. 13), and the God who has given them that authority expects them to exercise it with justice and righteousness (Eckhardt (2010:81; Green, 2005:148. There is no doubt that the ANC's early response to HIV and AIDS was lukewarm because of a limited motivation to promote ARVs and paranoia.

Therefore, Christians should monitor the behaviour of government and other institutions to ensure that their response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the urban areas is not only adequate but efficient. This means that Christians need to be those who are willing to ask awkward questions about what is being done to help those who are suffering but who are also powerless.

However, we should not entertain any illusions that social structures can be changed overnight. All the changes that have been brought about thus far were a gradual process. Nevertheless, we can follow in our Lords footsteps and emulate the example of the many followers who have tried to bring social transformation. Even though Christians are not apt to change the large social structures of this land, they can

definitely have a positive impact on their immediate society and community. One can always start with a positive attitude within the family.

#### 4.5.2.3 The servant Church

The title servant is a title with a great history. In the Old Testament it is the title of men whose lives are mountain peaks in the history of Israel, and who were essential actors and agents in the master-plan of God. This implies that the title servant of God is woven into the religious heritage of Israel, and that, therefore, it is a title which it is fitting that the Church should inherit and possess (cf. Barclay, 1995:161). The fire of HIV/AIDS all around the urban centres provides Christians and the Church a unique opportunity to minister in Christ's name. The opportunity is not to increase its own numbers or authority, but to serve (Basu, 2005:248; Louw, 1994:129-30; Nouwen (1994:4).

#### 4.5.2.4 A pastoral response

Proper counselling and teaching should be given regarding the cause of AIDS, without using harsh derogatory words, and theories like the wrath of God. This means that Christians should befriend those infected/affected with loving care and with sensitivity to their changing physical and spiritual needs, moods and feelings about the future (Amos: 1988:95; Russell, 1990:161). This does not mean that we should avoid the issue which has often been raised of whether AIDS is God's judgement on those who are acting immorally (Stott, 2006:172). There is certainly a need for confronting sin and for discipline, but the goal is repentance and restoration of fellowship, not shame, humiliation, or exclusion (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-11, 7:9; 2 Tim. 2:25; Hebrews 5:2; I John 5:16).

Garland & Blyth (2005:218) concurs with the above-mentioned views in that good counselling in the area of HIV helps to give people courage to bear personal responsibility for their actions and decisions, especially if sinful behaviour caused them to be infected. It is true that the ethical dilemma of AIDS affects patients profoundly. Therefore, the possible danger always exists that patients develop a type of fatalism: 'I

won't go alone'. From the Christian ethical perspective they must be led to behave responsibly. Especially people who have been tested HIV-positive must realise that they can transmit the virus to others.

#### 4.5.2.5 Dimension of testing

Another facet, which pastors or counsellors should take into consideration, is the dimension of testing. Ethical and moral questions like, whether a blood test for HIV should be taken by force, before an operation, marriage, employment, efficacy of condoms and the recent proposal by the government to introduce “voluntary” HIV/AIDS testing in schools, what should be the response of the Church; whether the Churches should be involved in distributing clean needles to drug addicts. The dilemma therefore is, whether one should encourage a bad habit, or we uphold the moral standards of the Church? The Church will need to address these ethical and moral questions and find clear balanced biblical teaching (Basu, 2005:243; Bowman, 1998:65).

#### 4.5.2.6 An educational response

Given the extent of the AIDS crisis, education may be thought to be an inadequate response to the development of drugs and other medical interventions. It is absolutely necessary for the community, and in particular the young people to know about AIDS, its causes, prevention, damage, control and research possibilities for the discovery of a cure (Stott, 2006:173). As Feinstein (2007:130) puts it “poverty, lack of education opportunities and low skills levels heighten vulnerability to HIV infection, with HIV/AIDS prevalence falling sharply as skills levels arise. Findings such as these highlight education and economic development as important components of an integrated approach to combating AIDS”. There is no doubt that the combination of socio-economic and biomedical factors, together with unsafe sexual practices, that produces the lethal basis for the spread of HIV.

Garland & Blyth (2005:290) correctly states that if the Church is to play a role in preventing AIDS, it must be actively involved in teaching the Biblical views of the place

of sex in the family and society. Thus, the age-old phrase “prevention is better than cure” has never been more relevant. However, the Church needs to not only teach about adultery and fornication from the pulpit, but also to teach young people the life skills needed to live pure lives. The Church should be helping them to deal with the pressure that urban culture today is placing on them.

Furthermore, one need programmes that should seek to counter harmful gender norms that lead to sexual coercion and the rape of children, such programmes should promote the following values:

- ❖ Teach and promote equality in relationships and in the domestic and public sphere;
- ❖ Support actions to reduce male violence, including domestic and sexual violence;
- ❖ Challenge concepts of masculinity and femininity that are based on inequality and aggressive and passive stereotypes (Van Dyk, 2005:102).

#### 4.5.3 The role of the Church in combating crime

Many Reformed Churches in the cities representing homogeneous cultures have become complacent and dependent on safety, comfort, and convenience. Our study of the ministry of Christ tell us that being a neighbour means being willing to live with danger, hardship, and inconvenience. Salt, light, and leaven lose themselves in the process of being neighbours, and so undergo transformation (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:43). According to Schroeder (2008:118), peace is not just the absence of violence. It requires on-going positive and active choices. Therefore, the role of RCSA in combating crime and violence in the urban areas can be investigated under the following aspects.

##### 4.5.3.1 The Church must set the moral standards for society

Some of the values held by South Africans urban communities are among the many causes of crime. This is where the Church intercepts to first educate man that they are responsible for their actions and the wellbeing of their society. Simply put, the purpose



of the Church is also to set the moral standards of urban society. The Church is therefore, called not only to demonstrate healing among its own members but also to be a peacemaker and justice-maker in the world (Eph. 2:17; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). Such social service or work for peace and justice is to be done out of the conviction that, one day, the whole world will acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and even the murders will bow before Him.

#### 4.5.3.2 The Church must set an example as a community of peace

There are many organisations and associations in society of which the Church has a very unique and extraordinary identity. The Church can be defined as the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Spirit of God, in short, a sign of the Kingdom of God, a signal of the new world of God as God would like the world to be. Therefore, the Church is (and should be) a community where love and hope, liberation and reconciliation are received, shared and proclaimed in an exceptional way.

As such, just by (truly) being a Church, the existence of the Church implies social criticism in society, where fear and hatred, disunity and despair often prevail. The cardinal and primary calling of the Church in a society that is undermined by crime and violence is therefore to be the Church of Jesus Christ in the fullest sense of the word, to set an example to the outside world of how people should live together in peace and harmony (Forrester, 1997:57; cf. Meeks, 1983:157; Brown, 1989:53).

Basu (2005:268) is of the opinion that Christians must always remember that they are marked people at home and at work, and whether it be in the Church or in the community, they are being watched by unbelievers. This implies that God's call to Christians is not only to "preach peace" and to "make peace" but also to embody it. We can hardly call the world to peace while the Church falls short of being the reconciling community God intends it to be. If charity begins at home, so does reconciliation. In order to fulfil this vital role and survive, all Christians need to banish all malice, anger and bitterness from both the Church and home, and make them instead communities of love, joy and peace.

#### 4.5.3.3 The Church should take care of victims of crime

Our model of criminal justice largely ignores the victims of crime. The focus is on the perpetrator and the state whose laws have been violated. For the most part, the involvement of victims is only as witnesses for the prosecution. Moreover, in many cases the innocent people whose lives are caught in the act of crime are drastically affected. Many people tend to blame themselves as a result they question the actions of God. “What did they do to deserve such punishment?”

In some cases the families’ lose people that are close to them. This causes more pain, grief and anger. It is true that many of the urban Churches are filled with victims of crimes or other crimes suffered at the hands of spouses, parents, partners, and acquaintance, but few find the courage or an environment conducive to sharing their ordeal. Often many families are so frustrated that they tend to seek vengeance.

In a culture of silence they bear their burden alone, unaware that they are surrounded by others with similar experiences. Emotions and thoughts of this nature need guidance and responses from the Church on sensitive issues of these sorts are essential. A sensitive religious education program can build the opportunity for these buried stories to surface and to set the stage for the next steps in the healing process. There must be a space, a home for people, including children and youth, who have been victimised to begin to deal with their fears, guilt, and the rage that haunts them. The Church can be such a home (Exod. 22:1-36; Lev. 6:2-5).

#### 4.5.3.4 Healing the wounds of the militarised urban youth

It was already mentioned, the year of struggle for liberation in South African urban communities by African youth led to a new attitude towards authority. The origins of this attitude and its consequential sets of behaviour can be traced back to the political struggle of the 1980s that encouraged crime and violence (the idea that “violence is a useful and acceptable instrument by which aims could be achieved).” Evidently, there is sufficient reason for national concern and a national campaign to first understand the phenomenon and the origin of this attitude and second, to start the process of dealing with it.

It is the researcher's conviction that to deal with this complex situation, the Church should establish a working group formed by members of the local Church and leaders of civil society. The emphasis should be on choosing those actors who have been or are keen to take roles in peace initiatives and reconciliation work. In this context the Church target groups should be the militarised youth in the community. Because of the ingrained culture of violence, the Church should develop an inclusive system that engages them in peace and reconciliation.

#### 4.5.4 The RCSA approach to poverty

Buff (1991:78) observes that an evangelisation that does not directly involve the poor, and confirm their hope in a new, different society, an evangelisation that does not take up the cause of the poor, their struggles and their lives, loses its Christian density. Missionaries and inner-city workers know about the difficulty of communicating the gospel to starving people without first addressing their hunger. This same understanding was a critical component of the Spirit-led strategy of the early Church, which made the regular provision of food for the hungry an integral part of its ministry (Silvoso, 2007:118).

The researcher believes that the following practical guidelines will help the Church to eradicate the high levels of poverty in the urban centres:

##### 4.5.4.1 Develop values that are consistent with Christian principles

Hiebert & Meneses (1995:355) are of the view that the problem of poverty is not so much a problem of the poor but of the rich and powerful. Thus, transformation must begin with a change in the attitudes and actions of prosperous Christians and Churches. They must reject the urban environment's tendency to evaluate people by wealth and see, as the Bible does, the dignity and worth of every human being. They must see themselves as members of the same body with their poor sisters and brothers in faith. They must know deep within themselves that sharing is greater than accumulation of wealth and that the wellbeing of others is as important as their own.

The author concurs with Hiebert & Meneses in that while studying the book of Acts (2:44-46), the first thing one learns is a voluntary restitution by rich people, which reflected a dramatic change of attitude on their part: away from using their wealth and stature to dominate and toward using the same to show godly deference. A newfound spiritual strength enabled them to exercise a kind of Christian communism in Jerusalem which the world had never witnessed before (Acts 2:44-45). Jesus's lifestyle, his teaching about the poor, and the requirements for true discipleship had a profound influence on his followers. Their experience of Pentecost and conversion to Christ led to an intense heart-based unity with each other.

The foregoing makes it clear that the RCSA needs to develop values that are consistent with Christian principles. This may mean cutting across the accepted customs of the society one lives in. Jesus was constantly criticised for his teaching and his actions that opened up completely new values in thinking and living (Matt. 5:38-48, 12:1-4, 15:1-3; John 13:34). James also reminds us that something must be done, but the extent of poverty and homelessness seems to place their eradication beyond the power of the Churches.

The author is of the view that the RCSA needs to eject from its midst class division. By ejecting from its midst a socially accepted (or tolerated, depending on one's status) system designed to perpetuate poverty through class division and the resulting oppression, the Early Church impacted a society ruled by such a system, causing many to join the Church daily because of hard-to-ignored good news. As mentioned, undoubtedly the Church was the most popular institution in Jerusalem. How can a local Church meet or respond to the needs of the poor in its midst?

#### 4.5.4.2 A theology of the poor must begin with Christ

At the time when Jesus exercised his ministry, begging was common (Mark 10:46; Acts 3:2). Each synagogue ran an effective welfare system for the poor in addition to the requirements of the law. Two or three almoners were appointed who received money and gifts for the poor. Contributions to the 'poor chest' on the Sabbath were encouraged, a daily 'poor bowl' provided food, and a weekly 'poor basket' provided

clothing. Jesus commended this activity (Matt 6:1-4), but warned against almsgiving for personal recognition (Matt 6:2-3). From the foregoing it is clear that a theology of the poor must begin with Christ. His incarnation among the poor, his miracles, and his suffering model for us what our ministries should look like. Thus, any gifts for the poor should always be accompanied with true spiritual humility (Richardson, 2007:33). We must not serve people who are poor from position or attitude of pride and superiority. If we do so, we only add to their oppression.

One of the main obstacles in the quest to eliminate systemic poverty within the RCSA is the perception that there are not enough resources to take care of the poor. This could not be farther from the truth. First observation is that God is very intentional about multiplying our assets if we choose to become channels to bless others. For instance, Psalm 41:1-4 reveals that taking care of the poor is the social equivalent of acquiring insurance against poverty, economic disaster; hostile takeover and catastrophic illness. This set of promises covers the past, the present and the future, if one takes care of the needy. A more pressing challenge facing the General Synod of RCSA today is: How to mobilise the local Churches in the city to respond to the practical needs of the poor in their midst?

#### 4.5.4.3 The diaconal service of the Church

Eckhardt (2010:134) is of the opinion that a deacon's ministry is a helping ministry. This ministry needs to be strong in the local Church. According to Klaiber (1997:222), the diaconal work of the Church takes place in the care for the poor and needy, in the care and healing of the sick, in accompanying those who mourn, and in counselling those who are helpless, as well as in public engagement for justice, peace, and the conservation of the earth.

There is strong evidence today that SA cities confront the diaconate with immense and multifarious challenges. Therefore, the diaconal service of the RCSA is important both because of the direct aid it can give to those within and outside of the Church, and because the verbal proclamation of the Kingdom of God will be less forceful without the visible reflection of the Kingdom in the diaconal service of the Church. The common

used Greek word “diakonos” denotes a waiter sense, as well as to designate a specific ecclesiastical office, such as a “deacon” (see Basu, 2008:147; Vorster, 2003:450; Greenway, 1979:212).

The lowliness of Christian service is even more strongly emphasised by the use of another Greek term “*doulos*”. Jesus Christ himself was a model for such a humble ministry, in terms of serving others (Matt. 20:20-28; cf. Mark 10:45). The diaconal work of the Church takes place in caring for the poor and the needy, in caring and healing of the sick, in accompanying those who mourn, and in counselling those who are helpless as well as in public engagement for justice, peace, and the conservation of the earth.

In a nutshell, this ministry denotes any form of loving service performed by or rendered by members of the Christian community. Therefore, the diaconal dimension of the Church refers to the various forms of ministry and service in which the Christian community, in imitation of Jesus of Nazareth (who was among us as one who serves), puts himself at the service of the whole world.

#### 4.5.4.4 Practical dimension of the diaconal service

The researcher believes that there are at least three levels at which the RCSA is called to work in diaconal service. The first is in meeting the immediate needs of the poor for food, shelter, medical care and other necessities. Second is in helping the poor to be able to provide for their own needs in the future, for example by helping them to obtain skills and employment. These two levels are expressed in the well-known statement: ‘Give a person a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed him for life.’ However, this statement is incomplete. Even if a person knows how to fish he may not be able to feed himself if he has no access to the equipment necessary for fishing or if the fishing grounds are owned or controlled by others.

This illustrates the fact that a third element of diaconal action is needed, that is service to change unjust structures which causes poverty, for example lack of access to

adequate education or unjust concentration of control of land and other wealth in a society. The task of the deacon has a further dimension:

➤ Freeing people from drug addiction

Another type of urban poor is drug addicts. The Churches are called to answer in the form of projects and programs which already exist in many cities. For example, there is the work among drug addicts and assistance offered to alcoholics. In both areas some of the most effective work is being done through those who were formerly addicted themselves. There are also programs for fighting prostitution by means of creating opportunities for women to return to normal life and moral relationships. Additional programs are available for juvenile delinquents, school dropouts, and children without suitable homes (Greenway, 1979:213).

Programs and projects such as these belong to the great tradition of the modern diaconate, and they must not be permitted to fall into neglect. The truth of the matter is that a substantial number of addicts would like to kick the habit, and this is where specialist help may be more successful. As with the street alcoholic, money given to him would go towards maintaining his addiction. However, joining a church-based team ministry with experience of the drug scene might be profitable (cf. Richardson, 2007:66).

➤ Advancing meaningful community

Anyone who knows something of contemporary urban life cannot deny that “communication poverty” is great and that it is accompanied by large dose of egotism. How can Churches provide a sense of community in the midst of the depersonalising system of the city? Clearly the church must avoid acting like a club or a corporation. There were numerous kinds of clubs and institutions in the Greco-Roman society that the first Christians could have emulated. Rather, the New Testament writers chose the term *ekklesia* to describe the Church.

An *ekklesia* was not a voluntary association or a corporation. Its members were seen as children in the same family (Eph. 5:23; Acts 11:29), parts of the same body (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12), and citizens of the same colony (Phil. 3:20). In other words, the

Church was a true community that was more than the sum of its members. Simply put, the early Church was a new kind of society characterised by *agape* and *koinonia*. Above all, however, it was a community with Christ in its midst.

Greenlee (2003:88) correctly states that God is community, His power and authority in producing creation and redemption all comes from a God who is not the isolated “one” distant from relationships. However, He is the Father, Son and Spirit who are in eternal and mutual love towards each other. His power comes out of this eternal community of love with Himself (Nicolson, 1996:183; cf. Joslin, 1982:248; Basu, 2005:45). The diaconal service which cannot develop and sustain friendships of loving communion with others will ultimately be destructive.

- Demonstrate practical concern for the poor

Richardson (2007:11) remarks that Christ commands his disciples first to proclaim the Gospel of repentance and salvation to the whole world (Mark 16:1), but also to demonstrate practical concern for the poor (Matt. 25:32-46). This means that the acts of denunciation and annunciation must be not empty words but historical commitments. Within this compressed statement there are a number of themes that one must elaborate briefly:

First, the denunciation is not merely word but deed as well, target against “every dehumanising situation, which is contrary to brotherhood, justice and liberty.” While this will involve speaking, it will also involve acting on the basis of speaking. For example, if Christians denounce an unjust or corrupt regime, that may also mean refusing to pay taxes to support it; if a Church denounces torture, that may mean public exposure of the tortures and banning them from the Eucharist; if a Church denounces an exploitive economy, that may mean refusing to profit from the economy and becoming a “poor Church.”

Second, the Church must not only denounce dehumanising situations created by others; it must also “criticise every sacralisation of oppressive structures to which the church itself might have contributed”. The Church has been very good at sacralising oppressive structures and failing to acknowledge its own complicity in the evil those



structures perpetuate. For example, lack of denunciation of Church investment policies makes Christian institutions complicit in Apartheid in South Africa.

Third, denunciation must attack the causes of injustice and not just consequences. If wages are below poverty level in the mining industry, it is not enough to deplore the fact; the analysis must also indicate why this is so, even if (or especially if) it turns out that South African business interests pay exploitive wages in order to keep stockholders happy at the annual meeting.

Fourth, since negation implies affirmation, those who denounces must also indicate the annunciatory stance from which they speak. Thus, denunciation of exploitation by the rich is an annunciation of the gospel's special concern for the poor; denunciation of a competitive economy is an annunciation that a cooperation economy would be closer to the demands of the gospel.

It is true that sometimes the Churches proceed from a utopian vision. They "announce" the way they think life should be and denounce what falls short or impedes the vision. For the Church, annunciations proceed from proclamations of the nature of the Kingdom of God. Such annunciation will not only offer alternatives to present evil structures, but will stand as an on-going check against complacency, however evil or good the structures become.

Five, the time between denunciation and annunciation is also the time for building, the time for doing of deeds that will illustrate the annunciatory stance and the consequent denunciation that must come from it. The time for building will be the time (a) for acts of solidarity with the oppressed wherever they are, inside or outside the Church, and (b) for helping the voiceless gain a voice of their own (cf. Brown, 1978:163-164).

Six, the Church needs to rediscover the potential of prayer and fasting as a tool for social action, even as it confronts the god-complexes of the urban economy and political systems, and challenges the deceit that the principalities and powers perpetuate to keep the urban poor in their poverty (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:216).

- Struggling against unemployment

Vincent (2000:60) suggests that Churches in the urban centres ought to be involved in the provision of employment. Thus, the problems of moving from provision of services to provision of employment are enormous. The researcher concurs with the above-views in that in today's world a large percentage of beggars and unemployed poor are capable of work if they could find it. This means that responsibility for job creation does not rest on the government and business; unemployment is also a challenge for the Churches' diaconate.

There is no doubt that helping young people to enable them to find work is a task to which Churches are called. In terms of skills, the poor youngster is likely to develop abilities vital to surviving the physical and emotional traumas of life. Other children are likely to learn verbal skills, such as reading, writing, and speaking Standard English. In short, although the skills learned by those at the bottom are valuable, if not absolutely critical, they will not aid the person in beginning with school and leading to the job market (Claerbaut, 1983:60).

#### 4.5.5 Overcoming corruption in the local government (municipalities)

According to Feinstein (2007:248), corruption is eating away at South African's biggest economy, stifling growth, marring its international reputation and most, importantly, hurting the poor. Corruption in SA cities manifested itself at municipalities. One report into the provision of key utilities, including water and electricity, for two of the country's most important cities, Johannesburg and Cape Town, came to this searing conclusion:

Local government remains a sphere in which there is strong contestation over power, roles and responsibilities. In some cases, officials in the administration have found common cause with politicians in creating a "spoils system", where corruption, fraud and nepotism have developed as accepted ways of working. In other cases, officials have used their powers of maladministration to subvert legitimate council decisions and obstruct the efficient operation of the council decisions and therefore obstructing the efficient operation of the council (Plaut & Holden, 2012:288).

Arguably, the biggest gap in the fight against corruption is the absence of an agency with a clear duty to raise awareness about the nature, from the impact of corruption, and to promote respect for ethical values and the public interest. Silviso (2007:204) is of the view that corrupt people do not love corruption. Like drug addicts (who do not love drugs, but they are enslaved by them). In similar way, today multitudes of people in positions of influence and authority are hoping for deliverance. They are crying for an alternative, but because they don't see it, they sink deeper into hopelessness and sell out of the Mother of Harlots (Babylon).

Various ways in which RCSA can overcome corruption in the urban centres are:

#### 4.5.5.1 Exposure

Christians and other people of goodwill can, for one thing, expose corruption to the light of day, using media. The mass media includes newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet. Furthermore, Christians who work in these media forms may have special opportunities to use their positions to expose corruption. Other Christians can also contact newspaper editors or reporters and others who work in the media with stories of corruption and the abuse of power by government officials. However, there is some risk in exposing corruption (Monsma, 2006:78).

The problem in our urban community is that criticism even if well meant, is seen as subversive and negative by the corrupt councillors in the urban areas. Hence, the ruling elite have proposed the Protection of State Information Bill. If it is passed in its current form, it is likely to muzzle the media and discourage whistle blowers from coming forward. A free press and protection for whistle-blowers are critical to enable the people to hold public officials to account. The researcher believes that self-praise has brought no society forward. Democracies function well if citizens are critical and use their voting power to remove ineffective leaders. It would logically follow that the Church should challenge this Bill that muzzles the media and discourage whistle-blowers from exposing corruption.

#### 4.5.5.2 Honesty

A second way in which Christians can work against corruption is simply by practicing basic honesty themselves. When one engages in conversation about government or business today, it does not take long before the matter of honesty and integrity in the workplace is raised. This means that the entire world of business is built on trust (Murray, 1998:205). Without trust the economy will fail. Not only has, without honesty, society in general set a poor example for government officials. If the virtue of honesty pervades a society, the government may learn from the example of Christians (Kretzschmar & Hulley, 1998:123; White, 1980:53).

#### 4.5.5.3 Self - control

Lack of self-control leads to self-indulgence and no one is immune to such temptations. On the one hand, leaders due to their position and prominence are more susceptible. Thus, the need for self-control in every aspect and area of our lives as Christian leaders has never been greater. Hence, Basu (2005:203) observes that “we need moderation in our food habits, soberness in our social gatherings, abstinence in sexual matters, self-control over our tongues and tempers, modesty in matters of dress.” As the writer of Proverbs, the wise King Solomon, said, ‘A man without self-control is as defenceless as a city with broken down walls’ (Prov 25:28).

#### 4.5.5.4 Faithfulness

The author laments that it is so unfortunate and shameful to hear of so many instances of Christian leaders, who, due to their greed and extravagance, have embezzled money or cheated their own Churches. Others have been lured by sexual temptation and have destroyed their leadership and their ministry, and as a result many Christian marriages are wrecked because one spouse is unfaithful (Hui, 2004:46).

According to Eckhardt (2010:168), faithfulness is tested in the area of money. Thus, money is a barometer of a person’s character. Lack of faithfulness and integrity in finances is a sign of the lack of godly character. Christian character includes integrity in financial dealings as well as trustworthiness with offerings. Moreover, believers must

use their time, finances, gifts, and revelations for the correct purpose because of faithfulness.

Additionally, synonyms for faithful include “loyal”, “allegiant”, “devoted” “incorruptible”, “unwavering,” “reliable,” “trusted,” “dependable,” “honest,” “sincere,” and “high-principled,”. From the above it is clear that faithfulness has to do with being; the leader staying true to his vision and the mission he has undertaken (Ps. 89:5-; Isa. 49:7; Lam. 3:23; Deut. 7:9; Heb. 10:23; 1 Thes. 5:24; 1 John 11:9; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Thes. 3:3; Heb. 2:17).

#### 4.5.5.5 Holiness and Godliness

If Christians want to be salt and light in the municipalities, they must bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. For this one must put to death his/her old earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust and evil desires; and get rid of such things as anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy-language and lies, and “put on” the new nature, which is being renewed (by the Holy Spirit) in the image of our Creator (Col 3:5-10).

The purpose of living a life of ‘observable holiness’ as it is with ‘observable love’, is primarily to please God through obedience to His will that, we be Holy because we are His children and that we love others, even as we love ourselves. However, it also has another dimension, namely credibility for effective witnessing and evangelism.

As Paul said ‘You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of people who are crooked and stubborn. Shine out among them like beacon lights, holding out among them the word of life.’ Peter the apostle goes on to say we have been chosen by God Himself, to be holy and pure, ‘so that we may show to others how God called us out of the darkness into His wonderful light’ (1 Peter 1:15).

The adage, “Actions speak louder than words” is very correct. John makes this very clear in 1John 1:6; 2:4; 2:22-23, when he says, ‘if a person’s behaviour contradicts what he says is a liar. To claim to know God, and then to walk in darkness and disobedience is to lie; to claim to love God, while hating our brothers is also a lie.’ Therefore, every

Christian in the urban centres is called to be holy, which means he/she is called to be different (Basu, 2005:140).

#### 4.5.6 Rebuilding the Christian families in the urban centres

When one turns to Biblical records, one will discover that families feature prominently both as the recipients as well as the agents of salvation blessing. In a similar way, the Bible informs us how God took the initiative in establishing (Gen. 1, 2; Eph. 2:19), sustaining, and using families for the salvation of the nations (Packer, 1994:256). Moreover, one comes across several examples in the New Testament of whole families or households putting their faith in Jesus Christ. For instance, in Luke 19:1-10, we read about Zacchaeus and his household. Paul also concludes his letter to the Romans (Rom. 16) by sending his personal greetings to the households of Priscilla and Aquila, Aristobulus, and Narcissus (Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:151:2)

Interestingly, almost all of these households lived in cities or large towns. So in the New Testament where from the capital faith is moving from family to family, establishing its strong presence in the urban world. There is no doubt that one of the major reasons the Early Church became strong and grew quickly despite persecution is because of the conversions of families and households. Christian families in the South African urban community are therefore, a useful tool for city missions when they shine as a light to others. Christian homes can also be used for small group meeting to help newcomers to the Church adapt and identify easily within their new environment (cf. Greenway & Mashau, 2007:18).

How can the RCSA rebuild Christian families in the urban areas?

##### 4.5.6.1 The Church as a family training centre

There are many reasons why the Church should and can be a family training centre. The researcher will highlight just a few: First, once a family or household becomes Christian, other relatives and friends encounter them and receive their introduction to the Gospel. Thus the Gospel will move across cities and spread from family to family. When a total family is reached for Christ it can become a tremendous force for Christ in

winning other households. Similarly, when these families united and formed a Church, they exerted a tremendous influence on their relatives and friends. These households will become centres for further evangelism (cf. Rom. 16:5-15; Col. 4:15; Phil. 2).

Second, the Church has been commissioned to reach the world for Christ. This means that the world is a place of spiritual wickedness where individuals and families are lost, through Christ, God offers not only eternal salvation, but also abundant life here on earth for families. Third, the Church is involved with people from birth. For example, the news of a baby born into a family brings joy to other members of the Church. They pray for the baby and the mother during the time of pregnancy and minister to children and teenagers through such activities as the Sunday school and youth ministry. In addition, the Church has an opportunity to instil family values in children while they are growing up.

It is clear from the foregoing that the New Testament pattern of household evangelism has tremendous implications for evangelism in our modern cities today. Thus, the family should not be left on its own without help. It is only then that we can expect to have children who will love, obey honour and respect their parents. This means that to be more effective in urban evangelism, the RCSA needs to examine its approaches in the light of the New Testament (1 Cor. 1:16; Gal. 6:10; Greenway, 2009:66-67; cf. Richardson, 1996:27-29).

#### 4.5.6.2 The training of unmarried Christians in SA cities

The Bible is clear that some people have a special calling from God to lead a single (unmarried) life. Of course, many of them spend a significant part of their adult lives as single, before marriage and after the loss of their spouse. Single people are freer to use all of their energies to serve the Lord. (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 cor. 7:8; Eph. 5:3). Thus, the Church must reach single or unmarried Christians who are in the urban centres without Christ. This has to be followed by discipleship.

Discipleship goals should including helping a couple achieve a higher level of mature love, spirituality, and unity. It is true that without salvation in Christ, marriage can never be what God intended. As a matter of fact, one may discover, as he/she minister to

professing Christians couples that they have never really converted. At this point, the Church can help a couple to move beyond a religious experience to a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### 4.5.6.3 Equip Christian parents to love God and their children

According to Basu (2005:134), there is a serious erosion of true love in family life. It is no wonder that a significant number of street children live and beg on the streets having severed their ties with their parents. Most of the social problems we observe in our cities and schools, evident in the soaring rates of violent crime, premature sexual activity and sexually transmitted diseases among teens, dropping out of school and unemployment can be traced to the breakdown of the family and a massive crisis in parenting. Even the most well-meaning parents are at a loss as to how to deal with their children, and there are previous few places where the “good” or the “bad” parents can go to receive instruction, guidance and support (Sanders, 1997:77; cf. Hepde, 2002:41).

It is clear from above that the Church should equip Christian families to become a centre of love, and concerns where alienated and rejected children can find a sense of belonging. In view of this, the Church should train Christian to share the gospel in a natural and sensitive way that would re-establish and strengthen Christian families and social solidarity. Beyond this, the pastors working in the urban centres may find it helpful to consult with neighbourhood social workers and family agencies.

This implies that Reformed Church pastors in SA cities have to lead our Churches and mobilise reformed congregations to get involved in saving and building nuclear families in the urban centres. Pastors can provide valuable insight into major family needs in the area as well as suggest realistic ministries that can address these needs (Wenham et al., 2006:19; Claerbaut, 1983:77; Dobson, 2002:143; Murray, 1996:1).

#### 4.5.6.4 To proclaim the core values of marriage

There is one message from the Church and that is: Marriage is a lifelong commitment between male and female that involves mutual sexual rights. This was clear from the



very beginning. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one.” The same Hebrew word for one (*ehad*) is used in the verse quoted above, “and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). In other words, marriage is to represent the plurality and unity of God in the Trinity. Just as it is unthinkable that members of the Trinity would operate as separate entities, so a husband and wife should operate together with diversity within unity (Geisler, 277-8; Hepden, 2002:41; Botha, 2006:17).

#### 4.5.6.5 Equipping Christian families to become centres of hospitality

According to Van Engen & Tiersma (1994:158) urban stresses can lead to isolation and alienation. As result many urban dwellers crave a sense of belonging and family solidarity. In connection to this, the Church can equip Christian families to become centres of hospitality, love, and concern where alienated people can find a sense of belonging. Elmer (2006:43) mentions that hospitality is rooted in the word hospital, which comes from two Greek words meaning “loving the stranger. It evolved to mean “house for strangers” and later came to be known as a place of healing.

Therefore, the Church should train Christian families to share the gospel in a natural and sensitive way that would re-establish and strengthen family and social solidarity. The key here is equipping Christian families with specific training in urban witness and evangelism. This means that the challenge is to develop family friendship evangelism for reaching urban families in South African urban communities. To a large extent, the RCSA in SA cities has not taken seriously the ministry of equipping Christian families for evangelistic purposes. This remains a crucial challenge for the local congregations to equip their members to serve as anchor for urban evangelism.

#### 4.5.6.6 Preventing and resolving family conflict

As it was already noted, family violence is the most common human rights abuse in the urban centres. Every day women are murdered, physically and sexually assaulted, threatened and humiliated by their partners in their own homes. At its most extreme, violence may lead to women killing their abusive partners. However, the number of such

killings is small compared to the number of women victims. There is no denying that family conflict is the breeding ground of moral decay in the urban areas.

Perhaps the most disturbing effect of family conflict is the way in which it teaches children that this is the way a family functions and that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems and that women should submit. Moreover, children who have observed family conflict in their families tend to have various difficulties that one can subsume under the category of maladjustment (cf. Sekhalelo, 2007:20). The local congregations must develop a long-term strategy to eliminate family conflict in the urban areas. A powerful way for the Church to eradicate family conflict in the urban areas is to use youths themselves to teach each other about conflict resolution (cf. Symke, 1993:57; cf. Brigham, 1991:454).

#### 4.5.6.7 Equipping Christian families to serve as an anchor of evangelism

The local pastors, evangelists, and missionaries in the SA cities alone could never complete the task of reaching hundreds of segments of migrant people. The key here is equipping Christian families with specific training in urban witness and evangelism (Van Engen & Tiersma (1994:158). Sharing the gospel with urban dwellers requires personal communication. Where there is actual Church growth and Church planting today, it is taking place largely through the form of interpersonal communication. As it was noted, this approach was effective in winning large segments of different societies for Christ.

The great challenge facing the local congregations of the RCSA in the urban centres today is to develop family friendship evangelism for reaching urban families in SA cities.

#### 4.5.7 Extending hospitality towards urban outcasts

One of the challenges that the Church must deal with in the urban centres is the marginalisation of certain groups of people in the urban areas: refugees, asylum seekers, homeless, tramps, old people, and illegal immigrants are the first of this kind of marginalisation. The unemployed, the homeless, street children (children of and on the streets), prostitutes, alcoholics and substances abusers, destitute beggar also fall within

this category (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:13; cf. Richardson, 2007:61-62; Vorster, 2004:156; Guder, 1998:117).

A message of hope should be preached to these people if the Church in the city is to succeed in claiming all SA cities for Christ. This kind of social isolation should be declared abnormal within our cities. A Church that becomes a community in the city should propagate a sense of communality in all spheres of life. This will include, among others, the task of embracing those who are marginalised (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:13; Elmer, 2006:42).

Another marginalised group of people in the urban centres are prostitutes or sex workers. There is no doubt that a few women today, and certainly no children, can escape the bondage of prostitution without adequate outside assistance. God's righteous indignation against prostitution is clear throughout Scripture, but so is His power to forgive and restore public sinners (Matt. 21:32). Clearly Churches must deliberately include prostitution in any efforts to relieve human suffering and become more aggressive advocates for alleviating the suffering and exploitation of women and children in the cities (Kilbourn, 1996:143).

#### 4.5.8 Developing leaders who are spiritually mature

The most critical need for any ministry is leadership. Without trained and committed leaders, the fruit of any urban ministry will be limited to the physical, emotional, and spiritual energy of the ministry of mission (Schaller, 1999:57). Young is of the opinion that the effective church must have effective leadership (Young, 1978:66). The author shares the same sentiments with Young on that if the Church is to revive and revitalise the world, believers, including Church leaders need to be renewed first.

The RCSA today is undoubtedly facing a leadership crisis. There is a crisis of spiritual leadership and a crying need for leaders with a vision. As a Pastor in a small Reformed Church in Meadowlands, the researcher had one of the most painful experiences in his Christian life: A moral problem involving people in leadership whom he loved caused great spiritual stress. Why do so many Reformed Churches have leadership crisis? The problem is that many Churches in the townships attract poor and less able men

with time on their hands who have difficulty in finding proper employment. In their enthusiasm to establish or plant Churches within the black community, missionaries were tempted to appoint such unemployed and unable men as elders and deacons, maybe out of sentiment rather than suitability for the position, without proper scrutiny as to why they were available in the first place.

Once appointed, the local men may prove to be inadequate for the leadership in the Church. The process of removing him can be immensely difficult as his prospects in finding another job are bleak, and this may lead to deep-seated resentment. This process has tested many Reformed Churches within the black community to their limits; hence there is a leadership crisis. In a similar way, this leadership crisis in the RCSA may be ascribed to inconsistency in what pastors say and what they do.

This fact was very clearly evident and exemplified at our synod meeting. As it was already noted, Church leaders were from the so-called “sister Churches.” They were totally ineffective in upholding social and economical issues on Christian moral and ethical principles. Hence, many Christians think that poor leadership in the Church and lack of vision, skills and planning cause Churches to limit themselves to the purely “spiritual” aspects of life. For instance, leaders take Church services and visit their own members; they teach a limited doctrine of personal salvation but they do not relate it to the world in which they live. Thus, people criticize the Church for not developing a holistic ministry and not engaging in the world beyond the Church (Ande, 2010:2).

There is no doubt that members of the RCSA in SA cities would like to see able and godly leaders bring a spiritual dimension into the community and the workforce, into politics and economics. God also described His search for spiritual leaders in Ezekiel 22:30, saying ‘so I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one.’

How can the local congregations of the RCSA in urban areas develop leaders who are spiritually mature? Here the researcher notes five key areas as a basis for growing or developing leaders:

First, we have to see leadership formation through the lens of spiritual formation. Spiritual formation means that leaders are in the process of becoming fully human, growing in the entirety of what God has intended them to be in the various dimensions of life. Money, sex, prayer, emotion, culture, discipline, politics, vision and many more areas fit under this idea of spiritual formation. The mistake of the RCSA in the past has been to merely focus on a spirituality of lofty feeling goodness and pious sensibility, which has led to a rejection of the material reality of our organisational lives and has caused endless confusion and continual problems.

This means that it is not enough to take secular models of leadership, baptise them with Christian enthusiasm and vocabulary then let them loose on an unsuspecting Church. However, leadership has to be approached from the spiritual formation of all that we are before ourselves and the world in relationship to the love of God expressed through His word. One can then go on, take leadership models from others, but frame them in the context of what they do to our own spiritual formation and the shaping of those who lead.

Second, the Church needs to see the development of leaders who can listen. In the RCSA leadership is often seen from the perspective of the power of the leader who can communicate well so that people know how to dialogue with the leaders they choose to follow. However, the key to being a good communicator is being an even better listener to the many messages which surround. Listening to God through revealed scripture, listening to his own heart, listening to friends and the culture one is in, and listening to the Spirit's voice through all of this is at the core of developing leaders. In short, great leaders who are spiritually mature are great listeners.

Third, many Churches are obsessed with image. The researcher laments that in our increasing obsession with image, calling is often ignored or understood as how one appears rather than how one is. When un-anointed people ascended to positions of authority in the Church, she (the Church) quickly ceased to be the Church and become an institution and very quickly a tyrant, instead of a force for redemption, deliverance, and healing. We can build much with human effort, but we can never build the true

Church with it. Returning to true Church government is fundamentally returning to the King (cf. Joyner, 2009:182; Verwer, 2000:99).

Fourth, the Church needs to develop leaders who are generous. Leadership is about generosity, the ability to give and keep on giving. As it was already noted, many leaders are totally ineffective in upholding social and economical issues on Christian moral and ethical principles. Church leaders should be able to be forthright about the power of money, not only in worldly affairs but also in Christian ministry. There are many good books about this, but let the author just say that a realistic view of wealth and ability to handle it and make use of it in all its power in the affairs of God's Kingdom is essential for a leader in mission work. Developing leaders will therefore, necessitate teaching potential leaders how to give themselves along with their time and resources to others (cf. Greenlee, 2003, 88-90).

Last, the RCSA needs leaders who have vision. The Christian leader must have a vision of the world evangelism; a mission to preach the gospel to all nations. All his goals, objectives and programmes must be geared to achieve this (Thwaites, 2001:77). When a Church is under the direction of a man who has no vision, the result is bound to be confusion, disorder, uncontrolled license, rebellion and even anarchy. As King Solomon puts it "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs, 29:18). The sooner the RCSA grasp this truth that without a wholehearted commitment to a vision there cannot be a true leader, the better it will be for the Church and Christian leaders of today. The vision one needs is a vision of his desire to fill up and fill out the spheres of business, health, family, marriage, education, government, the arts and the media (Thwaites, 2001:83; McGavran, 1988:154).

The conclusion, which can be reach from the foregoing, is that although Christians are to be holy, even as their heavenly Father and their Lord is holy; they must be willing to "permeate the unbelieving community and society", and be involved with social concerns. They are to be spiritually distinct, but not segregated from their community and society. Only, as the Disciples of Christ permeate and identify themselves with the suffering and misery of their neighbours, can they expose the evil, corruption and moral degeneration and dispel the darkness around them.

It must also be clarified that the Christian response to social responsibilities, is not the same as the “social gospel” or the social concern propagated by Liberation theologians, which equate material liberation with salvation. To equate material liberation with salvation is to totally misunderstand and misrepresent Scriptures. The most important thing to remember in this regard is that, unless people are converted and become true believers and live exemplary lives, lives that manifest love and holiness.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

From this chapter, the researcher managed to evaluate the work of the Church in the perspective of the Kingdom of God. This was done, among other things, by evangelism, worship, prayer, mission, service, discipleship or teaching, and stewardship. It was also clear that Christians should respond in a Christ like manner to the contemporary social issues that plague the South African urban community.

What was striking in this regard was that, Christians should be imitators of Christ and live a Christ like life of love and holiness, and show compassion and concern for the lost souls, as well as the poor and needy of these modern cities. Thus, disciples of Jesus Christ must preach the whole gospel (full) for the total man, his spirit, soul and body. Our primary concern should be the regeneration and transformation of man through faith in Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHURCH STRATEGY FOR MORAL RENEWAL OF THE URBAN COMMUNITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The fundamental question to be answered in this chapter is: What is the strategy which the local congregation can employ in its urban ministry to promote moral renewal? To achieve this objective, attention will, first be given to a definition of strategy. Second, attention will also be given to the biblical understanding of strategy. Third, the author will outline the strategies which the Church can employ in its urban ministry to promote moral renewal of the South African urban community. Last, an overall conclusion of this chapter will be given.

#### 5.2 THE DEFINITION OF STRATEGY

According to Phillips & Coote, the term “strategy” derives from the Greek word “*strategos*” or “general”. This involves the art and science of assembling all necessary resources: political, economic, psychological, and military to form a strategy. In nutshell strategy is the plan of action (cf. Chanderdeo, Pilane, Pinnock, Strydom, Viljoen, 2011:163). Malphurs (2000:44) remarks that strategy is the process that determines how the Church will accomplish its mission of ministry. This definition contains three important concepts:

- A strategy has a mission or an overall goal

First, the strategy involves a mission. Simply put, the mission or goal is at the very heart of a ministry because it is what God designed the organisation to do-what it is supposed to accomplish. Without a clear, concise biblical mission the ministry is rendered impotent and lethargic.

- A strategy involves a process



Second, a good strategy consists of a process. It is the process of moving people from spiritual pre-birth to Christian maturity (cf. Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:12-13; Col. 1:28; 2:6-7). This involves moving them from where they are (unbelief or immaturity) to where God wants them to be (spiritually mature). However, this process does not take place overnight for it is a lifelong journey toward maturity (Matt. 13:18-23).

- Third, a good strategy addresses a key question. It asks and answers the question: How will the church achieve its mission?

One may have the greatest mission in the urban areas –to save the community, to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to bring peace to all ethnic groups and people in the SA cities. However, if one has no way to accomplish his mission, then essentially one is wasting his/her own time. Therefore, a good strategy is the vehicle that enables the Church to accomplish its mission or overall goal, which is moral renewal of the South African urban community.

### 5.3 BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGY

Why does a Church need a strategy when God is sovereign and will do what He pleases anyway? Strategy planning is appropriate because God models it for us, and calls to the Church to minister according to His strategy (Acts 13:1-21). Eckhardt (2010:52) correctly states that God always has strategic people and strategic places. He works through strategic people, Churches, and places. For example, one sees Nehemiah in captivity in Babylon, about 1, 500 kilometres from Jerusalem, and yet he had a strategy of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem to the glory of God. One may further explain Biblical examples of strategy in terms of the following stages:

#### 5.3.1 The calling of Adam and Eve after they defied God's authority

After their sin Adam and Eve experienced the natural consequences of their rebellion (a desire to hide from God). God employed an aggressive “evangelistic” strategy as He lovingly forced them to face their sin. From the moment mankind's fellowship with the Creator was broken - God has been in the business of restoring it. Peters (1976:166)

notes that this strategy was conveyed to Adam and Eve as representative of the race and involved the whole realm of human culture. In its widest sense it includes religion.

This strategy relates to agriculture, industrialisation, commerce, politics, health, social and moral order, academy and scientific advancement, education and physical care. In other words, it is the qualitative and quantitative improvement of culture on the basis of the revelational theism manifested in creation. Such culture was to glorify God. The Bible expresses it in the following terms: to populate, to subjugate, to dominate, to cultivate, and to preserve (Gen. 1:28; 2:15).

### 5.3.2 From Abraham to all the families of the earth

Another biblical understanding of strategy is found in the story of Abraham. In Genesis 10, we find that Nimrod was a “mighty one” who built cities. However, as it was already noted, these cities were not serving their intended purpose. As a result the people of Babylon were scattered. In Genesis 12, God sought Abraham so that blessing may come to all the nations, to all those seventy nations God had scattered over the face of the whole earth (cf. Genesis 11). This is the scope of what God initiated through his dealings with Abraham. It is the covenant of grace which stands behind all subsequent acts of God in history, for it represents God’s commitment to the ultimate good of humanity.

The very significant dimension of the covenant with Abraham for biblical ethics was the promise of a people “In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” God’s answer to a world of nations scattered in arrogance and strife, which was the world portrayed through the story of the tower of Babel, was to create a new community. It would be a people descended from Abraham and blessed as he was, but which would ultimately be the vehicle for blessing to the whole world of nations. And it would be a people whose contribution to the purpose would be by their ethical distinctiveness (cf. Wright, 1995:127). The Church, being the seed of Abraham, is now that people. One aim of this people is to ensure that cities carry out their purpose –to create well-being for those who dwell there (cf. Bernard, 2004:12; compare, Bauckham, 2003:28; Yandian, 1985:132).

### 5.3.3 From Israel to all the nations

Davies (1966:22) asserts that the Old Testament presents Israel as God's chosen people; Israel has been elected by Him and has entered into a covenant relationship with Him. The strategy of this election was that Israel should mediate the revelation of God to all nations. It is however becoming quite clear that the instrument of this mediation was not to be mission, in the sense of the children of Israel being sent out to the nations; instead the knowledge of God was to be conveyed by the witness of Israel's life of worship and devotion. In other words, Israel's role was thus to be a holy people and to attract, by its holiness, other people to worship and service God (Shenk, 1993:162).

This strategy of acts of salvation for Israel that makes God known to all the nations recurs in later instances: YHWH dried up the Jordan for Israel to cross 'so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty' (Joshua 4:24); Hezekiah prays for deliverance from the Assyrian army 'so that all the Kingdom of the earth may know that you, Lord, are God alone' (I Kings 19:19; Isaiah 37:20); Ezekiel prophesies God's restoration of Israel after exile, not for Israel's sake, but for the sake of God's name, so that 'the nations may know that he is the Lord' (Ezekiel 36:22-23; cf. 36:38; 38:23; 39:7).

In spite of such a grand calling, the people of the covenant repeatedly failed to honour their special relationship and role. Simply put, they compromised their calling. Instead of seeing their neighbours as potential converts for the one true God, they viewed them with suspicion and even hatred. Instead of being a light to surrounding nations, Israel was riddled with provincialism, ethnic pride and a protectionist mentality. The story reaches a decisive point when the people of Israel demand a king (1 Sam. 8; cf. Deut. 17:14-20). Theologically, this step would shift Israel's primary loyalty from Yahweh to the king. Politically, this form of kingship would subject the people to all manner of oppression and exploitation, against which they would have no recourse (Shenk, 1993:162-163). Samuel & Sugden (1987:132) observe that Israel's obstruction of God's purpose and his strategy for the nation did not totally thwart God's intentions; He was able to fulfil them through other means related to but not dependent on Israel.

### 5.3.4 The sending of Jesus Christ

Several further observations may be made about God's strategy as seen in the self-understanding of Jesus and the apostles. Jesus' strategy was initially seen at Pentecost when he sent his Holy Spirit to his followers and "they began to speak other languages". This strategy was carried forward by evangelism, discipleship training Church planting, Church care, and benevolent ministries. One finds this substantiated and outlined in: (1) the sending of the twelve (Matt. 10:1-20; Mk 3:13-19; Lk. 6:12-16); (2) the sending of the seventy as well as winning a number of other disciples among the people (Luk. 10:1-20); (3) the further sending of the twelve (Matt. 16:14-18; Luk. 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23); Act 1:7-8).

In addition to this, not only does much of Acts provide evidence for and information on the fact of a strategy, but the Apostle Paul, who was involved in all three missionary journeys also ministers according to a carefully developed strategy. For example, Paul and other apostles did not simply wander aimlessly through an area, witnessing and ministering as he found opportunity. The evidence is that he carefully selected the cities where he might exert the greatest influence on the largest number of people (cf. Acts 19:1-10).

### 5.3.5 The sending of the Church

According to Webber (1986:20), the historical dimension of the faith also implies that things did not end with the life and ministry of the earthly Jesus. According to Sookhdeo (1987:176), the Church, as the community of the risen Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, was called to continue Christ's mission in this sinful and fallen world. As it was already noted, the mission of the Church is inseparable from that of Christ who bought the Church with his own lifeblood (Ande, 2010:10).

This strategy assigned to the Church is well crafted and defined in the missionary mandate: "Go therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19); "Go into the entire world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark. 16:15). The gospel, the object of the proclamation, is therefore nothing other than the good news of the salvation brought to humankind by the plan of God (Tonna, 1982:7; Ladd, 1993:582).

The strategy of Christian mission was nothing neither more nor less than participation in carrying out God's own strategy.

### 5.3.6 Kinds of strategies

Malphurs (2000:47) explains the definition of strategy that should adopt by the local congregations by examining the three different kinds of strategies:

#### 5.3.6.1 The personal strategy

Every Christian is personally responsible to be one of Christ's disciples (Col. 2:6-7; John 13:34-35; 17:7-17). While Christ commands the Church to make disciples, individual Christians must commit to become disciples. Thus, every Christian is personally responsible to be one of Christ's disciples (Col. 2:6-7; John 13:34-35; 17:7-17). This means that we must discover and adopt a personal strategy designed to move us from wherever we are spiritually to where God wants us to be mature, Christ like Christians.

#### 5.3.6.2 The corporate strategy

The corporate strategy is the congregational or overall strategy that a ministry in general or a Church in particular develops to help its people become disciples. In view of this the Church is responsible to develop a corporate strategy that helps each of its members in the discipline process. Simply put, the Church exists to edify, or educate, God's people (Warren, 1995:106). The things that edify Church members according to Choate (2000:52) are God's Word, fellowship, engaging in worship, helping one another, good works, and love.

The corporate strategy will therefore help the urban Church to witness to various groups and to present Christ that he becomes understandable, relevant and accessible. This implies that the catholicity and the unity of the Church are two sides of the same apostolic truth, because Christ reconciles us and we therefore are made one in Christ. In a particular community, this truth will mean that we need openly to confront

everything that divides us, finding the ways we are “conformed to this world” (cf. Rom. 12:2).

#### 5.3.6.3 The mini –strategy

It is true that the overall urban ministry of the Church includes a congregational strategy, and each goal that is a part of the strategy will have its own mini-strategy that leads to its realisation. As Warren (1995:77) puts it “Every church is driven by something. There is a guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happens.” Thus, every goal must have a mini-strategy or it will not happen.

#### 5.4 THE RCSA’S STRATEGY IN RELATION TO MORAL DECAY

Although the founders of the RCSA felt that it was their calling to remain true to the principles of the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century as formulated by John Calvin, the author observes that this Church for a long time did not have any clear strategy as there were strong differences within the Church on the nature of social involvement and community projects. The disagreement was between the vertical interpretation of the Gospel as essentially concerned with God’s action in the life of individuals, and the horizontal interpretation of it as mainly concerned with human relationships in the world.

The difference in perspective within the RCSA also led to the polarisation of mission activities, which was ultimately based on the logical position held by each group. One group focussed exclusively on evangelistic activities, only preaching and propagating the gospel. The other group was using social activity as a bridge to evangelism, although there was always the danger of having ‘bread and butter’ Christians. The researcher is of the view that both these extreme positions were false and arise from “an unbiblical dualism” between body and soul, between existence in this world, and the next.

There is no doubt that today the social concern and compassionate response of the Church is an established fact, especially in the poor community. It is absolutely true that the priority and the prime responsibility of the Christian and his end time mandate is to proclaim the good news to all the nations; and there should be no compromise regarding the primacy and priority of evangelism. However, we see from the example of our Lord that he was always sensitive to the physical and emotional needs of the people to whom he preached the good news (Basu, 2005:224). The author also believes that missionaries must manifest the love of God and help those around them.

This said what should be the RCSA strategy for the moral renewal of the urban community?

#### 5.4.1 The Church should first and foremost be the servant of God

The first strategy which the local Church can employ in its urban ministry to promote moral regeneration of the urban community is to be the servant of the King of the Kingdom of God. This principle implies that the plans and actions of Churches today should correspond with the moral principles of Scripture as they are expressed in the Ten Commandments in its synecdoche character. As the servant of Christ the Church is thus a unique community in the midst of many other human communities in the modern city. It has its own character, calling and way of doing things. It is responsible for its actions not to humankind, but to Christ (cf. Vorster, 2007:256; Maston, 1979:200).

Snyder (2001:215) correctly states that the Church of Jesus Christ was sent into the world, but does not belong to it. This means that the Church of the city cannot agree with the world's method or use of its strategies and resources of manipulation in order to reach its purpose. If it were to do so, it would be declaring its own suicide, giving place to the devil and denying its own nature. It would lose its authority and become powerless to struggle against the world systems.

The Church as holy nation also has an alternative understanding of power. This is important because the possibility of becoming a "state theology" again in the new political dispensation is a real one for Churches in South Africa today as it was in the past (Johnson, 2009:310; Gruchy, 1995:190; Venter, 1998:18). Churches have to

restore their holiness and redefine their obligations by being a critical voice in the development of the South African urban community (Rousseau, 1994:24).

#### 5.4.2 Present an authentic gospel

The Word of God must always be our starting point in urban ministry. Winter & Hawthorne (1999:555) are of the opinion that in order to understand God's will for cities, we need more than scattered verses of the Bible. We need to see God's overall plan from creation and the fall, to redemption and consummation, as it applies to cities. Cairns also reminds us that the theological cause of the Reformation was the desire of the Reformers to go back to the classic source of the Christian faith, the Bible, in order to counter the moral decay within the Roman Catholic Church of their day (Cairns, 1996:274).

Basu (2005:56) is of the view that only a strong view of the Scriptures and only a strong stand on the 'New Testament Absolutes' by which the Early Church was able to face the pressure and oppression of the powerful Roman Empire, can once again give the Church of Jesus Christ the power and unity to face the increasingly anti-Christian, secular and humanistic trends that threaten the Church today. Hence, Shenk (1993:102) observes that the Church itself was created by the gospel and can remain true to its calling only by sharing the gospel of the Kingdom with others, for the King's message is for all people. The Church experiences its most vital solidarity with the King when carrying out the King's wishes.

From the foregoing it is clear that the Bible is a kind of project aimed at the Kingdom of God, that is, towards the achievement of God's purpose for good in the whole of God's creation (Bauckham, 2003:11; cf. Parker, 1995:131; Berkhof (1996:577). For Greenway & Mashau (2007:69) the first lesson we can learn from this ancient event is that the Word of God is never outdated. Hundreds of years had passed between the time Moses heard the Law spoken by God on Mount Sinai and the day when Nehemiah stood before the Hebrews recently returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.

However, the Law was not outdated. It spoke to the people and it met their needs. It was relevant, and it led to the spiritual renewal of Jerusalem. The mission of the RCSA



today therefore, should be to go back to the roots and foundation of our faith, and present a “balanced biblical Christianity”, which will not only be conducive to the spiritual unity of the Church; but by also cutting through the maze and semantics will bring out the essence of the full gospel message, which alone shows the way of salvation and eternal redemption (Torrey, 2010:20).

Our proclamation of the gospel has to be with courage and boldness. Moreover, our preaching must preserve the truth which we have received as our Christian heritage, based on historical origins and the revelation of God. As Paul puts it: ‘But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus’ (see 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Again, in 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Paul says, ‘stand firm and hold to the teaching we passed on to you.’ The author of Hebrews also gives the same warning when he says, ‘We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away’ (Hebrews 2:1).

#### 5.4.3 Holistic approach

As we have seen, one of the hallmarks of the city is diversity. This raises a serious question. How should the local congregation respond to these differences? According to Hiebert & Meneses (1995:346), today the Church in the city must proclaim and live the whole gospel. It cannot relegate concerns for everyday human needs to the government and expect to be relevant to people. It must provide for the care and nurture of its members, help feed the poor, heal the sick, counsel the distraught, care for the widows and orphans, and preach the Word with boldness. It must avoid the mental dichotomy that separates evangelism from social ministries and see both as ways to bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

Thus, to pursue mission with the world’s cities implies that we will have to rediscover, develop and make known urban mission that speak to people where they live and touch them where they hurt. This means that our strategies must be holistic and relevant (cf.

Monsma, 1979:90). Greenlee (2003:141) asserts that holistic ministry aims to bring the whole of mankind into the freedom and dignity found in God's value of each individual, regardless of physical or mental capacity or racial, geographical or social background. It reaches out to help the needy and speak on behalf of the oppressed.

Sanders (1997:29) concur with Greenlee's views in that the Kingdom mandate is a mandate to do holistic ministry in the name of Christ. Those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, take in the strange, clothe the naked and visit the sick and incarcerated become identified with the in breaking of God's Kingdom in the world and move with God in the realm of human affairs. The gospel of the Kingdom is best proclaimed by the Church when, in the power of the Spirit of the King, it preaches, teaches, and dedicates itself to authentic Kingdom activity in the confident hope that God's universal salvific reign of righteousness and peace will be manifest within the Church itself, among all humankind, and over all creation. This is the context of the Church's fervent prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (cf. Matt. 6:10). To disobey this mandate is to deny allegiance to the Kingdom and the King.

#### 5.4.4 Equipping the office-bearers of the Church

Sookhdeo (1987:94) remarks that the Holy Spirit gives to every individual Christian certain talents which should be employed and fully utilised for the benefit of the Church. However, each gift must be used for the benefit of other people. Some gifts or talents are given to individuals so that they can use them, not necessarily publicly, but on a person-to-person basis. Such gifts may include the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, giving aid, faith, and hospitality.

However, other gifts are given for public ministries within the community of God's people and should be used regularly and constantly for the building of the body of Christ. "And his gifts were given that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of saints, for the work of ministry, for the building of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

The researcher is of the view that the following ministries will help the local congregations in the urban areas to develop the public morality of the urban community:

- Training of elders

Young (1978:66) notes that the effective Church must have effective leadership. Towns concur with the above-mentioned views in that elders were associated with the apostle in the government of the Church (Acts 15:2-23; 16:4; 21:16). They led the spiritual care of the congregation, exercising rule and giving instruction (Towns, 2003:105). Viola (2005:170) also observes that their chief task is threefold: to model servant hood in the Church; to motivate the believing community toward works of service; and to model the spiritual development of the younger believers.

Oversight of the elders allows for individuals to be confirmed in the direction they are going. Thus the objective affirmation by the elders is of utmost importance. This affirms the ministry Christians are doing in the name of Christ. It also corrects and forms on-going activities and the aspirations an individual may have for a particular ministry individual. They must also oversee all the ministries of the Church because God holds them accountable as elders for the Church's life and ministry (see Guder, 1998:183; Hui, 2003:109; compare Ande, 2010:40).

The greater challenge facing the local congregations in the urban areas is to develop elders who work principally among the members of the Church explaining the Bible, visiting homes, praying for the sick, teaching children and youth, and caring for the spiritual well-being of the members (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9). The local congregations should not use an irresponsible, spontaneous approach to utilizing the gifts of its people where the Church goes ahead and activates the gifts without oversight and mentoring. Oliver & Thwaites (2001:194) rightly say that as the Church in fullness arises, there is much need and much scope for elders to pray to work and to build together, to see a way of oversight and nurture rise in the city.

- Deacons

According to Eckhardt (2010:134), the apostles recognised the need for help when they instructed the congregation to choose seven men to help in ministering to the widows. This freed them to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-7). The result was an increase of the Word of God and a multiplication of disciples. In short, the deacon's ministry is a help ministry. Greenway (1999:186) correctly states that Deacons are leaders who serve the Church in a variety of ways, especially by receiving the offerings and serving the poor. The spiritual and moral qualities expected of deacons are taught in Timothy 3:1-13).

This ministry needs to be strong in the local Church. It has to be strengthened to carry the burden of the local Church. Thus, deacons and others in help ministry need to know their strategic importance in the plan of God. Without them, the Church in the city will not be able to carry out the vision. This needs to be taught and recognised by the local congregations (Towns, 2003:103). The researcher is of the opinion that the office of the deacons must consist not only of financial and material care for destitute people, but also the compassion of God in Christ should find concrete expression in help and aid to ill people, widows and afflicted people and those who need empathy and sympathy. However, in all instances the deacon's conduct should be such that people are confronted with Christ and his great mercy and compassion.

- The office of believers

One of the most important reasons for the present moral decay is neglect in the office of the believer. Greenway & Mashau (2007:90) correctly state that the resurgence of the office of believers in urban mission reveals the fact that mission is not only about sending missionaries, but about the involvement of every individual member of the Church, in one way or another, in bringing the gospel of Christ to all humanity, without being selective.

By virtue of their trust in the resurrected Christ, believers are kings, priests, and prophets of the living God. It is their sole responsibility as prophets to be true witnesses to the birth, life, death, and resurrection of their Saviour, Jesus Christ. In addition, it is

the duty of the people of God, the true believers to shine out as a beacon of light in this world full of apostasy, moral degeneration, corruption, and wickedness (cf. Van der Walt, 1991:337; De Bruyn, 196:78).

The New Testament also indicates that God used the laity, the people of God, in the initial stages of the Church's ministry. The gifts are distributed for the purpose of displaying Kingdom power and Kingdom abilities (Eph. 4:11-13). It is the utilization of the gifts in the power of the Holy Spirit that corrects the sin curve of Genesis 3:8-19. It is a comprehensive, holistic straightening out and restoring of life and community. The gifts are used for character change, and the more we are like Christ, the more renewal and restoration occurs.

It is sad fact that the "mystery" of the clergy has frozen the laity in huge sections of the Church over the centuries. If the local congregations are ever to promote moral renewal in the SA cities, this frozen part of the Church must be defrosted by a major infusion of redemptive energy (Greenlee, 2003:126). McGavran (1988:38) concurs with the above-mentioned views in that Christians must become more moral and devout, and they must become more effective harvesters.

There is also a great need today for Christian men and women, to perceive their daily work as Christian ministry and to "penetrate their secular environment for Christ". For instance, Christian doctors are needed to face the contemporary urban challenge of medical ethics arising out of a new age of Biotechnology and Genetics. Additionally, they need to take a stand on matters like abortion, euthanasia and mercy killing (be it passive or active), human cloning (whether it be reproductive cloning or therapeutic cloning) and by God's help develop ways and means of maintaining the uniquely Christian vision of the human person and the human family (cf. Monsma, 2006:71; Stott, 2006:44).

For Thomson (1976:10) Christian man lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbour. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbour through love, by faith he is caught up beyond himself in God, by love he sinks beneath himself into his neighbour, yet he always remains in God and His love.

- The minister

Dubose (1978:156) observes that an effective urban Church growth strategy needs leadership. McGavran (1988:146) correctly states that responsibility for equipping members for Kingdom service and evangelism lies with the pastor. The biblical pattern is teaching, modelling, and organising. The ministers are also being encouraged to expose and reprove sin and corruption that pervades the social and economic fabric of urban community; even against political exploitation and racial discrimination of women and child abuse.

Since the pastor occupies the key place of leadership, he must give the most careful attention to developing a program to meet the current needs of his own congregation. He himself must recognize that a Church will accomplish only what it sets out to accomplish by means of following a plan designed to lead to certain desired results (Young, 1978:69). The researcher concurs with the above-mentioned view in that in the city, as in other places, the vision for renewal always has to be in the mind and heart of the pastors.

Thus, local pastors must have a vision that promotes the eschatological view of the city that there will be a new city (Rev 21:1-25). In the same vein, they should actively work at sensitizing the people to the need of the Church to be unselfishly involved in new work. Preaching, teaching, Bible studies, prayer sessions, and sharing groups will accent the Christian truths about loving, caring, and reaching out in ministry and evangelism. Therefore, all pastors must be thoroughly convinced themselves, before they preach to others that all Scripture is God breathed, and therefore the only basis for our teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, and for preaching salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is the Scriptures, the Word of God, which alone can make one wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. With this divine authority, contemporary preachers should preach the Word of God without accommodation or compromise, both from the pulpit, as well as from the street corners. From the pulpit, because many Christians are ignorant of even the rudiments of their faith and are therefore immature and unstable.

From the street corners, because it is the only way to make the people of this world wise in the way of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ alone. With leadership in place and giving direction to the local congregation towards moral regeneration of the SA cities, the following elements assist the equipping of the laity for urban ministry.

Unfortunately, as the researcher has already noted, this is not the case in every Reformed Church. In reality one sees that there is much disparity between what the ministers of the Word preach and practice; in their total life-style and attitudes towards life. According to De Bruyn (1998:154), this phenomenon is linked with the whole process of secularisation. Consequently, the preachers today cannot help their parishioners, nor can they help themselves from indulging in the degrading practices of worldliness. What we need today in our pulpit is more “Bible-believing” preachers and none of the “Bible-bending” preachers. The following areas can be addressed in order to remedy the situation:

- Preaching should reveal the moral principles and norms of the Kingdom. Simply put, people should be convinced to live in accordance with the attitude of Christ (that is to show love, be stewards, and be willing to engage in self-denial and to be obedient to God). In short, preaching should shape a Christian attitude and should mould Christians into servants.
- Preaching should preserve the truth which we received as a Christian heritage, based on historical origins and the revelation of God.
- Preaching must define the moral foundation for responsible redress in the inequalities within Churches.
- Preaching must address burning social issues, such as: affirmative action, political protests, labour relations, business, religious freedom and HIV/AIDS prevention (cf. Ande, 2010:56).
- It is also important to explain to the believers what the meaning or implication of their faith was for their everyday life and their occupations: in modern language one would say an integral Christian worldview founded on the full Gospel (Van der Walt, 2007:311).

Good preaching, however, does not stand alone. It must be in combination with the whole ministry of the pastor and the life of the Church. For example, pastoral visitation, particularly in homes, hospitals, and prisons is a key to success in urban ministry and moral restoration. This means that it is excellent therapy for pastors to engage regularly in direct evangelism on strange and unfriendly turf (cf. Conn, 1988:153).

Last, the researcher is of the opinion that a high view of Scripture and a high standard of life must go hand in hand. One of the bigger stumbling blocks for new Christians is when they do not see the relationship between Word and deed in the lives of their leaders. There is no value and no worth in having a heartless, loveless, fundamentalist legalism. This implies that the ministers must not only have a “loving confrontation” with regard to doctrinal truths; but must also manifest the love and holiness of God in their lives.

There is an urgent need to restore the two biblical principles of love and holiness in pastor’s lives. The most effective and powerful testimony is one that is honest, practical and down to earth. Mix such qualities with the fruit of the Spirit and you have someone who is real and human enough for others to want to emulate. Scriptures that underscore the above-mentioned point are Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.

#### 5.4.5 The witnessing of the Church beyond itself

According to Van der Walt (1991:460), apart from the fact that the Church is the place of mobilisation or the training centre where the soldiers of God have to be inspired for the struggle in any field, it must also be a visible, signalling, hope-giving sign of the Kingdom of God in urban centres. It should be an “experimental plant”, a place in which the subjects of the Kingdom may practise how to live according to the laws of the Kingdom (as culminating in love), before they can go and apply this outside of the Church in all spheres of life (cf. Monsma, 2006:70).

This means that the Church should not only train its people concerning their spiritual duties, but also train them to apply Christian ethics to all areas of life, including civil government, education, economics and law. To support this argument a few guidelines are given on how the Church can fulfil its important prophetic role in the urban areas.



#### 5.4.5.1 Creating a growing awareness within civil society

Another strategy which the Church can use in its urban ministry to promote morality in the South African urban community is creating a growing awareness within civil society. Civil society has a very big influence for good or bad in the urban areas, and the work of the government is made easier or better by society's institutions. According to Monsma (2006:34), civil society consists of these organisations and associations' - families and kinship groups, municipality councils, primary and secondary schools, and universities, plus non-profit organisations such as hospitals, health clinics, Churches, Christian charities, labour unions, and professional organisations.

According to Biko (2013:245), there are between 100 000 and 120 000 civil society organisations in South Africa, of which 37 000 are registered as not for profit organisations. The scale and scope of these organisations' activities cover areas such as HIV and AIDS, poverty alleviation, environmental programmes, gender issues, faith-based initiatives, housing and other areas of need. However, Gumede (2005:274) laments that the normalisation of South African politics in 1994 saw many once formidable civic societies run out of steam, and hence the civic society are hesitant to take up the battle for better housing, affordable electricity, water and rates and against corruption on behalf of local communities.

The unfulfilled mandate of the local Church of the city today is to create a growing awareness within civil society regarding the causes that have hampered their role in the urban community. Simply put the importance of all this for Christians who are working to obey their Lord's command to be an influence for good in their nation is that they can have a great influence on the South African urban community by influencing civil society rather than by trying directly to influence the government.

How can Christians be an influence for good in civil society?

- Churches should teach Christian virtues to their members

According to Sanders (1997:24), the declaration that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom illuminates for us three emergent themes with special significance

in the life of the Church today: stewardship, spirituality and servant hood. Each of these aspects of the Christian life begins with reverence for God, and each is the consequences of habitual exercise. Hence, the author is of the view that local congregations must teach Christian virtues to their members.

As millions of Christians in the urban community live lives of Christian obedience and faithfulness, together they will have an influence that will change their societies forever. The Bible teaches various virtues to the children of God, many of them based on the Ten Commandments. These virtues, when practiced by millions of faithful Christians, lead to a society marked by integrity, hard work, and concern for one another. Moreover, they will be like yeast that changes the entire loaf (the urban community). Here are some of these virtues:

- Diligence

Despite biblical evidence, the goal of work today seems to be to enjoy the end product and work only because it is a means to that end of leisure. Many members of the Church consider their secular job spiritually meaningless and think real spiritual people are in full-time Christian work. This denies that the Church is to glorify God before an unbelieving world by living as God intended us to live (Brown, 1989:57; Greenlee, 2003:126).

Hood (2003:41) correctly states that there is a danger that, as values are discounted and faith as a basis for life is further discarded, Christians can become more and more like people they work with, by a process of drift. Part of this is the struggle for many to be salt and light when people to whom they witness have no framework in which to fit Christianity. Another dimension of this pollution is the worship of the god of materialism.

Moreover, Vorster (2007:95) observes that the emergence of a Liberal Democracy with the philosophy of neo-liberal economic principles changed the labour environment in South Africa and poses new ethical questions. For example, in the recruitment industry, the words people favour today, include “dynamic”, “technological”, “proficient”, “flexible”, and “creative”. Thus, Christian’s virtues such as honesty, commitment, and loyalty are not mentioned.

- Promoting Kingdom economics

The author laments that corruption is not only an observable fact within the public sector (government) but also within the business community. Unethical behaviour in this sector (business) can take many forms, but the motivation behind it is basically the same: the desire, particularly of the managers of companies involved, for wealth and power. This can be worse if the government of the country concerned is corrupt and fails to set and enforce strict codes of behaviour for business. Taking their lead from the government, the managers of companies will feel that they can do anything they please.

Based on this premise, the local Church should help their members to adhere to the following business principles:

- Be ethical, operating with the highest integrity to produce and deliver quality products and service.
- Refuse to accept or pay bribes.
- Pay taxes honestly.
- Pay reasonable salaries and wages.
- Intentionally invest in the betterment of the workforce and their families.
- Invest generously and sacrificially in the broader community, with the focus on eradicating systemic poverty.
- Purposefully connect with other companies, professions and individuals to impact on the world (Silvoso, 2007:226).

➤ Reconciliation

Social discontent is visible at all levels of urban society. One cannot overlook the basic human nature of hatred and revenge that is being inculcated in the mind of young people by their parents and politicians. Often, race is a convenient camouflage for the real anger of millions of South Africans. The first attempt to transform the moral and cultural climate of the new democracy was made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Johnson, 2009:272; Jeffery, 1999:7). This does not imply that there

were not any mistakes made, and no group was more aware of this than the Truth and Reconciliation Commission itself.

Hence, Sanders (1997:98) is of the opinion that the ministry of reconciliation is fundamental to the Christian faith. Elmer (2006:83) concurs with the views of Sanders in that forgiving those who have wronged us is an important Christian virtue. If there are thousands of people in the urban areas, who still live with bitterness, anger, despair, and fear in their hearts as a result of the political violations of justice in the past, how can we expect to build a country of peace, tolerance and justice? And how then do we proclaim the Gospel meaningfully in such a context of bitterness or fear?

According to Hession (1990:45), reconciliation means the ending of enmity and making of peace and friendship between persons previously opposed. This, then, is not merely a theological word but is used in everyday secular situations. Botman & Petersen (1996:113) maintain that the Church is an alternative society. Thus the Church is obliged to struggle against all structures and practices of irreconcilability in its own life as well as in the urban community. The chief pastoral concern of the Church in dealing with reconciliation, they say, is the task of healing the wounds and the creation of community. Hiebert & Meneses (1995:352) note that reconciliation often begins first with Church leaders and pastors, but it must spread to the congregations.

McCauley & Steel (1996:123) concur with the above views, in that in matters such as confession, forgiveness, restitution and mercy, there is no better institution to be involved than the Church. They indicate further that it would be unfortunate if the issue was left solely to the legal minds of the country. Thus if the TRC's recommendations is to play a significant role in the healing the nation, it must not omit the capacity of the Church to bind the wounds. The author also believes that the Church proclaims the message of reconciliation and peace with God (2 Cor. 5:11:21), an aspect that should have a humane effect on a society in which Christians live and work together in many different relations.

From the above it is clear that the only way we will ever be able to build a united nation is if each community – whether formed along political, racial ethnic, religious or other

lines – makes defending the rights of other communities' part of its daily activities. Thus, it is the task of the Church in the city to continue to detribalise the urban community and their minds and to build the kind of democracy one wants for his/her children.

➤ Love

Throughout the centuries men have displayed many symbols as a sign of being a Christian. However, love has been relegated to the back seat. Unfortunately, not only the world at large, but even the Church is not concerned about that which “really matters”. Preachers today are busy preaching a gourmet gospel, a prosperity gospel, and the Church hierarchy is busy propagating their Liberation Theology and social gospel. The RCSA is no exception. We must admit that today the tragedy is that Christians not only do very little to love and help their neighbours, but they also have very little love for their fellow brothers within the Church.

In connection to this, some Church leaders like books and privacy more than they love people. They want to serve the Lord, but they do not want to get close to people (cf. Greenway, 1999:167). No wonder there is so much factionalism, hatred, anger, bitterness, criticism, infighting, schism, and even drunkenness and broken homes, and fratricidal murders. By and large, love today is a concept totally misunderstood; totally abused and misused by people who are “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited” (2 Tim 3:2-4).

The Bible's command to love our neighbours as ourselves underlies all of the virtues. When loves fills society like water fills a sponge, crime will go down, honesty will mark economic dealings, workers will do their work well, and their employers will pay them a fair wage, and in many other ways urban society will be as God intends it to be. This means that loving our neighbour like ourselves is a far cry in the wilderness, in this self-seeking, self-loving world (Basu, 2005:136).

From the proceeding it is clear that there is an urgent need for a revival of true love within the structures of the RCSA. If Christians want to practise the Word of God and live according to the Word of God, the first thing they will have to do is bring about a revival of love for God. Such love and humility can only come when the heart has been surrendered to Jesus Christ.

➤ Marital faithfulness

There is a serious erosion of true love in family life. How can the local Churches teach marital faithfulness in civil society? The first thing which Christians can do to be salt and light in civil society is lead by example. The statistics on divorce within the Church are a cause for repentance and shame. There is no doubt that Christians, having drunk deeply from the cup of modernity, have opted for an escape clause in their marriage vows. Second, Church in the city must model good virtues and values for the urban community.

As far as ethics is concerned, the questions that have to be answered are: Do we have adequate premarital and marital counselling in our Churches, or are we willing to marry any two people as long as they claim to “love each other”? The author is of the view that the Church should not be in the business of marrying people, but rather in the business of establishing Christian marriages and Christian homes. The essence of this argument is that families in which husband and wife love one another, are faithful to one another, and are concerned for their children are the building blocks of a well-ordered society (Monsma, 2006:36-37; Lutzer, 2004:92).

The conclusion, which can be reached from the foregoing, is that if all Christian Churches in the urban centres would teach these virtues to their people, what a difference this would make in the world! The author realises that in a sinful, broken modern city, these virtues will never be fully practiced. However, as more and more Christians live out these virtues in their societies - more people will be attracted to Christianity. Urban communities will change, and as society changes, morality will also be regenerated.

- Churches should encourage their members to enter key positions in civil society

Another thing Christians can do to be the salt and light in civil society is to participate in the meeting of civil society. Christians might not want to enter key positions in civil society because they do not wish to be identified with, or held responsible for some of the immoral behaviour one sees in civil society today. It is interesting that when Roman soldiers came to John the Baptist and asked, “And we, what shall we do?” (Luk 3:14), John did not respond by telling them to resign as soldiers.

He rather told them to show trustworthiness and fidelity in all matters: “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages” (cf. Luke 3:14). Moreover, the Reconstruction and Development Programme’s emphasis, on ‘a commitment to grassroots, bottom up development which is owned and driven by the communities and representative organisations’, should also be heeded by the Church. The author is of the view that for the sake of democracy, it is vital for the Church to have informed members.

This means that Church members need to know who their representatives in local government are and what they are doing, and what decisions, both good and bad they are making. If Christians do not even know who their elected leaders are, or what they are doing, they will not be able to influence the government to make decisions pleasing to God. Thus, one of the most important roles which the local congregation of the RCSA can play in the urban areas is in educating and socialising their members to participate in civil society.

By so doing the Church can play a creative role in promoting democracy. Any association which inculcates the above democratic norms of participation, tolerance, cooperation, accountability, openness and trust can become a “large free school” for democracy. In the act of participation, Christians can learn certain democratic skills which include tolerance for diversity and acceptance of a plurality of diverse opinions (Clarke, 2000:4).

- Promote helpful charitable organisations

Many Churches in the urban areas show charity to those in need, but often an individual Church is not large enough or wealthy enough to have the resources to be helpful to

those who are in need. In addition, the members of a given Church may not have the training to be helpful when certain needs arise. Whatever the need, a Christian organisation (sometimes called a Para-Church organisation) or a group of Churches may need to band together to meet these needs in appropriate way (Monsma, 2006:39). Charities all have a specific goal, and these goals may include:

- Feeding the hungry.
- Feeding, clothing, and sheltering refugees or disaster victims.
- Protecting the environment.
- Supporting people with chronic illness or disabilities.
- Helping the elderly.
- Helping the homeless (Schaller, 1999:87; Senkhane, 2002:26).

Charitable organisations such as these are part of civil society. They help meet needs that otherwise would either go unmet or the government would have to meet. In similar vein, they can sometimes draw needs or problems to the attention of government more effectively than individuals acting alone could do. Thus, Christians should be encouraged to support the government's campaign, which mobilises people to fight violence and abuse against women and children, as well as campaigns that are meant to restore good family values. The involvement of Christians in such campaigns will help the government to deal with the evil of domestic violence and abuse (cf. Sekhaulelo, 2007:94).

#### 5.4.5.2 The Churches should urge their members to serve in government

The Church should encourage its members to become policemen, soldiers, and civil servants (workers in government offices). People in these occupations have often used their positions to provide essential services, keep the peace, and be an example to others of Christian love and service. They are thereby used by God for much good (see Monsma, 2006:56). Thus, Christians who have been called to serve in government with a transformational anointing, either as elected officials or career civil servants, will be entrusted by God with supernatural insights to solve perennial social problems that have



baffled world leaders. And they will do it with the same generous spirit that Daniel did (Daniel 1-3).

The first thing we learn from Daniel's life is that he wasn't in the ideal environment. It wasn't his choice and in many ways, it was a sad start. In the dark and lonely moments, Daniel could so easily have questioned his ability to fulfil his destiny: 'God, how can I fulfil your destiny for my life in this place in these circumstances?' However, Daniel 1:8 tells us that Daniel resolved not to defile himself. That was his starting point, not his conclusion; his beginning and not the sum total, but it served as an important starting point.

This means that when Christians enter key occupations in government their starting point should be 'I will not defile myself.' Simply put, believers need to work in God's way and not the world's way: honestly rather than dishonestly, straightforwardly rather than convoluted. However, it can be hard to be all these things, as it was for Daniel in Babylon. That is why we need God to enable us to stay strong in our faith and wholesome in our actions (cf. Thwaites, 2001:6-7; compare Harvey, 2012:174; Van Engen & Tiersma, 1994:67).

#### 5.4.6 The Church as an exemplary community

The author is of the opinion that if the Church in the city wants to be an agent of moral transformation in the urban areas she must act as an exemplary community. As the people of God, the body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, it has the vocation to act as an exemplary community – a model of love, stewardship, self-denial and obedience to God. The early Christian lived a very high ethical life. They were not only bold and uncompromising in preaching the gospel, but were wholly committed to righteous living and upholding the highest moral and ethical standards of Christian's behaviour.

They would not let a brother or sister suffers, be they widows or elderly people, orphans or homeless. Their lives showed palpable love, witnessing faith, unity and purity, concern and compassion for the poor (cf. Acts 4:32-35). Moreover, they settled their differences with love and understanding. For example, there were initial differences

between the Gentile Churches and the Jewish converts, regarding circumcision and other cultural differences. However, since the regenerated believers were guided by one Spirit, the Holy Spirit thus helped the apostles to settle the differences and disputes most amicably (Acts 15).

However, today, the cardinal and primary calling of the RCSA in the urban centres is undermined by disunity and impotency. In the present context of sectarian quarrels, denominational and theological barriers, Christians totally fail to put up a united front. Such behaviour cannot be condoned or compromised, nor can the Church ignore those who deliberately confuse and mislead believers to accept devil inspired heresies.

The Church of Jesus Christ should set an example to the outside world of how people should live together in peace and harmony. The world may not understand what the Christians are disagreeing about, but they will very quickly understand the difference of our differences from the world's differences.' As Greenlee (2003:17) puts it a community that deals with problems openly and biblically will become a community with a deep spirituality because God is able to minister and teach His deep truths through the grappling that takes place to solve the problem. A prophetic critique of the RCSA will be regarded hollow rhetoric if the Church does not promote reconciliation by fighting the social ills within her own ranks. This should include:

#### 5.4.6.1 Restoring spiritual unity.

Restoring unity between our city's Churches is an important strategy of rebuilding the wall of the city. Similarly when the Churches of a city are in unity, they have great power to tear Satan's Kingdom up by the roots on a city wide level. However, as it was already indicated, the Reformed Church's family has been profoundly broken in some way. Upon seeing the problem of sectarianism, the RCSA has proposed structurally unity as the solution. This brand of unity envisions all the former National Synods of the RCSA working together and relating to one another under the banner of a unified general synod.

However, the researcher is of the view that the unity that the Church is trying to bring about or talk about today is inadequate. It only touches a segment of the body of Christ

(the clergy) and fails to touch the root problem of sectarianism. For this reason, it is a bit like holding hands over the fence (Viola, 2008:124-125; Berkhof, 1999:573). Quoting Francis Schaffer, Basu (2005:53) has used a beautiful image to describe the veneer of unity the RCSA is trying to bring about:

“It is more like a watershed in Europe along a great divide covered up with unbroken snow, a seeming unity, more of an illusion than reality.”

This is an accurate description of the cosmetic unity that prevails in the Church of Jesus Christ today. From the foregoing it is clear that the RCSA gave undue emphasis to the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21 that all of them may be one. However, the Church has overlooked the other half of the verse, which clearly states that this is not structural unity, nor is it unity by amalgamation, absorption or compromise, but it talks about unity in the Spirit.

Hence, the following critical remarks can be offered against the concept of one structurally united Church.

First, the researcher observes that this structural unity is not, however, a concrete, tangible reality. From the world’s perspective, the witness remains divided and often competitive. As Nicolson (1996:158) puts it, it is very difficult to overcome an “us and them” mentality, even within the Church. This has been difficult for the Church to put into practice from the beginning. A Spiritual unity that is neither concrete nor institutional is, by definition, not incarnational (Berkhof, 1999:573).

From the above-said it is clear that there is good reason to be sceptical about the structural unity that the Church is trying to bring about or talk about today. In view of this, the author suggests that the RCSA needs to analyse what the New Testament means by “oneness” and what it actually means by “ecumenical unity”.

To put it simply, does the New Testament understand the Church’s oneness as a centralised, hierarchically organised Church structure? Or is it some kind of corporate or bureaucratic institution that provides services and defines denominational identity?

Or is it discipline of community, fellowship, shared ministry, and mutual support that translates these ecclesial practices into every level of the organised Church?

Second, the researcher is of the opinion that unity between Churches of Reformational confession who have become estranged from each other cannot be organised or created. It has to grow and it will grow from a deeper experience of communion with Christ. Hence, the New Testament speaks of a unity that is natural and based on being in Christ. Basu (2005:45) correctly states that unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and cannot be kept through human efforts or human organisation. This spiritual unity is maintained by being loyal to the truth and by walking in the light, under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:3-13). From this perspective, then it is reasonable to say that essential to Christian unity is the confession that there is only 'One Lord'. It is the confession and acceptance of the truth that the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus is sufficient and complete. The believer is able to draw near to God through Christ alone (Heb 7:25; 9:15; Eph. 2:22).

This means that before people can be united with each other, they must first be united with God. In this divine oneness, all national, racial, social, and family differences are removed. The same is true in the Church today. Church unity occurs by the grace of God when one enters Christ's body (cf. Litzman, Nee & Edwards, 1993:57). In his body, people do not see Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, rich man or poor man, male or female, white or black. Christians only see that they "are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28b).

It is clear that there is an essential unity in the body of Christ that already exists, that no one but God created (Heb. 7:25; 9:15). No man can destroy it, not even the members of the body (cf. Parker, 1995:131). What the RCSA needs today is not continual harping about the need to "create" unity. However, what the Church needs is recognition of the organic unity that already exists in the body of Christ. One enjoys it because of being in the body of Christ. What we need now is to recognise that unity and act as one in areas of essential agreement (Lewis, 1987:121; Horton, 1992:109). Therefore an attempt to create an artificial unity through meetings, conferences, councils, and complex

organisational can result in a betrayal of the very unity for which Jesus Christ prayed for. The RCSA must think and act in agreement with this truth.

Third, it may also be noted that Jesus did not pray for a one time organic unity to “become one”, but he prayed that they “may be one”. This implies an on-going process of remaining one in the Spirit, “to be continually one” by abiding in the vine (Jesus Christ) through faith and obedience to the Word of God; the unity with each other, as the members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ.

This mystical unity must find expression in the lives of the believers, as they pray with one another, pray for one another, exhort one another, comfort and edify one another, share and care for one another, have fellowship, praise and worship God together, and bring glory and praise to His Holy Name. It is by this unity that the world will know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (cf. John 17:23).

Fourth, it is true that our Lord in His High Priestly prayer prayed for his disciples to be one and asked that their unity should follow the pattern of the unity which exists between the Father and the Son. This unity, however, does not rule out diversity in the Church (Joyner, 2009:196). Nürnberger (2005:145) concurs with the views of Joyner in that true unity can only be achieved if one does not negate diversity, but accommodates it.

Shibley (1989:32) correctly remarks that biblical unity is not a person-enforced conformity but Spirit-orchestrated cooperation. As Winfield (2002:13) puts it “living in unity does not mean all being the same or all becoming the same, but it does mean our coming to recognize our need of one another.” Therefore, God is not looking for uniformity where everyone is alike, but God compared Church unity to the unity which exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the sake of the world (Bernard, 2004:62; Nazir-Ali (1991:194).

Five, structural unity disregards altogether the autonomy of the local Church councils, ignores the principles of self-government and of direct responsibility to Christ, engenders formalism, and binds a professed spiritual Church by formal and geographical lines. Christ is the King of his Church and in the Kingdom of God (Eph.

1:22 -23; Col. 3:1). He rules the Church through the Holy Spirit and the Word. He cannot be replaced or substituted by any man or human institutions. The same principle applies to local Churches. Each Church is a complete manifestation of the body of Christ.

A bigger, older or more established Church cannot be seen as more authoritative than a smaller, younger and new Church (cf. Vorster, 2003:145). Parker (1995:132) concurs with Vorster in that each local Church has the right to be called “Church” and each has the authority belonging to the Church. Obviously, it is to these local Churches that believers belong by their profession of faith.

Six, in many cases a structurally united Church is much less concerned with world evangelisation than it was in the days before several denominations united. Reason being: Churches were so concerned with maintaining internal unity that their outreach efforts were sadly diminished (cf. McGavran, 1988:104). Berkhof (1996:573) also observes that the only attempt that was made so far to unite the whole Church in one great external organisation, did not prove productive of good results but led to externalism, ritualism, and legalism.

This means that there is no evidence that this concept of one structurally united Church proposed by the RCSA will be more effective in urban ministry or evangelism than a universal Church consisting of many branches or denominations structurally separate but united with regard to belief in Christ and the Bible. Joyner (2009:126) shares the same sentiments in that in modern Christianity, it can be easy to get caught up in the building of structures, but neglect the building of people. However, it is the people the Lord is looking at as His building. He notes further that the gospel is not about the building of an institution but rather the building of men. When the true wine of the true gospel is preached, it will burst out of the institutions that men build like a new wine will burst out of old wineskins.

Seven, the researcher is of the view that those who stress structural unity over Spiritual unity often go through life extremely suspicious of their brothers and sisters in Christ from other traditions. It is true that spiritual discernment is one of the most pressing

needs among Christians today. However, it is fundamentally unbiblical and profoundly unchristian to go about scrutinising fellow brethren with a critical eye. In a similar vein, the Bible warns against those who are ruled by a prideful, fault-finding spirit.

Last, the structural unity that the RCSA is trying to bring about or talk about today should be probed with a view to the specific character of the corporate business culture, in which issues like efficiency, management, and power dominate. The influence of the corporate business ethos on South African denominations can be seen in present efforts to unite denominations, moving from top to bottom. Corporations may merge when their respective administrations or stockholders decide to so. However, denominational Churches do not necessarily unite when their administrative bureaus want to merge (cf. Guder, 1998:263).

The key element of this argument is that the critical issue in the RCSA, as far as the general synod is concerned, has since 1988 been how to constitute a true representative general synod of all sections that make up the RCSA and in accordance with the equality principle that runs through many of the articles of the Church Order. The issues involved requires serious discussions and whatever the differences, be it great or small, we must consciously love and show our love with manifestations, that the world may see and know, that we are one in the Spirit.

The true starting place is a call for repentance, and reform. As God puts it “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from the wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles, 7:1) (NIV).

Therefore, the author suggests that the Church should publicly follow the guidelines of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and humble herself and confesses thus:

- Although we have been conscientious in our response to the mandate of the Great Commission to go and make disciples (see Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15), we have too often failed to live out and actualise the mandate of a loving unity which testifies to our Jesus (see John 13:34-35; John 17:21-22).

- Although we value unity and united Christian action, we too often do more to build our own ministries than to cooperate in making it difficult for people in our neighbourhoods to be lost for eternity.
- In our pursuit of faithfulness, we have too often accommodated the spirit of this world; which elevates a political correctness over the more difficult task of critical reflection and repentance.
- Although we have assented to Christian truths as embodied in our statement of faith (Church Order and the Bible), we have on many occasions been unwilling to be confronted redemptively with the implications of biblical truths about life and faith.
- Although we exist to serve the ministry of the local Church, we have not done all we can to advance the whole biblical understanding of the Church and the Lord's mandate for evangelism, or reconciliation (cf. Hayford, 1997:151-152).

#### 5.4.6.2 Promoting the dignity of the marginalised groups within the Church

God has promised strength to all who believe in Him. However, women's potential is often crushed by the power of an unjust male-dominated physical and economical structure (cf. Baxter, 1997:60). Vorster (2007:258) also notes that women are still oppressed within the Church as much as they were oppressed within society at large. He indicated further that bias against homosexual people, stigmatisation of people with HIV/AIDS and lack of concern for children are features of many Reformed Churches, and they merely reflect the deficiencies of South African society.

Nürnbergger (2005: 178) mentions that most mission societies were embedded in an authoritarian social structure. They planted a Church in Africa that was, for all intents and purposes, constructed along patriarchal and hierarchical lines. Women were subordinate to men; the youth had to keep quiet and obey, children did not count for much (Brown (1978:165; Conn, 1984:128; Phillips & Coote, 1993:284).

Although many seminaries have generally opened their doors to women, women have up till now played virtually no role within the structural life of the RCSA, deaconesses here and there, but not minister of the Word, or a professor. Joyner (2009:194)



correctly remarks that we desperately need spiritual fathers in the Church, but we have just as much need for spiritual mothers, whom the Scriptures refer to as “mothers in Israel.” The Church needs to recognise and honour women, who carry the seed of the Lord through intercession and then nurture the young with words of life and constant vigilance.

The second marginalised groups within the Church are children and youth. Shibley (1989:101) observes that young people have always been at the forefront of world missions. However, in some Reformed Churches, youth and children are not catered for in the service and get bored. What is left in many cases is a cohesive body of elderly women, mostly composed of members of the women’s prayer league, who are presided over by a small group of elderly men, who are primarily interested in their own status and authority (Piper & Grade, 1992:12). In this regard, it is fair to say that some Reformed Churches in the urban community have become to a large extent the extension of a troubled society.

As part of the Christian response to the challenges of a modern secular urban society, true believers must uphold the dignity and honour of marginalised groups in the Churches; and oppose every form and effort to devalue the worth of human beings. When human beings are devalued and dehumanised, everything in the Church becomes disoriented (cf. Basu, 2005:254). From the above-said it is clear that the RCSA should be major agents on behalf of children and should never cease to voice concern about child labour, corporal punishment, and lack of education, sexual abuse and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Concomitantly, every local congregation as God’s caring community within an unkind society should be involved in caring for street children roaming the streets of cities. It is personally unacceptable, ethically unthinkable, that on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, children and youth, by the tens of millions, should have to call the streets of South African cities their home. The Church emerged in response to the work of Jesus the messiah as a community committed to his Lordship. Therefore, the special vocation of the Church is to enter into a vital, redemptive relationship with all people (Shenk, 1995:81).

#### 5.4.6.3 Promote Christian communication within the Church

The Bible gives sufficient details about the manner in which Christians should communicate in the Church. For example, at a personal level, Jesus said in Matt. 18:15, if a brother (or sister) sins against you should go to him privately and confront him/her with his/her fault (lovingly). The same thought is given in Galatians 6:1, 'If a Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help him back onto the right path, remembering that next time it might be one of you who is in the wrong'. In a similar vein, Ephesians 4:32 say 'and be kind to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you'.

However, Elmer (2006:61) laments that much congregational management fails either from the lack of Christian communication or from its breakdown. The RCSA is no exception. The author regrets that instead of trying to settle or to communicate with one another and settle their disputes among themselves, believers go to court and try to solve differences with the help of the civil judiciaries. These Christians are using the secular law courts as a means of divisively enhancing their own status over their fellow Christians (Clarke, 2000:181).

The very fact that there are lawsuits among believers shows the lack of communication or its breakdown within the Church. The RCSA should promote Christian communication within its ranks. If the communication that exists is not carefully established and maintained as Christian communication, then the sort of communication that develops will tend to be non-Christian; gossip, slander, half-truths will flow quickly along the grapevine.

The only effective way to assure against such perversions of truth is to develop and to maintain a vital communication network that, at every point, scoops the grapevine. The Church must get the truth to each member sooner, more fully, more attractively, and with complete accuracy and honestly (cf. Adams, 1975:380-381).

#### 5.4.6.4 Promoting the concept of Ubuntu in the Church

The researcher believes that in initiating a comprehensive public awareness programme aimed at informing the urban society and stimulating discussion on moral renewal, the Church's broader objectives need to be balanced against the concept of Ubuntu. The concept of Ubuntu manifests itself in the use of empathy as a moral compass to help one navigate around everyday trade-offs. In a similar vein, it is Ubuntu to love and care for others, to be kindly towards others, to be hospitable. It is Ubuntu to be truthful and honest so that people know that one's word is one's honour. African societies are famous for raising their children by committee, so this concept, reinforced as it was from household to household, became a powerful mechanism in creating self-governing behaviour in young children (Balshaw & Goldberg, 2005:44; Mbigi & Maree, 1995:121; Lessem & Nussbaum, 1996:70; cf. Rautenbach & Malherbe, 2004:10).

However, this concept of Ubuntu was seriously challenged by the adoption of a capitalistic lifestyle amongst Africans as they were forced by the urbanisation and accelerated industrialisation of South African urban society to adjust to the new set of values that lived side by side with the concept of Ubuntu (cf. Biko, 2013: 25-26). Ramphela (2013:63) laments that the only main difference between the Afrikaner approach and Ubuntu has historically been the exclusionary nature of relationships within the Apartheid-tainted Afrikaner culture that counted white people as the only ones worthy of inclusion.

The challenge we face after more than a decade and a half of adopting a human rights-based national constitution is how to close the gap between the value system we committed ourselves to and our actual day to day practices in our social, political and economic relationships. These challenges are more acute for Christians because they do not have the excuse of pleading ignorance. The home, Christian communities, workplace and wider society are the arenas where our system of values should find

expression – where Ubuntu and human rights become the standards against which we measure ourselves.

The solution to this problem is to be found in actively embracing the struggle against poverty and inequality as the national struggle for economic liberation of this generation. It is important to understand the above cultural believes and openly recognise their worth and role in the process of moral regeneration of the urban centres (Balshaw & Goldberg, 2005:440; Mbigi & Maree, 1995:121; Lessem & Nussbaum, 1996:70).

#### 5.4.6.5 Accommodate tolerance in the Church

Usually many leaders attempt to bring about unity either through imposition or through consensus. For example, dictators and totalitarian states try to forge a united nation by imposing their official ideologies and policies on everybody by force of arms, social pressure and psychological manipulations. “One has to toe the line or he/she gets into trouble.” The Church can do the same and has often done it. Pressure to come to an agreement usually leads to dishonesty.

The researcher believes that the structural unity proposed by the RCSA allows for tolerating other people from other cultures and traditions. This includes tolerating other faiths within the rubric of Christian dominance. The expression of this pluralism usually means acknowledgment of other religious expressions to a certain degree. This kind of tolerance by the Christian community comes from a sense of security in being the dominant group in society. It does not necessarily reflect an inner security.

#### 5.4.6.6 Application of Church discipline

There is a constant tendency in the Church to trivialise the nature of Church discipline because people are afraid that members will be driven out of the Church (De Bruyn, 1998:156; Parker, 1995:146). It is true that, historically, the Church has sometimes erred in this matter of discipline, but today the problem is one of outright neglect. In our day, the Church has become tolerant of sin even when it is found within its own ranks. Simply put, the modern Church seems more willing to ignore sin than to proclaim it (cf. Wray, 1988:1).

The vacuum created by the failure of the Church to apply Church discipline, and give the people an answer to their quest for the meaning of their existence and being, has encouraged many false teachers to step in and try and fill the gap. As a result, the Church faces a moral crisis within its own ranks. Her failure to take a strong stand against evil (even in her own midst), and her tendency to be more concerned about what is expedient than what is right, has also robbed the RCSA of its biblical integrity and power.

It is ironic that this rejection of Church discipline is often justified in the name of love. However, the question one may ask in this regard is: Who is responsible for addressing error in the Church? The answer is the body of Christ. In other words, Christians must police their own. John Calvin was well aware of this when he wrote in the sixteenth century:

“For what will happen if each is allowed to do what he pleases?” Yet that would happen, if to the preaching of doctrine there were not added private admonitions, corrections, and other aids of the sort that sustain doctrine and do not let it remain idle. Therefore, discipline is like a bridle to restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ; or like a spur to arouse those of little inclinations; and also something like a father’s rod to chastise mildly and with the gentleness of Christ’s Spirit those who have more seriously lapsed” (Kerr, 1989:152).

The conclusion that can be reached from the above-mentioned is that it is necessary in our hardened and apostate age for the Church to be called back to the New Testament doctrine of Church discipline. The Church needs to take a strong stand against such people who do not take a full view of the Scriptures, and against those who have been infiltrating the fundamental doctrines of the Church (both theological and culturally) with teachings and ideologies which are totally divergent to the Christian faith. If we do not have the courage to confront such trends, we shall no longer be ‘the redeeming salt and light of our dying generation.’

#### 5.4.7 Networking with other urban entities

McGavran (1988:112) reminds us that the modern city is not made up of one kind of person but of many different kinds: business executives, government officers, daily labourers, university professors, ditch diggers, illiterates 'and semiliterate for instance. The hard truth is that moral formation is most likely to take place in communities, usually confined communities, such as families, schools, universities, sports clubs, and labour unions, voluntary and professional associations. These are the most fertile areas for developing moral values because they are the groupings to which people feel allegiances, where their lives are lived (see Sekhaulelo, 2007:78).

Therefore, the development of morality in the urban areas requires that the local Church must be aware of the nature of the different entities in the cities, so that it may act justly in relation to them and establish just relations among them. One of Satan's chief and most effective devices for keeping entire cities in darkness is to keep pastors apart from one another. He doesn't necessarily make them enemies. He can accomplish his purpose just by keeping them indifferent towards one another. For example, the Presbyterian pastor doesn't care much what the Nazarene pastor does. The white pastor doesn't care much what the black pastor does.

The charismatic pastor doesn't care much what the traditional pastor does. The older established pastor doesn't care much what that young Church planter does. Thus, Satan is happy, he can continue to steal, to kill and to destroy just by maintaining the status quo. He likes the Churches in the city just the way they are. They are virtually no threat to him. However, Satan gets extremely worried when the pastors of a city begin to pray together regularly.

Hiebert & Meneses (1995:278) note that networks are a major form of middle-level social organisation in cities. News may spread rapidly through the networks. What is networking? According to Greenway (1992:112), the term networking comes from the world of business, and it simply means the creation or maintenance of a "net" of contacts through which one effectively carries out an enterprise. That net can be a human net or a corporate net or even an electronic net (such as in telecommunications). Whatever it is, it is effective only as the contacts in it are used to carry out a given function.

Networking, in the Christian context, is the intentional and systematic visiting of people in an urban community by pastors and Church workers in order to enable that community or Church to address more effectively that neighbourhood's most substantive problems. Through networking the local congregation builds bridges throughout the community, bridges by which the gospel and its implications for all of life can be carried to corners that otherwise would be inaccessible (cf. Ondendaal, 2012:164). There are three primary reasons for networking, all of which are interrelated to each other.

First, networkers seek first to learn what the people consider their issues. If a local congregation is to reach out to its community, one must begin where people are, with their issues, and the only way to uncover those issues is to network or to ask the people. The second thing networkers seek to learn is who the real leaders of the community are. The third thing networkers want to know is who in the community cares so much about an issue that he will get involved in dealing with it. No community issues can be addressed successfully unless the people addressed it (Lingenfelter, 1996:263).

What are the benefits of networking to one's Church or ministry? Networking can inform one's preaching and teaching so that it brings biblical insights to issues of greatest importance to the people. In the same vein, it can help the local pastor to identify the people in the community with whom he needs to build a strong, empathetic, and trusting relationship. One of the positive developments within the South African mission's scene during the past fifteen years is that many solid relationships have been built – especially among and across various racial and cultural groups. Especially encouraging for the researcher is the greater degree of Kingdom vision which has recently taken root in South African Christian urban community. Networks of mission and Church leaders and organisations are playing a meaningful role not only in creating a mission awareness in South Africa but also by providing South Africans with practical ways of involvement in the Great Commission, moving us significantly beyond what we could accomplish on our own (cf. Greenlee, 2003:122).

The researcher is of the view that if networking is built upon biblical foundations it will enable the urban Church to reorder and prioritise its life and its urban ministry so that it

will be able to join effectively with other religious traditions and learning institutions to promote moral renewal in SA cities. Such networking would also include building intentional relational bridges between rural and urban Churches (Ruth 4:1-6).

Nehemiah made excellent use of his existing relational network and extended it quickly by focusing on the most important relationships that were critical for the success of his Jerusalem project. With full integrity, he took advantage of the privileged relationship he enjoyed in Artaxerxes's court to secure needed permission and resources. Strong bonds of camaraderie grew as the workers on the wall laboured together to achieve a common goal.

From the foregoing it would appear that the story about SA cities is not only about developing an appropriate Christian response to urban challenges, but also calls for an examination of the relationship between local congregations of the RCSA and other local structures of other Church denominations. It is true that the ministry of the Church is essentially local. However, Church leaders are encouraged at the local and regional levels to provide and carry out strategic; cooperation in prayer, evangelism and discipleship to reach the lost in a particular area (Hayford, 1997:55; Greenway, 1992:119).

#### 5.4.8 Distribution of Christian's literature

Verwer (1998:63) recognises that the opportunities to distribute Christian books and tracts are almost unlimited in many cities, and if you have the opportunity it is always better to distribute good books and tracts. Throughout the history of the Church, God has used books to permanently change individuals and nurture them into effective, productive ministry. Without the printing press the German Reformation might have been different. Luther's own writings constitute a third of all German books printed in the first four decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Greenlee, 2003:146).

However, Basu (2005:185) laments that the growing moral depravity that one sees in the urban areas today is no doubt, due to the increased activity of Satan and the powers of darkness. Viewing it from a Christian evangelistic view point, it reveals our failure in taking advantage of the modern techniques of communication, and the power of



literature evangelism. There is no doubt that the loss of moral values that is devastating the South African urban community can be traced to a large extent to the deadly work of pornography.

Moreover, many Christians in the urban areas go through times of varying degrees of doubt and dryness concerning their faith, and well-written apologetics can help to stabilise and strengthen them in such periods. Literature distributed before an event organised by the Church can create curiosity and arouse spiritual hunger; given out at the event it can consolidate the thrust of the message; given out after the event it can be an invaluable aid in follow - up. Regardless of one's spiritual maturity or experience in sharing the gospel, Christian's literature is an indispensable strategy which members of the RCSA can use in the urban ministry for moral restoration (Monsma, 2006:52-53).

A point sometimes overlooked by the local congregations is that literature can help all other kinds of ministry to be more effective. Simply put, there is no form of Christian ministry that cannot be strengthened, complemented, stimulated or enhanced by the use of relevant literature. Radio/TV/video, humanitarian relief and development, preaching, teaching, Church planting, counselling, and moral renewal all can be given greater impact by the sensitive use of appropriate literature (LeFlora, 2007:6). This poses a very persistent question. Why as believers, who have a mandate to preach the gospel to all nations, are we not able to make available more Christian books?

The researcher believes that if the RCSA plans to distribute tracts in the SA city, the Church must insist that its material is true to Scripture, relevant to urban culture and of enduring value. The kind of seed we sow now will determine the kind of harvest we reap in five, ten or twenty years' time. If the Church publishes superficial literature, it will reap superficial Christians. In addition, if the Church's material is sloppy and not thoughtfully rigorous, its readers will tend to be careless and easy prey for cults, sects, and secularisation, and that is again manifested in moral decay.

#### 5.4.9 Demographics and psychographics

The author believes that the local congregations can also use the demographic and psychographics tools in their urban ministry as a strategy for moral restoration. It is true

that leadership theory can help the local congregations to develop their approach to strategy. The key question is how can we understand complex situations (reality) and modify our approach to respond to the contemporary social ills facing the urban areas?

According to Conn & Ortiz (2001:289), the term demography, of Greek etymology, means description of people. It is the study of population, trends and movements. Malphurs (2000:104) correctly states that demographics provides reliable information about the people who make up the target group such as information about age, sex, education, occupation, income, race, marital status, and other areas. This knowledge helps the Church to discover its potential “customers” and what they are like.

In the same vein, demographic studies which inform us of AIDS infection rates, illiteracy, crime, or other social trends in cities, help us visualise the needs. This means that the use of statistical and demographic tools in urban ministry as a strategy should be widespread. The local congregation needs more of this type of tools to promote moral restoration. The following questions can be helpful for establishing some of the dynamics of urban demographics:

- What is the population of the city?
- How many people in the city have filed for divorce each year for the last three years?
- What is the current teen-pregnancy rate?
- What is the median educational level of the people in the city? (Is it rising or lowering? (How does this compare with the median educational level in the Churches?))
- What is the median age of the people in the city? (Is it rising or lowering? How do these age groups compare with the age groups in the Church population)? Many cities have an increasing younger population while the Church community is aging) (cf. Hayford, 1998:74).

Some of this information can be gathered through the acquisition and application of secondary data and primary sources. Secondary sources are national sources. National sources include various professional organisations that provide their service for

price, but have been made available for the community use, for example, Statistics South Africa or the recent census data, Provincial Government, and National Government. Primary sources are local sources. You may obtain information from public libraries, utilities, realtors, real estate organisations, chambers of commerce, door-to-door surveys, as well as personal observation.

In connection to this, psychographics presents information about what people are looking for in life. It is all about people's need, values, desires, beliefs, hopes, dreams, aspirations, fears, and so on (cf. Warren, 1995:165). Simply put, psychographic information helps the local congregation to answer certain questions such as: Do you know and understand the needs of those in your target group? Are you addressing people's needs, values, and hopes? Can you meet these needs? Should you even attempt to satisfy their needs?

Where will you get psychographics information?

One way is to ask people for information. This could take the form of survey. However, knocking on doors is difficult, but one can find these people in shopping malls where they are more accessible and willing to answer one's questions than from behind a closed door in their neighbourhood. Another source of psychographic information is observation. One can learn a lot by simply studying the habits of the people one is trying to reach (cf. Malphurs, 2000:106). From the foregoing it is clear that becoming acquainted with the community is an on-going process. It prepares us for ministries that honour God as the source of strength and transformation and demonstrate his concern for people (Greenway, 1992:95).

#### 5.4.10 Training urban Churches for effective evangelism /mission

From the day of its inception in Rustenburg in 1859, the founders of the RCSA came to terms with the fact that the obligations of mission were the same wherever the community was established, namely being God's missionary people. They had to come to terms with the fact that the Church's mission requires both the individual and groups who, authorised by God to communicate His message, go out from the community to

others, near or far, and also the community that manifests God's presence in its midst by its life together and its relationships to others (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:8).

As Paul puts it, "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produce by faith, your labour prompted by love; and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 The. 1:3).

However, the researcher laments that there has been a loss of memory regarding the role played by the founders of RCSA in mission/evangelism. This loss of memory in the way of telling the truth is due to the fact that many Churches and Christian groups believe that soul-winning is best done in auditoriums. They forget that in biblical times, soul winning was achieved where people lived. To be quite candid, many local Reformed congregations in SA cities are engaged in many good works and do not really recognise the need for Church growth. They do not believe that every Church should be giving birth to new congregations.

They are theologically sound in regard to many doctrines, but with regard to God's command to proclaim the gospel to all segments of society throughout the entire world, leading people to faith and obedience, they are quite unsound (cf. McGavran, 1988:117). In most cases, a greater part of a Church's resources, time, and attention is poured into Church property rather than into evangelism or mission. Maintenance replaces mission/evangelism as the guiding principle of the community's life. Our Churches, in the language of the Scripture, have miscarrying wombs and dry breasts.

The challenge confronting local congregations in the urban community is a radical one. It is that neither maintenance nor survival is an adequate purpose for any particular community or ecclesial structure. The Church that emphasises maintenance and survival are often missiologically questionable. The researcher is of the opinion that the testing of any community's structural integrity is its continuing articulation of the evangelistic invitation. How it lives as a community and what it proclaims and confesses should centre on Jesus's words. 'Follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Mark. 4:19).

The author suggests that the Church as institution should prepare future leaders in the light of these trends:

#### 5.4.10.1 Ecclesiology

Theology is vital to the on-going life of the Church. In fact, according to Phillips & Coote (1993:249), Church life cannot exist without an active theology. Simply put, the Church and its teaching ministry are inextricably intertwined. The researcher concurs with the views of Phillips & Cootes that theological education has a more direct bearing on Christian leadership than perhaps any other single factor. This is because the primary objective of theological institutions worldwide is seen as the equipping and training of Church leaders.

The researcher laments that although the Theological Seminary itself is to be the direct vehicle of mission, it has concentrated on theology, not missiology. This has been an inherent weakness because theological education does not build a capacity for prophetic leadership. Ande (2010:93-94) is of the view that theological education can build a capacity for prophetic leadership by, among other things, a vigorous implementation of the following threefold agenda:

- Greater engagement with life outside the Church: Remembering that the Church exists within the world and the world exist within the Church, theological institutions will need to have much more engagement with the world outside the Church. This would ensure an up-to date awareness and critical appraisal of contemporary issues facing urban areas today. This engagement with the outside world can be achieved by providing more opportunities with the outside world for theology students and staff to integrate with non-theological institutions, through conferences, sport, cultural events, exchange programmes and reading publications in the secular media.
- Strengthening of alumni inter-relations. The alumni of a theological institution indeed, of any institution, can be a great asset in giving feedback about the

situation on the ground. Theological institutions therefore must strengthen their alumni associations in far more capacities than mere annual general meetings.

- Curricular renewal. Finally, in the light of the first two remarks, theological institutions will need to engage continually in revising and renewing curricula. The great challenge facing Reformed Theological Education is to devise integrated curricula where the interpretation of Church leadership, biblical hermeneutics and appraisal of contemporary issues can all be integrated into a single programme of learning. Such a programme would take into account the question of Church and State relations for leaders, and focus on moral decay in the South African urban community.

From the preceding it is clear that doctrinal soundness and spiritual renewal must always aim at substantial numbers of conversions from the unreached. Any congregation, denomination, or theological seminary that would be true to the biblical imperatives must insist that full doctrinal soundness by itself impels Christians to seek the lost, to evangelise the unreached, to multiple congregations among the unchurched, and to engage continually in planned, prayer-supported, and effective world evangelisation.

#### 5.4.10.2 Uniformity in theological training

As the author has already noted, the RCSA initiated a unification process that was intended to unite the three synods into one. This resulted in the phasing out of the former theological school that had upheld the Apartheid regime. Ironically, the author observes that the RCSA presently trains most of their students in four Theological Institutions, i.e. Mareetsane, Mukhanyo College, University of Pretoria and University of North-West (Potchefstroom campus).

Surely these students are taught from different levels and with different standards. This is very unhealthy for the wellbeing of the synod and hampers the work that needs to be done. For how do you expect two doctors to co-operate in executing an operation when they do not have the same level of knowledge? Uniformity in theological training is very important for the structural unity which the RCSA is trying to bring about today. For

example, students, who study together, begin to network from the seminary and it becomes simple to put things into practice. In view of this, the researcher believes that the RCSA needs to make a major change in its mission strategy. The major change in mission strategy is the development of common theological training for the students.

#### 5.4.11 Stewardship education

Some Reformed Churches did not have a finance, budget, or stewardship committee. Presumably these Churches handle their financial matters in a haphazard manner. It is poor business for a Church to try to operate its financial affairs without some kind of planning. Simple or complex it may be, every Church needs a budget. A budget is simply a plan for spending anticipated income to care adequately for anticipated expenses. Further, the adoption of a budget by a Church is a pledge to the Church members that their contributions will be spent accordingly to this prearranged plan. Thus, members know in advance exactly how their contributions will be used (Young, 1978:202).

From the foregoing it is clear that stewardship education and promotion is essential if a Church is to have a growing income. Some type of stewardship committee should give guidance to the Church's educational and promotional emphasis upon stewardship (Schaller, 2002:265). Berkley (2000:18) is of the opinion that committed Christians do support the work of the Church when they consider the Church's plans to be godly and right. Most often, however, people need encouragement.

If a Church does not utilise such a common business strategy (method) as a budget, it can scarcely expect its members to give conscientious support to such a slipshod program. A standing finance committee may give valuable assistance to the Church treasurer and the Church itself in administering the Church budget once it is adopted. Careful management of money within the framework of the adopted budget can save a Church hundreds and thousands of Rands annually.

### 5.5 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

After the local congregations have developed their overall strategy, the next step in the conception stage is to implement the strategy. The greatest problem in developing an overall ministry is implementation. Local congregations can catalyse and articulate a fresh, innovative, powerful strategy, but somehow never get around to implementing it. They fail to follow through. Thus it dies a quick death for lack of implementation. This implies that if you have no way to accomplish and implement your strategy, then essentially you and the others on your team are wasting your time.

The implementation step consists of the following six key components:

- ❖ Determine specific actions. The first key component is determining the specific actions one needs to take to accomplish strategy. You can't implement the entire strategy all at once. Thus one must ask, what are the specific actions one must take at the beginning to afford the greatest impact?
- ❖ Formulate specific priorities. Once specific actions are identified, one must prioritize them. This serves to focus one's resources, energy, people, and creativity.
- ❖ Decide on specific deadlines. The third component of the implementation process is deciding when each action should be accomplished.
- ❖ Assign responsibility. Next the pastor or the church councils must assign responsibility to someone for the implementation of the specific action.
- ❖ Communicate the specific priorities. The fifth key component is communication. Here one asks who needs to know about these specific actions. People need to know what one is implementing if they are to buy in and be involved.
- ❖ The final step in the conception is evaluation. Whether or not the strategy is successful in solving problem, it is useful to evaluate the process that was used to reach the strategy. You need to analyse what lessons can be learnt from the problem you were facing and whether those lessons can be applied to other areas of the organisation (Church). It is useful to get the views of all the people involved in the process. For Churches to grow and improve, they need to conduct regular evaluations of their ministries or strategies (cf. Malthus, 2004:162-163).



## 5.6 CONCLUSION

The essence of this study was to outline the various strategies that the RCSA can use in its urban ministry to promote moral regeneration of the South African urban community. It was quite clear that God is the source of any urban strategy. The researcher was able to summarise God's strategy following biblical references. Israel was called out of all nations to accomplish certain things in the eternal earthly plan of God. Abraham was elected and, through him, the people that he could bless to be a blessing to all nations.

Further observations were made about God's strategy as seen in the sending of Jesus Christ and the apostles. It was also clear that Jesus' strategy deals principally with the problem of sin and guilt, and today Jesus' strategy is carried forward by benevolent ministries. What also became clear in this chapter was that God's strategy did not end with the life and ministry of the earthly Jesus Christ.

However, the Church was called to continue God's strategy on the earth, and its strategy is well crafted and defined in the Church missionary mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). And last, the author was able to highlight various strategies which the local congregations can employ in their urban ministry to promote the moral renewal of the urban community.

## CHAPTER SIX

### PROJECTS LOCAL CONGREGATIONS CAN UNDERTAKE

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this chapter is to make recommendations regarding specific projects local congregations of the Reformed Church can undertake to promote moral renewal of the South African urban community.

#### 6.2 DEFINITION OF PROJECTS

Greenway (1992:119) defines projects as activities undertaken by a coalition or community to solve a problem directly by them.

#### 6.3 SPECIFIC KINGDOM PROJECTS

There are many projects in the urban areas, but many of them are human-centred projects. They may be involved in Christian charity, but some of them have no Christian witness or testimony to go with it. When is a project human-centred? In human-centred projects a person is in the centre. It is typical of some who wish to build their own small kingdom with the motive to receive honour for it.

In the same vein, secular projects are based upon materialist assumptions; many believe that the solution to basic human misery is material. Some of their leaders are apostates, others are atheists and some are agnostics. In such projects there is usually very little or even no room for the working of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, human - centred projects are temporary, and many of them are secular in their motivation (Lingenfelter, 1996:263).

To remedy contemporary urban challenges facing the local congregations of the RCSA today, the author is of the view that the Kingdom projects will make permanent differences in the urban areas. According to Du Plessis (2004:20), a Kingdom project is an ordinary project clothed with godly vision. The overall objective of the Kingdom

projects is to restore people's relationship with God. As Jesus Christ puts it: "But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

Here are some examples of Kingdom projects which the local congregations of the RCSA can undertake to promote moral renewal of the South African urban community.

### 6.3.1 Christian Education

Vincent (2000:141) laments that one of the classic elements in the cycle of deprivation which characterises life in deprived city areas is the absence of educational facilities. Local schools are typically underachieving schools. The researcher observes that what are lacking in the townships are not simply adequate schools, but also all the other ancillary educational provisions which exist in more affluent areas. The Churches also do not place their educational provisions in poor areas.

It is true that one of the most serious problems facing Christian education is finance to run private or Christian schools. For a long time financial contributions from Europe assisted in running the mission schools, also in South Africa. Funds are no longer so easy to come by and private or mission schools face a great danger of being restructured or being handed over to the government. The key question one may ask in this regard is: How can the RCSA establish Christian schools in the poor community?

The researcher is of the opinion that the RCSA must build a coalition with other Christian communities (Churches) to become involved in promoting Christian education in the urban centres. Coalition building, as it was noted, is simply going to the people in the community who claim or share a particular issue as theirs and pulling them together into an action group to address the issue. It is also recommended that the RCSA should, on an ecumenical basic, become involved in education by setting up the following Christian-based community schools:

- Adult-based education

There are many healthy and intelligent people in the Church and in the SA cities who, when they were young, did not have an opportunity for an education in school. Others

had the opportunity but did not take full advantage of it. They are now adults with family obligations and cannot return to school for several years of instructions. Examples are construction workers, truck or bus drivers, domestic workers, tailors, barbers, beauticians.

The researcher observed that many domestic workers in the urban areas cannot read or write. There is no doubt that Adult-Based Education is especially important for them. How could a local congregation most effectively provide Adult-Bases-Education in the urban centres? Usually when we think of such training, we have in mind a classroom setting in which a teacher dispenses information concerning a field in which he/she is an expert to a group of novices (cf. Conn & Ortiz, 2001:414).

This type of training can be sponsored by local congregation, under the supervision of the Church council. The Church council might persuade other Christians who know a trade or skill, but are now retired or approaching retirement, to teach skills to others (Monsma, 2006:40). Furthermore, the situation creates an additional opportunity for local congregations in the city to establish pre-school education, Adult-Based Education, home-based schooling, and computer classes.

➤ Christian crèche

One other area that demands and prompts adequate attention in charting the road ahead for Christian education in the urban areas, especially in the township, is provision for pre-school education which, after total neglect over the years, has now been incorporated in the new Education Act. The beginnings made by the Department of Education and Training in this direction are deeply appreciated. Greenway (1992:205) observes that public schools have used learning centres for several years, and Church education can use them effectively, too.

Christian parents have the premier responsibility to supervise their children in every aspect of their development to full maturity (Sanders, 1997:65). Moreover, the Constitution of South Africa, Section 28(3) of the Bill of rights requires us to meet their intellectual needs by sending them to school or, as the case may be, teaching them at

home, so that they are socialised intellectually to function as literate, informed adults (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:107).

The highest aim of pre-school education is to help our children to become children of God, and to lay a sound foundation in the lives of many young children and provide spiritual, mental and physical support in the name of God (cf. Matshiga, 2001:20). Thus, a curriculum for urban pre-schools development must always meet certain prerequisites. First, it must maintain a theocentric perspective. Simply stated, a curriculum for children (pedagogy) must start with a theocentric perspective (Rom 11:36). Second, it must be sensitive both to the specific learner's asserts and needs, and to the specific urban context for which that learners is being prepared (Conn & Ortiz, 2001:419).

Based on this premise, the aims and objectives of Christian education can be summarised along the lines of the following mandate:

- o Christian education is a tool for moral generation

According to Monsma (2006:41), these religiously-sponsored schools contribute to a healthy society in two ways. First, they help supply the educated workers that are needed in a healthy society. Second, Christian schools teach Christian ethics to their students with the result that, hopefully, those who leave school not only know how to work; they also practice the virtues as they work with what were taught to them by the Christian community. Gous & Kruger (2000:114) concur with the above-mentioned views that if the school, which to the child represents the large outside world, is silent on values, the child will repudiate more quickly the lesson he/she learned at home, and he/she will also be more strongly influenced by peer values with their emphasis on the hedonism of teenage parties or the destruction of gangs.

This implies that the aim of Christian education is to produce a better person who would be useful in the society. Therefore, Christian education prepares pupils to be well educated, and to be morally, mentally and spiritually upright. The urban society is not interested in one's career, certificates, diplomas, degrees or position; but is interested in

one's usefulness or service. Simply put, good education is an education that brings about social regeneration (cf. Barker, 1981:142).

- o Christian education will equip young people to fulfil their calling in the Kingdom of God

In the same vein, good education in the schools is one of the chief building blocks of both an active, growing Church and a stable, prosperous economy. In other words, Christian education seeks to train its students to view the whole of life from God's perspective, not just from man's point of view. From the perspective of the Kingdom of God, education is nothing more or less than equipping people to fulfil their calling in the Kingdom of God.

This calling by God is divided into several "smaller" callings, such as choosing a profession, achieving something, getting married, serving the country. Apart from equipping young people to fulfil their calling in the Kingdom of God, Christian education as a socialising agent has an important role to play in the moral development of children. For example, during language periods, learners can be given the opportunity to debate moral issues. Christian Education serves as a socialising agent for urban youth, and it is also expected that when the family fails, Christian Education should be able to compensate in great measure.

### 6.3.2 Health projects

Inner city areas often have appalling levels of ill-health. Apart from the absence of many of the health facilities available elsewhere, the ill-health is often the result of bad diet – crisps, sliced bread, chips, processed food, tinned food, fatty food and very little fruit and vegetables. Silviso (2007:175) concurs with Vincent in that the health (or lack of health) of a nation always reveals itself in the marketplace. Unfortunately, if the urban community is sick, the government is inefficient and most likely corrupt (Johnson, 2009:469; cf. Pottinger, 2008:158).

Rather than discussing what the government might do to help urban communities become healthier if they had the funds, the author wishes to point to what Christians

can do to help one another, as well as those who are outside the faith (cf. Gal. 6:10). Simply put, how can Christians work to improve society in the area of health care?

First, the author is of the view that it is best they form a private network (coalition) of help with medical people within the Church, classis or synod. In this arrangement they can also co-operate with a NGO to bring superior care to those needing it. The third option is that the local congregation can established its own NGO to improve the urban community health care. In view of these options, the researcher believes that the following NGOs could help the local Church in its urban ministry to improve the health care of the urban community.

- Christian home care and hospice

Often the services offered by home carers and hospice NGOs turn out to be more effective than government health institutions. They can very well be organised from the Church office with Church resources. The work can be organised from within the existing structures without incurring additional expense. To start with, such programmes can get non-specialist help from NGOs that are trained and dedicated to help with counselling, and other support programmes and activities to boost the morale of the afflicted ones.

In light of the need of some patients for specialised attention, NGOs can establish some hospices or in-patient units, where personalised attention and emotional, moral and spiritual support can be given along with specialist care, which is not possible in a hospital environment. In any case, keeping the patients in a hospital for a prolonged period is an expensive proposition. Often there is no cure, but only the prolonging of the life of patients. It only stretches their agony. In a home care situation or even in a hospice the aim is to help them physically, emotional, socially as well as spiritually to cope with their illness and dying.

It is beyond doubt that illness affects patients profoundly. Therefore, the possibility always exists that patients feel loneliness and anxiety. Christian home care and hospices can help the patients to face death in solidarity with others. As Louw (1994:129-130) puts it, a good death is a death in solidarity with others, and to prepare

ourselves for a good death, we must develop or deepen this sense of solidarity. He went further to say that the mystery of life is that we discover this human togetherness, not when we are powerful and strong, but when we are vulnerable and weak.

The Church should also give moral and practical support to those who take care of these terminal patients. Those who are helping and caring must know they also have someone who loves them and cares and shares their needs and burden. There are many practical ways of helping them. Bringing them a cooked meal for instance, or taking them out on a drive, a picnic, or even sitting with them to be there whenever the need arises. The burden should not be left to one or two people. Rather, it should be a team effort. The team members should be encouraged to work together and pray together, fortifying each other (cf. Basu, 2005:245).

- Christian orphanages

Gumede (2005:151) correctly states that the social, economic and health consequences of AIDS for South Africa are devastating. Particularly harrowing has been the rise in the number of orphans and the emotional impact on millions of children who will grow up without parents. The responsibility for income and care, sometimes not only for siblings but also for their ailing parents and elderly grandparents is falling increasingly on the shoulders of children.

Garland & Blyth (2005:260) mentions that children affected by HIV/AIDS are caught up in feelings and events that they do not understand and that threaten to destroy them. They face great emotional and psychological stress. Sometimes their grief may be overlooked as small and unimportant compared to the adults' grief. However, when a child loses a parent he or she feels great confusion and sorrow. When both parents are lost the shock is even worse.

The Church must involve itself with these children. Christian orphanages can make a valuable contribution towards taking care of the children of AIDS victims. They can respond in many creative ways. Some of the children are infected at birth, others are not, but nevertheless they have become orphans, or are going to lose one or both parents. It may help these orphans and provide them immediate relief, if the RCSA



builds orphanages providing residential accommodation and supplying all their needs of food, clothing and education.

Moreover, sexual exploitation is a serious risk for children, especially girls, orphaned or displaced because of HIV/AIDS. These girls are likely themselves to become infected. The Church must reach out to protect them. The Church can be the “older brother” to girls who become orphans (cf. Song of Songs 8:8-9; Isa. 1:17). Similarly, women in the Church can be the orphan girl’s special friend.

They can form a group for all young girls to teach them basic skills of taking care of their bodies, understanding the changes in their bodies as they mature, knowing how to tell men “no” to sex before marriage, and how to marry the right man. They can learn about cooking and farming and raising children. These are skills that girls usually learn from their mothers but orphaned girls can learn through the Church.

In addition, the Church and community must be involved in caring for HIV positive orphans, who will need special help to live as full and joyful life as possible, in the knowledge of God’s love for them. As ARVs become more available for children with HIV, they will live longer. These precious children should be cared for with the same compassion and dignity as those who are not HIV positive. They are innocent sufferers of an extremely unkind disease and must not be left out of any orphan care programme (Garland & Blyth, 2005:268).

- Caring for Christian adults

As it was noted, many households are headed by children caring for their young siblings. It is not easy for children to head a home. They need guidance to help them make wise choices in life. Therefore, a family headed by a child needs another caring family walking alongside. Likewise, grandparents are left to care for children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. The elderly grandparents need the help and support of the Church family to ease their load. How can the Church help?

One way is by financial assistance to extended families that lack the means to care for the orphans. It will be like giving them sponsorship in families. The money can pay for

food, soap, medical care, school books and school fees. The project office can coordinate with the families sponsored and also provide trained personnel to visit these homes, to advise, counsel and encourage, both the orphans and family members.

What else can local congregations do to support the extended family? As it was noted, the role of deacons in the Church is caring for people in need. They can mobilise Church members to plant and cultivate a vegetable garden, repair a home, take someone to the hospital, visit a sick person, and act as parents for children affected by AIDS. Furthermore, the local congregation can also train or equip grandparents to care for their grandchildren. If older children can be sponsored to receive an education, they can go on to help care for the younger family members.

The local Church in the city must make a long-term commitment to care for children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS. The Church is in the best position to respond to the crisis: not only is there a Church on most street corners in the big cities, but also, God has commanded the Church to serve (Acts 4:33-35). God has given us gifts of service and positions in the Church such as deacons and deaconesses (Acts 6:1-7). Let the local congregations of the RCSA use those gifts and resources to God's glory by ministering effectively to those in need.

- Support groups

In the face of a high level of need and limited formal health resources in the urban areas, Nürnberger (2005:299) reminds us that support groups should be formed for each individual case, or strengthened and encouraged where it already exists. It should recruit from family members, neighbours, congregants and the wider community according to local circumstances. Its task is to prevent isolation and loneliness both for the infected and affected, to comfort, reconcile and counsel, to overcome destitution, to find food, clothing and school fees.

It is absolutely necessary for the community, and in particular the young people to know the "truth about AIDS", its causes, and prevention, damage, control and research possibilities for discovery of a cure. The support group can very well organise such HIV/AIDS education programmes with the help of trained and qualified personnel.

However, it should not be a preaching session, but the people should be given the opportunity to ask questions and be helped to find answers with the help of expert guidance on all aspects of the problem, physical, social, moral, and spiritual.

A powerful way for the Church to communicate God's plan for life and relationships to young people is to use youths themselves to teach each other. The local Church could give youth fellowship leaders the opportunities they need to be trained in life-skills. The researcher is of the view that support groups and counselling can be opportunities for finding faith, as people with no human hope discover eternal hope through Christ. Moreover, the relational based care offered by the volunteers naturally opens up opportunities to raise awareness and understanding more widely about chronic illness and especially how they are transmitted and prevented (Dixon, 2002:108).

- Income generation projects

According to Feinstein (2007:130), poverty, lack of education opportunities and low skills levels heighten vulnerability to HIV infection, with HIV prevalence falling sharply as skill levels rise. Findings such as these highlight education and economic development as important components of an integrated approach to combating AIDS. Dixon (2002:125) asserts that HIV/AIDS contributes to poverty and is a product of poverty. It strikes predominantly the sexually active, who are most often the economically exploited, the subsistence farmers, factory workers, urban professionals or mothers and carers of the elderly.

Johnson (2009:206) points out that in 2003 a World Bank report suggested that Aids could lead to complete economic collapse once the cumulative generational effects were added in. If nothing is done to avert the epidemic then countries like South Africa could suffer a 50 per cent decline in their per capita GDP over three generations. If this is the case, reason would dictate that, it is desirable to engage AIDS patients and even HIV infected persons, in income generation projects mainly for two reasons.

First, it helps to divert the minds of the patients from their sickness and immediate state of affairs. Second, it makes them feel useful and productive towards society. It also helps to earn money, and not depend on inappropriate help all the time. Christian NGOs

can set up vocational training centres to equip AIDS infected people to become self-sufficient (cf. Basu, 2005:247).

- Funeral schemes

The number of burials (funerals) of people who die from AIDS is daily increasing in all SA cities. Many already poor families are using money that they themselves need for food, housing, school fees and sometimes medicines to bury their dead. They spend large amounts of money on funerals, especially on lavishly decorated and expensive coffins, food, special burial cars, videotaping of the service and other luxuries (cf. Garland & Blyth, 2005:251).

Moreover, the researcher observed that funeral undertaking in urban areas, especially in the townships, is as profitable a business as it is emotive, and it is also a trade which, badly done, can bring untold trauma to households that are already grieving in bereavement. There are indeed many decent, astute men and women in the industry who go the proverbial extra mile to give comfort and succour to bereaved families, some even carrying the cost of burial in certain instances.

However, there are also many “fly by night undertakers.” As a result innocent people, particularly the poor and uneducated, are very vulnerable to shady operators. Stories abound of people who contributed for years to funeral schemes, which had made extravagant promises, only to be left stranded when they need the service. The result is that a family traumatised by the death of a loved one now has the added burden of scrounging around for funds to conduct a burial. The Church as an institution should use its influence to speak out clearly and forcefully against all crooked undertakers.

It is for this reason that the local congregations must establish their own funeral schemes to help their members and to protect them against crooked undertakers who tarnish the undertaking industry. This implies that local pastors and their Church councils should know all funeral schemes or parlours that provide funeral services to their members.

Reason being: First, to ensure that all undertakers that run burial schemes are underwritten by established financial institutions. Second, to ensure that when death strikes, families that have been making contributions to these schemes, particularly the poor and uneducated members within the Church are able to access the service(s) they had been paying for.

Furthermore, local Churches must encourage their members to have a simple funeral. As Christians in their community, members of the RCSA should lead the way by having simple, inexpensive, prayerful and dignified funeral services that show love and respect for the deceased and also show their faith in God.

### 6.3.3 Business clubs or societies of concerned Christians

If the Church as institution is not to speak to the routine political issues of the day, how can Christians speak to government in a united manner? One particularly effective way for this is for Christians to form clubs or societies with their fellow concerned Christians. They may form a voters' club, a political research foundation, or a similar organisation that gathers information and then distributes this information to its members. Members of such a society may decide to meet regularly to pray about specific problems in the political arena. Moreover, they may also decide to try to influence government officials, or they may take action directly to solve various problems that come to their attention. Whatever the means they use, they are working together as Christians to improve their communities and nations.

In addition, businesses operate within a community. Generally, they will employ people from the immediate community in which they are based. The immediate community will also form a large number of their customers. It is therefore in the interest of a business to uplift the community in which it operates (cf. Chanderdeo, Pilane & Pinnock, 2011:108; see Monsma, 2006:58; cf. Murray, 1998:205). Furthermore, they need to fast track the money spend on redistribution, incorporating this type of corporate spending \*into the long-term incentive structure, so that executives's performance on empowerment can be incorporated as part of the creation of shareholder value (cf. Biko, 2013:8).

#### 6.3.4 Ministry of mercy

Nearly all large cities in South Africa have permanent marginalised people: street beggars, the street alcoholics, drug addicts, homeless persons, tramps, street children, refugees and asylum seekers, foreigners, strangers and sojourners. From the above it is clear that the problem with marginalised people living on the streets of big cities, without any hope, continues to abound. What are Churches doing?

Many offer a quick fix like donating clothes or a financial offering here and there, but it doesn't solve the long term problem. Some Reformed Churches in the urban areas when presented with this dilemma, suggest local "night shelters", but do they even have the telephone number of one in the area? Do they know that these shelters have a lockout time after 6pm? This is a very real problem facing the marginalised people in SA cities.

There is no doubt that the burden of the marginalised in urban areas should move Christians'. The researcher is of the view that every local Church in the city should have a mercy ministry that serves their community. According to Greenlee (2003:140), the ministry of mercy is built on a conviction that God has commanded his Church not only to preach the gospel but to live the gospel by loving the people of this world unconditionally.

Sometimes this ministry might offer direct help to the destitute and sometimes they may support those organisations that do help. It is imperative that the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should involve itself in social action if it is to remain relevant in the urban centres. Whatever, the economic and social environment might be, local Churches must participate in meeting the needs of the world's marginalised people. In doing so, the Church regains the right to take an active part in shaping the future of urban communities.

#### 6.3.5 Ministry among the poor

According to Hiebert & Menese (1995:354), the goal of this ministry is not simply to help poor people to meet their daily needs, but to see them transformed by the power of God

and empowered to be people of dignity and worth in society. We may need to begin with food, clothing, and shelter, but we must move on to the transformation of people and social structures. If we do not, our ministry can exacerbate the cycle of poverty. The researcher is of the view that the following projects will improve the lives of the poor people in the South African urban community.

- An information service centre to offer helpful information to the community in relation to any problems or challenges they may have.
- Self-help employment involving projects on sewing, knitting, leatherwork (for the blind) to support each other as well as helping those who cannot read Braille.
- A child minders project where unemployed women are trained to become child minders and are able to take care of a maximum of six children at their homes while there are at work.
- An old age project involving bringing together the aged from time to time to support each other, making sure they have access to a government pension as well as taking care of them while waiting for their pension.
- A housing and accommodation project where the community assist each other with information relating to accommodation and what people could do to secure their own accommodation (cf. Chikane, 1988:111).
- Computer skills where the local congregations provide computer skills to young people. This type of training can be sponsored by local congregations, possibly with only one person as a full time director. This director might persuade other Christians who know a trade or computer skill, to train these skills to young people (Greenway, 1992:154). As computer skill takes hold, youth will find productive work, unemployment will drop, and the economy improves (Schaller, 2002:149). This too is a way the Christian community can act as “a city set on a hill,” contributing to the health of its society.

Corbett & Fikkert (2012:176-178) explain two further projects with a developmental slant the local congregation could adopt:

- ❖ Job preparedness projects. The local congregations should adopt projects that emphasises the development of “soft skills” from a biblical perspective. Soft skills are general, nontechnical abilities such as a solid work ethic, the ability to function in a team, and strong communication skills.
- ❖ Financial education projects. Of course, even without the recent explosion in the number of predatory lenders, many poor people – and many people in the Churches in general –lack the knowledge and discipline to manage their money well. In connection to this, debt is on the increase these days with all the credit facilities around us. Debt is a state people go into hoping to pay back what they have borrowed. It becomes clear then that people go into debt because they are failing to manage their finances properly. This creates a tremendous opportunity for Churches and ministers to provide basic financial education using any number of biblical based curricula that are available. Topics typically covered include Christian stewardship, budgeting, goal setting, debt reduction, record keeping, tithing, taxes, banking, and managing credit. A solid financial education curriculum should be part of the tool kit of every Church deacon and counsellor. Training can be done one-on-one or in group settings and a team of mentors can provide accountability and relational ministry, walking with trainees across time to foster long term development.

A key question is: How can the local congregations help those people who are unable to meet their daily food? Some ways to decrease absolute poverty include:

- Feeding programmes for the poor and downtrodden. The researcher is of the view that the local congregation of the RCSA should cooperate or built a coalition with other Christian communities to provide food for the poor and downtrodden people. Especially encouraging for the researcher in this regard, is the greater degree of feeding programmes for the poor which has recently taken root in Linden (Johannesburg). Reformed Church Linden in Johannesburg has built coalition with other Churches to provide food for poor people, homeless, and street children in and around Linden. Other Reformed Churches are also being



encouraged to include feeding programme for the poor in their urban ministry to promote moral renewal of the South African urban areas.

The characteristics of good development projects can be summarised along the following principles:

First, the poor must participate. This means that projects must grow from problems and solutions proposed by the poor themselves. Simply put, decision must be made by the poor, and they must have ownership of the projects. As it was noted in the previous section of this study, these principles ran parallel with the movement away from paternalism towards a greater respect for the local people, their customs, abilities and capacity to make their own decisions.

Second, where outside funding is needed, funding must be provided for the completion of a project. This implies that Christian social service should channel their assistance through local Churches or local Christian agencies. Third, projects should have concrete goals, should be feasible and should be culturally appropriate. Needs should be clearly identified. In the same vein, projects should have a manageable size. Fourth, pastors and Churches should play a supporting, facilitating role.

Last, projects should aim for the glory and the salvation of human beings. Thus, our goal in ministry among the poor is not simply to help poor people to meet their daily needs, but to see them transformed by the power of God and empowered to be people of dignity and worth in society. As it was indicated, if we do not, our ministry can exacerbate the cycle of poverty (cf. Monza, Oskar & Brewer, 1991:54; cf. Herbert & Menses, 1995:354).

6.3.6 Ministry in the afternoon for latchkey children (a child who is alone at home after school until a parent returns from work) and orphanages.

As it was already noted, million domestic workers and men in the urban areas spent most of their time apart from their children. Moreover, orphans and soon-to be orphans may lack opportunity to attend school. The Church must involve itself with these Children. How can the Church help? Most Reformed Churches use their building for

two hours on Sunday, and then leave the buildings virtually unused for the rest of the time except for a few special weeks during the year.

The researcher is of the view that the local congregations must turn their building during the week to create schools for orphans and children who are alone at home. Youth group members and teachers from the Church can tutor these children in the afternoon. This means that local pastors need to be preaching on the topic regularly to prepare congregations to accept some of the responsibility for latchkey children and orphans who cannot attend school because they are at home caring for their dying parents (Schaller, 1999:87).

### 6.3.7 Ministry with substance abusers

A major factor in driving poverty and AIDS is substance abuse. A substantial number of addicts would like to kick the habit and this is where specialist help may be more successful. The researcher believes that much of the supportive help should be provided by the local Church where members of the congregation are understanding, familiar with the facts about addiction, and available to give encouragement and practical assistance. The local Churches must develop Alcoholics Victorious or similar groups that are based on the AA model (Alcoholics Anonymous). In the same vein, the pastors should be involve both in AA and in the broader, more diversified fellowship of a local Church. The principles of this ministry are quite basic:

- Encourage self-understanding and a change of lifestyle. When a trusting relationship has been established, there can be value in considering some of the reasons for the alcohol and drug abuse. These discussions can lead to insight, but insight is of little value unless it is followed by practical, specific plans for changed behaviour. Then there is the issue of lifestyle. One's lifestyle depends on making decisions concerning what will or will not be done now and in the future.
- Recognise that evangelism and discipleship are basic. If the counselee is to find new meaning and purpose in life, he or she must come to see that true and lasting fulfilment is found only in Jesus Christ. This means that the counsellor

must depend on the Holy Spirit's guidance to determine when and how to present the gospel. Highly emotional preaching sometimes produces false decisions that later are rejected, although there are many examples of persons converted to Christ, freed from their alcoholism, and permanently changed through the preaching of evangelistic message(cf. Collins, 1988:500-501).

It is clear that proper counselling and teaching should be given regarding both pragmatic and moral/ethical problems for drug abuse. The local congregations in the city should set up their own educational programmes to help the drug addicts and street alcoholics. For local congregations, rehabilitation programmes and counselling can be opportunities for finding faith, as people with no human hope discover eternal hope through Christ.

#### 6.3.8 Youth Ministry

It is an undeniable fact that one of the main problems faced by urban youths has to do with anxiety, discouragement, marriage, sex, money management, careers, relationships with parents and children, temptation, and spiritual growth (cf. Masha, 2005:1). Today there are many persons who see the oppressed spiritual condition of our youth as an opportunity to make money. The producers of cocaine, crack and marijuana, the beer companies, the manufacturers of expensive clothes and shoes – all are examples of businesses that exploit the spiritual and emotional vulnerability of young people to increase their profits (cf. Sanders, 1997:80).

From the foregoing it is clear that the local congregations in the city should consider teenage ministry in their programme to guide their youth. The Christian family is a potential powerhouse of intergenerational ministry and mission, where parents and children learn and work together to do tasks that no one individual can do alone. Both the Old and New Testaments testify of the importance of children in the work of God and the movement of the Spirit. Moreover, specific roles and significance are ascribed to children in biblical prophecy, notably as Old Testament prophecies are interpreted in New Testament contexts. One important example of this is found in the second chapter

of the book of Acts, when the prophecy of Joel finds fulfilment in the empowering witness of the early Church:

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Acts 2:17).

The implications of this interpretation of Acts and Joel are many for those of us with a concern for the plight of children in today’s world. From the preceding it is clear that local congregations must believe God’s promise and prepare our children to become responsive to God’s Spirit by nurturing them in our faith traditions, by taking them frequently to our places of worship so that they feel at home there, by allowing our own character to be moulded and shaped by the Spirit of God so that our children will be motivated or emulate the godly virtues they observe in us.

One of the most important things youth ministry can do is to provide youth with three things: feet to stand on, wings to fly with, and a moral compass to know where to go. Sequentially speaking, feet come first since they constitute the foundation from where to alight. If the Church does a good job in this regard, our youth will eventually undertake their first solo flight, establishing a constructive independence. From time to time they will come back to the place from where they took off for rest, fellowship and guidance when needed; but like a healthy adult bird, they will know they have wings to go places and they will use them. And that is when the moral compass becomes crucial, to show them not just where to go, but also when to go and how to get there (Salvos, 2007:256).

### 6.3.9 Ministry for men

According to Bike (2013:94) years of Black males being unable to fulfil their two most basic gender roles, to provide for one’s family and to protect one’s family, have destroyed the self-worth of many Black men in the SA cities. The expectation that they should be the head of the family, its provider and protector is often not met because many poor men lack the capacity and the capability to fulfil these roles. Such men live in a twilight world of pretending to be in charge when they know that they are not, and their families know that too (cf. Raphael, 2010:23). As Reiser (2009:221) put it, urban Africans had their cultural base destroyed, and there was no value system which in fact

replaced it, except Christianity –and even that was about going to Church on Sunday rather than ascribing to a moral code.

For those not strengthened by faith in a higher power, alcoholism, drugs and sexual conquests are the only available outlets. Crime, AIDS and violence against women and children are testimony to this problem. And, yet, there is considerable evidence that men do not come to pastoral care and counselling in large numbers, despite these difficult and changing times and the root spiritual issues at stake. The primary approach men seem to take in seeking care is through the casual drop-in to the pastor's office. Generally they come in during times when they are at the Church for another purpose-dropping off a child for youth group, after a meeting, or doing a Church errand.

The psycho-social dissonance that is set off in such men and their families by the failure to live up to the dominant male model requires more attention than we have devoted to it. Simply put, there is need to identify the kinds of problems that affect men and develop men ministry for dealing with significant problems facing men in the Church and in the community. How can the local congregations help?

First, the local congregations should set up their own men ministry to identify the primary issues that are confronting men in their congregations. Second, assessing the overall maturity, both strengths and weaknesses of the men in the congregation; recognise significant psychological, physical and emotional conditions among them, and knowing what to do about it. Third, developing a support system for men, a responsibility that includes adequate internal support and networking with external specialists (Greenlee, 2003:52). A Fourth response could be for pastors to offer reassurance and encouragement in these times of stress and transition. This includes an attempt to join men in their worries and struggles and to engage in helpful relationships (Neuter & Poling, 1997:64).

#### 6.3.10 Telerate ministry

According to Young (1978:190), in our cold, impersonal metropolitan life, many people feel that no one cares for them. The biggest problem they face may be loneliness even though there may be very few times when they are actually alone. When they are

burdened with problems there is seemingly no one to whom they can turn for a sympathetic listening ear and, perhaps, a little guidance or help of some kind. George (1994:225) is of the view that tableware is a safety-net concept in which teams routinely phone each household of the Church to offer prayer support and care. The principles of tableware are quiet basic:

- Touch the entire Church constituency regularly without shaming, blaming, finger pointing or in any way creating a truancy effect.
- Listen to complaints but avoid taking side.
- Telecare can dispel people's anxiety that they are being abandoned simply because they are not yet taking part in something new.
- Through telecare ministry can assist the pastors to be involved in all kinds of human problems –just as Jesus was when he walked the street. In many cases one's care would be expressed by helping someone in distress to make contact with the sources of help that are available to him.

Before the pastors start a telecare ministry, there are several steps and preparation one should consider or take. First, enlist and train a group of workers who can be available to help those who want pastor's attention. Second, determine how you can let it be known that you are in the business of caring. Third, know what resources there are in the community to help the sick, the hungry, homeless, the jobless, and the seriously disturbed. Fourth, understand ahead of time that a ministry of caring for the people for whom no one cares is taxing and frustrating, and often goes without thanks. Last but not least, know also, however, that it is a rewarding ministry –and can be fruitful in reaching and developing for Jesus sake (cf. Young, 1978:191).

#### 6.3.11 Ministry with immigrants

As was already noted, globalisation, urbanisation and migration bring people from all over the world to South African cities, and Church in such a time as this is able to reach out to people of the world without having to cross geographical boundaries. Strommen (1997:105) laments that many congregations have no sense of reaching out to immigrants. They tend to redefine their purpose in terms of institutional maintenance

and survival. The care and feeding of the organisation, rather than a service to constituencies, is their number one priority.

The RCSA is no exception. As it was already mentioned, the majority of Reformed Churches in the urban settings, even those in smaller cities, are facing enormous demographic shifts and are perplexed as to how to meet the needs of the changing communities. How can the Church survive with such turnover?

The Church must set up ministry to migrant people, to absorb people rapidly into the life of the Church. They need to be incorporated into programs of worship and lay ministry where their gifts are effectively used. In the same vein, local congregations in the city must find out quickly where newcomers are in their spiritual maturity and build on that. Some are new believers in need of basic indoctrination and support. Others are mature saints who need discussion of deeper spiritual matters. Still others may be experiencing stagnation in their faith. The urban Church must help them to grow. Leadership, too, needs to be flexible and creative. Prolonged leadership apprenticeships and bureaucratic traditions built around maintaining programmes rather than ministering to people can kill the urban Church (cf. Warren, 1995:77).

From the foregoing it is clear that the time is ripe, and the local congregations cannot afford the luxury of not responding faithfully to God's call in this regard. Opportunities for mission are suddenly opening up for Christians. People who were not easy targets for Christian missions have now become increasingly open to the gospel as they settle in new environments. Studies also confirm that many people are more open to listen to the gospel when in a new environment (Greenway & Mashau, 2007:11).

#### 6.3.12 Campus ministry

One of the central questions faced by young adults in the tertiary institutions is, "What shall I do with my life?" There are many ways in which campus ministry can make important contributions to human development and meaning through the concept of vocation. The most effective way to assist young people in tertiary institutions (universities, technikons, and Colleges) in the discovery of vocation may be to put them in touch with older persons who are established in occupational roles which are of

interest to young people, and who attempt to maintain the inner dialogue between faith and work. In addition, some very enterprising campus ministry unit might develop an internship program in which students are assigned to work with persons who are strong role models for Christian vocation and who, for that reason, would take seriously the opportunity to serve as mentors (Shockley (1989:117-118).

As mentioned, sexual activity before marriage is an on-going problem, especially for the young men and women in tertiary institutions. Many unmarried students have sex in their rooms and as result many young girls do not finish school because of pregnancies resulting from premarital sex. The goal of campus ministry is to help fulfil the Great Commission of our Lord by taking the claims of Christ to the millions of students on every Campus of the learning institutions, and through a trained adult leadership, help saturate each tertiary institution of our country with the good news of God's love and forgiveness in Christ (cf. Kritzinger, Meiring & Saayman, 1994:141).

A powerful way for the local congregations to communicate God's plan for life and relationships to young people in the tertiary institutions is to use youths themselves to teach each other. Thus, peer education is important. Maybe the local Church could give youth fellowship leaders the opportunities they need to be trained in life-skills education, and then allow them to teach life-skills to their peers.

#### 6.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF KINGDOM PROJECTS

According to McLaren (2006:138), the "project" has fallen on bad times in mission's circles, precisely because "projects" are seen as short-term, attractive to donors, often designed for maximum visibility, but seldom planned with enough concern for side effects and long term impact. Having thrown out the baby with the bath water, we would do well to go hunting for the baby again. Kingdom projects will probably have the following characteristics:

- The projects should have clearly stated primary goals along with desired auxiliary outcome.



- The various tasks should be integrated into balanced teams with special attention paid to finding qualified, spiritually gifted leaders and administrators to empower and support the teams' whoever possible.
- The project should have milestone dates, when progress reports will be submitted and funding can be re-evaluated. It should be commonplace to discontinue projects that aren't working out. This means that projects that go full term without producing the desired results should be seen as failures; those that are discontinued sooner should be seen as successful experiments, "nice-tries" learning experience, and opportunities to "fail forward".
- The project should capitalise on strategic alliances whenever possible, to avoid needless duplication of effort or omission of expertise. Success seems more likely if several organisations contribute their best expertise to a well-designed joint project.
- Whenever possible, projects should become either completed or self-sustaining. For example, suppose the project is to plant a Church in a certain area, once a self-sustaining Church has taken root, the project is completed. If the objective is to wipe out a disease-carrying mosquito from a certain region, the project becomes completed once the insect is gone. If the work is necessarily an on-going work –helping the poor, caring for prisoners, healing damaged environment, educating children –then donors or foreign missionaries should consider how the work can be passed on to well-trained local individuals and Churches so that it can be locally self-sustaining.
- Whenever possible, the total cost should be clearly estimated up front for the life of a project. This enables donors to evaluate the potential benefits against the cost.
- Projects should have a wide compass that embraces factors such as the involvement of sponsor; involvement of the indigenous Church; recruitment, coaching, and the care and on-going training of the workers (cf. McLaren, 2006:139-140).

The conclusion, which can be reached from the foregoing, is that a successful project requires the three main elements: (1) political will, (2) sufficient resources, (3) well

prepared plans, (4) effective, efficient and sensitive implementation. Effective because unless the plans are developed into a physical form on the ground they are useless; efficient because unless they are cost effective, the objective of providing a low cost, low priced service to low income people is lost (Dix, 1983:84).

Keeping in mind the clarifications that were discussed, one can now attempt to formulate a balanced biblical approach for the above mentioned projects:

- Both evangelistic programmes and social service projects need to be carried out in a planned manner and not in a haphazard emotional fashion. The priorities in such co-ordinated activities of the Church should be distinctly established and carried out.
- Social service projects should be undertaken to meet the specific needs of the targeted area and not to follow stereotyped blue prints, which may not effectively meet the specific needs of local people.
- Social service projects, funds whether foreign or indigenous, should be initiated through sacrificial giving to share God's blessing received with the less fortunate ones in life (Thwaites, 2001:38).

Of course, one must point out to local pastors that it will not be easy to undertake the above-mentioned projects in the Church. Reason being: As mentioned already, the RCSA did not develop any set norms and strategy for social service projects. Therefore, one risks being accused by the Church of running projects within the Church which are not seen as a "proper part of his ministry." The Church might respond that pastors are called to preach the gospel, not to engage in community projects.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to research the projects which the local congregations of the RCSA can undertake to develop the morality of the urban community. From this chapter it was quite clear that the Church in the city must proclaim and live the whole gospel. It cannot relegate concerns for everyday human needs to the government and expect to be relevant to people. It must provide for the care and nurture of its members, help feed the poor, heal the sick, counsel the distraught, care for the widows and

orphans, and preach the Word with boldness. It must avoid the mental dichotomy that separates evangelism from social ministries and see both as ways to bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel,

The researcher was able to explain the kinds of Kingdom projects which the local congregations can undertake to promote moral regeneration of the urban community. It was clear from this chapter that social service projects should be undertaken that meet the specific needs of the targeted area and not follow stereotyped blue prints, which may not effectively meet the specific needs of the local people. Both evangelistic programmes and social service projects need to be carried out in a planned and not in a haphazard emotional fashion. One thing which should characterise this approach is that believers must exert a strong positive influence within their own society and community by living a Christ like lifestyle, one of love and compassion, truth and holiness; taking care of the brethren, the poor and the needy, the orphans, and aged, being fair and just in all their dealings, be they involved in business dealings or otherwise.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The essence of this study was to outline the calling of the Reformed Churches in the moral renewal of the South African urban community. The main objective of this chapter is to provide conclusive remarks, findings, and recommendations of the entire research.

#### **7.2 CONCLUSIVE REMARKS OF THE ENTIRE STUDY**

In Chapter One, the background underlying the study under reflection was discussed.

Chapter Two was devoted to a discussion of the biblical theology of urban ministry, and specifically the Old and the New Testament view of urban ministry was examined.

In Chapter Three, the urban problems and challenges were outlined. In the exposition, the following subjects were discussed: the concept urbanisation, the dynamics of urban demographics, the origin of the modern city, and the city of Johannesburg in particular, was used as a case study. Factors behind the relentless growth of SA cities were also discussed. Last, an exposition was provided of the profile and manifestation of moral decay in the city of Johannesburg.

In Chapter Four, research was done on how the RCSA can respond to the challenge of moral decay posed by urbanisation. In order to examine this question, the following sub-themes were discussed: The Kingdom of God and its significance for moral renewal, the role of the Church in the perspective of the Kingdom of God, specific urban problems facing the RCSA, and the response of the RCSA to moral decay involved with urbanisation.

In Chapter Five, the strategy which the RCSA can employ in its urban ministry to promote moral regeneration of the South African communities was discussed.

Chapter Six, the projects which the local congregations of the RCSA can undertake in their urban ministry to promote moral restoration of the urban areas were examined.

### 7.3 FINDINGS

Having dealt with the study under focus thoroughly, the following findings can be made:

First, it was clear that urbanisation as a growing phenomenon in the world, in Africa in particular, presents the Church with diverse challenges. It was also quite clear that many RCSA in the urban communities, even those in smaller cities, are facing enormous demographic shifts and are perplexed as to how to meet the needs of their changing communities.

Second, what transpired from this research was that the RCSA needs to reflect on the fact that urbanisation as a present fact of life for most of the human family it is a reality under the providential control of God. Simply put, the world's population has migrated to the cities and this migration has given birth to cities larger than ever existed. Thus, men and women need to be educated for Christian service in this world of urbanisation and globalisation. The Biblical strategies for growing city Churches must be sought and city workers must be trained for this purpose.

Third, it was clear from this study that there are definite signs of moral decay over a wide sphere of human endeavour in the city of Johannesburg, and that the Reformed Churches in South (east) Africa has a particular role to play as a driving agent for moral renewal. The RCSA should implement the strategy and undertake practical projects at congregational level to concretise the strategy. It was also clear that the Christian response needs to be a balanced biblical response.

### 7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is a well-established tradition in Africa for the liberation movements to present themselves as an embodiment of their people's hope and aspirations, once in government they believe that they would even change and uplift the moral values of the whole of society. The assumption of the Black upper middle class that became South Africa's dominant political elite in 1994 was that after liberation the ruling party would

remodel urban society through its endless mass campaigns it would even change and uplift the moral values of the whole of society through its Moral Regeneration Programme and would create “the new man.” Although a large degree of consensus exists among Christians that God appoints authorities (state), “willing that the world should be governed by certain laws and policies, to the end that dissoluteness of men might be restrained, and all things carried on among them with good order and decency” (cf. Belgic Confession, art. 36).

However, the reality is the opposite. The ruling elite’s mass campaigns had no discernible effect in the South African urban communities. Society stubbornly refused to be morally regenerated and no “new man” appeared. The moral decay in the South African urban communities is a growing threat to the country’s new democracy it was demonstrated in previous sections of this study. It is absolutely essential that the Church rise up to meet this challenge of the South African urban communities, by presenting to them a glorious, living and reigning Jesus Christ. Only, as the followers of Christ permeate and identify themselves with the suffering and misery of their neighbours, can they expose the evil, corruption and moral degeneration and dispel the darkness around them. The following recommendations are suggested for the process of moral renewal in the South African urban communities.

- The Church needs biblical strategies

What transpired from this research was that RCSA for a long time did not have any clear strategy for social involvement. Thus, first, recommendation is that the Church ought to be motivated to respond to the moral decay posed by urbanisation and implement the strategy for the moral renewal of the urban community. We have seen that the disciples of Jesus Christ are not to segregate themselves from the challenges of the secular society; rather, the believers are to be like salt and light influencing the society and community, not only by proclaiming the whole gospel message, but also as by living a life that could retain their Christian distinctiveness.

- The church should place great emphasis on holistic approach

The Church should place great emphasis on holistic approach (“the total ministry, to the total man”). Thus, today the local congregation in the city must proclaim and live the whole gospel. Underline the fact that if one sees only man’s physical need, one will become a humanitarian. If one sees only his mental need, one will become an educator. Moreover, if one sees only his political oppression, one will become a politician or a revolutionary, and if one sees only his spiritual need, one will become religionist.

It is in seeing the whole man with the strongest emphasis on the spiritual need; one becomes a Christian witness, a missionary, an evangelist a communicator of God’s Word. Thus, evangelistic work and the social work of the Church should not be set as alternatives, as one against the other. It is absolutely true that the priority and the prime responsibility of the Christian and his end time mandate is to proclaim the good news to all the nations; and there should be no compromise regarding the primacy and priority of evangelism. However, at the same time, the Church can never use this as a form of escapism; it must take seriously the world God has created and which He loved so much that He gave His only begotten son (cf. John 3:16).

As has been stated earlier, the concept of holistic approach has nothing to with Liberation Theology, which equates material and political liberation with the salvation of human beings. It is the concept of preaching of the ‘whole gospel’ to the ‘whole man’, and is integrated with the evangelical concept of mission and world evangelisation, which the author has discussed earlier.

- The Church must never forget its servant role.

The gospel which the Church shares is the gospel of the Kingdom. This was the message which the early Church communicated to Jews (Luke 10:9), to Samaritans (Acts 8:12), and to everyone (Acts 28:31). The Church does not preach itself, no matter how attractive its life may be or how appealing its program is. Not only is the Church a unique community in society; it also has a unique message to society, that is the message of the kingdom of God. Reference to the kingdom of God implies that the

message of the Church is also relevant for urban society. This means that the Church must understand its role in instrumental terms rather than in managerial and imperial images, as has often been the case. Thus, in a spirit of humility, we are to preach and teach, minister to the sick, feed the hungry, care prisoners, help the disadvantaged and handicapped.

- The Church needs programmes and projects

There is strong evidence that the Church in both the Old and the New Testament has been involved in projects relating to social responsibility. Thus, the third recommendation is that the local congregations of the RCSA in the city should implement the programmes and projects to change and to reconstruct the moral fibre of the South African urban communities. With this in mind, one must render service to the lost and dying of this world, the drug addicts, the alcoholics, the AIDS patient, those who are under the bondage of child labour, sex slavery, the downtrodden and the unwanted. Christians must continue to serve the urban community despite heavy odds, resistance and even misunderstanding, so that, when the Lord comes back, He may say:

Come, blessed of my Father, into the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty, and you gave me water; I was a stranger, and you invite me into your homes; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison, and you visited me (Matt. 25:34-35).

- The Church should work toward closing the credibility gap which weakens its testimony

As mentioned, the Church has a credibility gap which weakens its testimony. The Church itself does not practice what it preaches. For instance, it preaches a gospel based on love but allows hostility and anger to fester in its fellowship. It preaches a message of concern and compassion for people but seldom translates its words into actions of kindness in helping people who are in need. It often denounces injustice, unrighteousness, and immorality from the pulpit but seldom ventures out into the community to help in eradicating these evils and to work towards better conditions of life



in accordance with the will of God it proclaims in its secluded sanctuaries. Thus, many wonder if the Church is for real because of the credibility gap created when it does not openly practice what it preaches.

It is therefore, recommended that the Church in the city should work toward eliminating these credibility gaps that so often hinder its testimony in the urban communities. We can do it by doing quality work that gets genuine results in our evangelistic and educational work. We can do it by making Church membership meaningful, accepting into membership only those who are willing to submit to the discipline of Jesus Christ, and then involving all members in the life and work of the Church. We can do it by planning a full program of ministry for the Church, one that will enable the Church to express the gospel fully by word and deed in ways that are clearly meaningful in its particular setting. There is no doubt that we will win far more people when we close those credibility gaps.

➤ We need social cohesion

The challenge we face after 19 years of adopting a human rights-based national constitution is how to close the gap between the value system we committed ourselves to and our actual day to day practices in our social, political, ecclesiastical and economic relationships. A focused and purposeful programme of action must address the severe corrosion of human dignity in our current relationships as well as our history. There may indeed be broad social consensus about the fundamental values that underlie our State: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, human dignity, an open society, accountability, the rule of law, respect and reconciliation.

These values reflect the idealism which is the foundation of the kind of society we want to build in post-apartheid South Africa, an idealism that is inspired by our cultural heritage of the recognition that our own humanity depends on these respectful relationships with others. So far we have failed: the gap between constitutional norms and public morality is huge and growing. Our children need to engage actively with the

meaning of the values we cherish, so that they are able to understand them and embrace them for themselves.

Societies nurture and socialise their offspring to conduct themselves appropriately within shared value systems through rewarding appropriate behaviour and punishing or discouraging bad behaviour. The challenge for the RCSA is to figure out how to get the people in the urban communities to own these values. The pertinent question is: How, then, can the Church close this gap, and stay relevant, in the modern city that is changing at an ever-increasing speed? The author is of the opinion that we need social cohesion. Social cohesion requires South Africans to create a special national identity and to have national pride. On the other hand social cohesion also means the following.

- Social cohesion is a call for a new community defined by new value systems and social relationships. For South Africans this call is linked to the project of redefining for ourselves as a nation, different from anything previously known in our history. Here the concept of koinonia becomes a companion symbol to describe the content of social cohesion. A koinonia is a community that is founded above all on the values of mutuality and co-operation. In this community every member is first and foremost a fellow human person and sister or brother. This is what social cohesion concept requires as one goes through a process of moral regeneration in the South African urban community;
- In the same vein, the social cohesion idea challenge the Christians to take part in government's effort to fight poverty, create jobs, support democracy, fight crime, fight HIV/AIDS, increase the number of skilled workers, grow the economy and respect the rule of law;
- Social cohesion also requires us to eradicate the culture of violence in our community. Christians should be encouraged to support government's campaign, which mobilise people to fight violence and abuse against women and children, and campaigns that are meant to restore good family values. The involvement of the Church in such campaigns will help the government to deal with the evil of domestic violence and abuse in the urban communities.

It is true that Church assemblies should deal only with “ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner” (Church Order, RCSA art.30). However, when we define the Church as a sign of the kingdom of God, “ecclesiastical matters” should refer to all matters that concern the kingdom. Certainly, the Church should have much to say to modern city, both negatively and positively, as it tries to make its influence felt. However, it must not be in the position of opposing every idea simply because it is new. Part of its responsibility is to lead its people to have a positive, wholesome influence on their society on behalf of Christian values and principles clearly enunciated in the Bible. The Church ought to be like salt and light, penetrating its society.

- Dialogue between the Church and the State must be encouraged

Although the establishment, maintenance and improvement of public morality are not in the first instance the duty of the state, however, from a Christian ethical perspective we may argue that the State has indeed a responsibility in this regard and therefore the dialogue between the Church and State must be encouraged. The reality is that, in the crucible of life’s moral challenges, we are not excused from the agonies of decision making. It is here we need more than ever, the guidance and wisdom and discernment of the Holy Spirit in the practice of godliness. Believers are to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their search for a moral decision in a moral difficult situation (Col. 1:9; Eph. 1:17). This call is a reiteration of what has been remarked by one of the theologians of this age who said: ‘I believe it is part of our academic responsibility to help open up communities and prepare our Churches for serious theological dialogue and co-operation and to continue to do so” (cf. Mashau, 1999:118).

The key factors to note in view of this are:

- The Church should be the moral conscience of the government, calling it to account to the people when it oversteps the mark;
- While these distinctions may be defined, the Church needs to be vigilant to ensure that the government does not attempt to intrude or impose too much control over its territory. Conversely, the Church must not interfere with the defined task given to government.

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