

**A Virtue Ethics Construct for the Restoration of an Ethical  
Society in South Africa**

**by**

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## **Declaration**

I, Dawid Venter, student number u16310749 hereby declare that this dissertation, "*A Virtue Ethics Construct for the Restoration of an Ethical Society in South Africa*," is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Master of Theology degree at University of Pretoria, is my own original work and has not previously been submitted to any other institution of higher learning. All sources cited or quoted in this research paper are indicated and acknowledged with a comprehensive list of references.

Dawid Venter

20 May 2020

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this research to all the citizens of South Africa who endeavour to live ethically and morally sound lives in the Christian hope, based on faith and executed in love for our country and fellow citizens.

## **Acknowledgements**

To have achieved this milestone in my life, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people:

- My Heavenly Father, who provided me the strength, knowledge and perseverance to complete this study;
- Prof Danie Veldsman, research supervisor, for his invaluable advice, guidance and inspiration during difficult times of research and personal struggles;
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## **Abstract**

The Preamble to the Constitution embodies the dreams, aspirations, wishes and hopes of most South Africans who elected to opt for the freedom without violence path during the 1994 referendum and subsequent democratic elections in South Africa. Due to its progressive nature and protection of human rights the South African constitution is often described as the envy of the liberal world. The constitution grants equal rights to life, equality, freedom and dignity to all citizens.

The sad reality for the Rainbow nation is that moral decline and ethical apathy have taken the centre stage and directly influence the lives of most if not all its citizens. This calls into question the prevailing views and actions of the Christian tradition and community. The breakdown of morality in South Africa and the contrasting fact that as a nation South Africa implores God to protect and bless her, raises the question as to why South Africa is still shying away from seeking a spiritual - religion based solution to redress the waning ethical narrative of South Africa? The moral fibre of a dominant Christian country has become brittle and tacky with very few strands still hanging onto some respectable form of morality.

The research followed the *qualitative method* and whilst incorporating the most recent empirical research highlighting the relevance and importance of people's responses to and opinions of morality and ethical conduct it considers the historical, current and future of ethical conduct and morality in South Africa. The theoretical findings and proposals are incorporated into a theoretical construct built on Virtue Ethics and presented as an alternative which provides the opportunity and possibility to influence and arrest the decline of morality in South Africa.

**Key Words:** Virtue Ethics, Christian Ethics, Morality, Regeneration and Business Ethics.

## Language editor

NV – No volume

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# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR STUDY

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 A praiseworthy constitution

*“May God protect our people. Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa beso. God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa. Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika”*

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996:15).

The Preamble to the Constitution embodies the dreams, aspirations, wishes and hopes of most South Africans who elected to opt for the freedom without violence path during the 1994 referendum and subsequent democratic elections in South Africa. Due to its progressive acknowledgement and protection of human rights the South African constitution is often described as the envy of the liberal world. The constitution is the product of the negotiations between the elites of different regimes and grants equal rights to life, equality, freedom and dignity to all citizens.

The sad reality for the Rainbow nation – a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe post-apartheid South Africa, after South Africa's first fully democratic election in 1994 - is that moral decline and ethical apathy has taken the centre stage and has a direct influence on the lives of most if not all its citizens. Landman<sup>1\*</sup> describes the moral and public life of South Africa, stating;

... our country’s public life is in a moral quagmire... This point is being raised repeatedly and from different perspectives. ... People are

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1 At the time of writing Prof WA Landman was executive director of the Ethics Institute of South Africa and professor extraordinary of philosophy at the University Stellenbosch.

\*All authors are referenced in text and bibliography. Academic contributions critical to this study are expounded and further recognised in footnotes.

understandably becoming tired and despondent about all the bad news and depressing analyses overwhelming us daily. We are increasingly made aware of violence, poor service delivery, incompetence, corruption, dereliction of duty, self-interest and power hunger. People rightly want to know what we can do about it. Leaders are our moral role models – good or bad – through word and deed. It starts with parents and heads of families and extends to business undertaking's executive head and the presidents of the country.

(Landman 2012:1)

There has been very little improvement in the moral and ethical landscape in South Africa since Landman's view was first published in 2012. This calls into question the prevailing views and actions within the current Christian tradition and community which includes the power centres of religion, that is, the churches, Christian institutions and communities.

### **1.1.1 The public and the elites**

The referrals above include communities of people, whether public or elite. Prof Kotzé, research fellow and Reinet Loubser<sup>2</sup>, researcher, reported in their 2017 research *Religiosity in South Africa: Trends Among the Public and Elites*, that despite most South Africans having a conservative and traditional belief system, the institutionalisation of the liberal constitutional values continued, and that it did not always receive the support of the public (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:1). They found that most South Africans remain religious and believe in or consider God to be important in their lives, with the importance waning. However, fewer Christians considered God very important. An important finding was that most parliamentarians profess to be Christians and that God is still highly important (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:11). These opinions of the public and parliamentarians as

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<sup>2</sup> Prof Kotzé is a Research Fellow at the Centre for International and Comparative Politics, Stellenbosch University, South Africa and Reinet Loubser is from the Department of Department Old and New Testament, Theology Faculty, University Stellenbosch.

part of the Christian community provide a level of hope for a resurgence in morality.

In their 2018 study *Christian Ethics in South Africa: Liberal Values Among the Public and Elites*, Kotzé & Loubser however found that the South African public gradually became more acceptant of the liberal values of the constitution. The public's traditional conservative attitudes towards homosexuality, prostitution, abortion and euthanasia, excluding the death penalty, softened. Having said this, it remained clear from the study that South Africans have not become liberals but that Protestants and AIC's (African Independent Churches) remained conservative in their views. Parliamentarians (elites), on the other hand, however remained more accepting of liberal values and practices than the public (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2018:1).

Despite the public remaining conservative, research findings in *Moral Degeneration: Crisis in South African Schools*, undertaken by Anas Bayaga and Louw Jaysveree (2011), found that the South African society and schools are in a moral and social crisis and that this crisis is manifested in the social ills that are experienced on a daily basis in the country (cf. Bayaga & Jaysveree 2011:209). The findings of this research found that the most common social ills were that of drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and negative values such as dishonesty - all of which points to a value crisis. The interesting finding was that the learners included in the survey did not agree with the notion of a crisis. Challenging for any attempt to normalise and intervene in these conditions were met with distinctive resistance from learners as they saw their behaviour as well as immoral behaviour of adults as, '... characteristic of modern times'. The norm of the day was that of drugs, alcohol and pre-marital sex which was acceptable because everybody did it. The way of life accepted by the adolescents as normal, reflected a typical loss of a positive value system but was accepted as it was 'the way of life' (cf. Bayaga & Jaysveree 2011;209). Clearly, we stand divided as a community or public, a youth believing that the current values are the acceptable norm whilst the adults for the most part believe things should change.

Should morality in South Africa be a rag doll, she would fast be heading to the rubbish dump. With her usefulness and previous attractiveness severely tarnished as she now faces ridicule and scorn as if it was her fault that she was abused and degraded to a mere word that no one really understands and lives. Did the praiseworthy constitution deliver the expected fertile soil that would lead the moral charge through the highly acclaimed Bill of human rights and freedom and protection of the individual's dignity that the country expected when they were set free from oppression? If then on whose path lies the challenge for the restoration of morality and values?

### **1.1.2 The church**

Dr Mookgo S. Kgatle in *The prophetic voice of the South African Council of Churches: A weak voice in post-1994 South Africa*, reflects on the voice of the church in the time of apartheid in South Africa and the reasons that it lost its prophetic voice of vibrancy, criticism and communication post the 1994 transition into democracy. He highlights that the prophetic voice is not silenced but still present, although in a rather weak state (cf. Kgatle 2018:1-4). Kgatle (2018) ascribes the weakness of the prophetic voice to three reasons; The prophetic voice became part of democracy; The prophetic voice was swallowed by the state and; The prophets retired before passing the baton.

#### **1.1.2.1 The prophetic voice became part of democracy**

The prophetic voice became part of the democratic government system. Prof Wessel Bentley identified that it was not only denominational leaders and theologians who became part of the government system but also charismatic leaders of the independent churches (cf. Bentley 2013:4). In identifying that this was mainly caused by the formation of the state-initiated National Religious Leaders Forum which in 2011 joined the National Interfaith Leadership Council to form the National Interfaith Council of South Africa, Kgatle (2018), states that it was under the leadership of Pastor Ray McCauley that the lines between state and church began to blur, even to the extent that, "... it gave the political parties a platform at their (Rhema Bible Church) church services to canvas for votes before elections" (Kgatle 2018:8). A further challenge to the church whilst within the system of the state, identified by Dr Tobias Masuku in association with Prof Nelus

Niemandt, was that of the incorporation of previous anti-apartheid prophetic voices into senior positions in the state, which effectively silenced them, taking the side of the state against the victims of oppression (cf. Masuku & Niemandt 2012:6). Concluding this point, Kgatle (2018) mentions that an important difference between the pre-1994 and post-1994 church was that the later could not as its former self infringe upon the privileges of others even if it did not approve with such privileges. The church could however still have a meaningful contribution to make if it was not part of the government (cf. Kgatle 2018:8). This leads to the second point of the prophetic voice becoming weak - it was swallowed by the state!

### **1.1.2.2 The prophetic voice was swallowed by the state**

According to Dr K.T. Resane the Nelson Mandela administration, through their public recognition of the role of the church in dismantling apartheid and transforming society, placed the church at the zenith of the new era. This led to the church following an armchair theology which allowed it to go with the flow, "... the mentality of 'we have arrived' developed subtly and subliminally" (Resane 2016:4). Bentley further held the view that although the church created a critical distance from the state as a transformation partner, it was not far enough to be critical when required to be (cf. Bentley 2013:5). Clint Le Bruyns foresaw the position held by Bentley (2013) and Resane (2016) explaining that:

The potential of a progressive 'constantinianism' cannot bode well for a healthy democracy and responsible citizenship in the future. It ends up engendering an unchecked solidarity with the State rather than the people. We lose our critical edge and prophetic witness. The Church and the State are seemingly soulmates, making differentiation difficult. As people in South Africa generally, and churches in a, we might readily assume an absolutist perspective of the political powers. We, as uncritical supporters of political leadership or indeed those forming part of this political leadership self, might entertain little or no room for diversity of opinion and especially for dissent.

(Le Bruyns 2012:68)

That the church and the Christian tradition, whether charismatic, independent or denominational, through their conspicuous absence and silent retrieval into



enclaves of government opulence and comfort, contributed to the state's moral degeneration and bankruptcy of society and stands clear for all to see.

### 1.1.2.3 Not passing the baton before retirement

Harmonizing a nation consisting of different ethnic groups into a peaceful community or a "Rainbow Nation" - as per Bishop Desmond Tutu - gradually disappeared like mist before the noon day sun and was rapidly replaced by an ever increasing and out of control nightmare sweeping through the Nation, leaving the prophetic vision in its wake. There is a Sepedi saying: "*Rutang bana ditaola le seye le tšona badimong*", means to 'teach your children skills, do not pass with them to the ancestry' (cf. Kgatle 2018:4). The English idiomatic expression closest to the Sepedi saying is that of 'passing the baton'. Kgatle (2018) is of the opinion that the likes of Alan Boesak, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Makhenkesi Stofile, Mvume Dandala, Peter Marais, Frank Chikane, and others had the responsibility to train the younger generation to take over from them and that they should have 'passed the baton' to the younger generation that was ready to follow on from them. The knowledgeable voices of the pre-1994 era failed in successfully mentoring and educating the younger generation. Our time requires well informed educated voices like that of Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego who were young and influential in their time bringing vision and wisdom to the government of the day (cf. Kgatle 2018:5).

The daily reality is that the church has failed in its attempts and leaves society in general worse off than before. The mood developing in South Africa is described by Kris Dobie as one that asks for, "... a stronger moral approach – and should not just look to politicians" (Dobie 2017:17). The Ethics Institute found that, "By far the largest group of people (47%) refused to pay a bribe because of *moral or religious reason*. This is significant as it indicates that focusing on *personal morality* may be one effective way of addressing corruption" (Dobie 2017:11 emphasis added).

Considering the foregoing research, the repair, rejuvenation and restoration of morality in South Africa will be a multi-dimensional task, something that will not easily be achieved by any one organisation or community, but rather a concerted

effort based on communal accepted values and supported and driven by communities and cultures in the country.

### **1.1.3 Twenty-six years after democracy**

The question is what can be done to build and strengthen a personal morality that will positively influence the collective morality in South Africa? What should the role of Christianity and Christian ethics be in a country that has a predominant Christian religious standing founded in democracy? The 2016 Community Survey (CS) conducted by The South African Statistical Service, found that of 55,650,716 people surveyed, 78% or 43,423,717 regarded themselves as Christian (cf. CS 2016:42). Despite this, Dr S.R. Kumalo states that, "... , the first decade of democracy has seen the church retreating to denominational conclaves leaving a vacuum in the political arena" (Kumalo 2009: 246). Professor Van Wyk reflects similarly that, "The voice of the church has fallen silent in post-apartheid South Africa. Witnesses against the authorities have become rare. The prophetic voice of the churches involved in the struggle against apartheid has become muted." (Van Wyk 2005:647).

Politicians were left to do what they seem to do best - be politicians. History has shown that this unfortunately did not materialise all the expectations the Nation held. Stability, prosperity, growth and freedoms as stipulated in the greatly heralded Constitution of the Republic of South Africa did not develop and mature fully. The preamble of the South African Constitution states inter alia that;

We, the people of South Africa, ... , through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic to -  
Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on *democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights*;  
Lay the foundations for a *democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law*; *Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person*; and Build a *united and democratic South Africa* able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 emphasis added)

The possibility of a Christian life ethos manifesting itself through Christian ethics in South Africa diminished further since the Zuma administration came to power in 2009. Jacques Pauw in his book *The President's Keeper those keeping Zuma in Power and out of Prison*, remarks that:

Our State institutions have been hijacked for the benefit of the elite few. The public protector's *State of Capture* report and the thousands of leaked Gupta e-mails have painted a sordid picture of the extent to which the state, the government, the ANC and the president have been infiltrated and turned into enablers of the violation of our sovereignty. This has impoverished the nation, crippled the state institutions and jeopardized security.

(Pauw 2017:294)

The Mandela era not only created hope and optimism but showed elements of the South African ethical narrative which was aspired to. It was partially embodied and reflected in the words and actions of two of its most influential leaders of the time. Nelson Mandela advocated ethical leadership and called a generation of African and world leaders to it:

The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both ... *For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.*

(Mandela 2008 emphasis added)

Both Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa and Desmond Tutu, a revered cleric, said that to lead ethically is to lead from experience, "... not because you were a perfect leader, but because you were thrust into difficult situations – stirring hatred or calling for cool heads, igniting a

war or enshrining peace, reaching out to the poor or assuming they will perish – and maybe you helped to see humanity prevail”(Hill 2016:183).

The 2016 Community Survey showed that at least 72,6% or 31,549,253 Christians were worshipping within the formal structured churches of South Africa (CS 2016:43). This allows for the possibility of a living Christian ethical narrative to be cultivated through the formal structure of the Church. Unfortunately, the yardstick of truth and desirability is driven by a liberal democracy which is the ultimate result of a populist democracy. The pursuit of collective-action goals is becoming the main interest in politics (cf. Van Wyk 2005). Sauter (1978:122) espouses that the Church may not be primarily directed to the pursuit of social ideals, because a Church’s main interest is its position *coram Deo*. In doing this the Church will safeguard itself from ‘a political theology’ and create opportunity for the basic truths of the theory of two kingdoms (cf. Van Wyk 2005). The position of ethics and more specifically theological ethics becomes important when considering that the Church has a role to play in the restoration of morality in South Africa. In this regard Prof Louise Kretzschmar<sup>3</sup>, quoted in Hill (2016), that Theological Ethics is inescapably linked to the *Missio Dei* in the world. She says that the task of ethics is, therefore, fourfold. It analyses ‘the nature, extent and causes’ of global ethical problems and proclaims salvation. It pursues human freedom and liberation. And it acts in ways that lead to transformation of individuals and societies. With this as departure point theological ethics therefore adopts a world-transforming rather than a world-escaping approach to social and physical realities.

Reflecting on the fourfold approach espoused by Kretzschmar above, and the comments from Van Wyk (2005) regarding the Church and its standing before God, as well as the findings of the CS in 2016 coupled with the sighs of the populace and the Constitutional privileges, enhances the question of the relevancy

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3 Prof Kretzschmar is from the Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology at the School of Humanities in the College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa.

of a Christian ethics-based solution as a solution to the moral degradation of the country.

## 1.2 Research question

Defining the research question for the study at hand I reflect on the work of Kretzschmar when she considers the similarities in the question as to what it is that 9<sup>th</sup> century Wessex citizens and 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africans want for themselves and their families? The answer is to be defended from corruption, injustice, incompetence, violence and politics that threaten the future of the country. Both the societies long and hope for work, homes, health and education for their children, wanting to live without fear and with a sense of purpose and hope. The longings and expectations described by Kretzschmar seem to be far from the reality experienced in South Africa whilst world history and humanity reveals the phenomena of moral degeneration are not unique to South Africa (cf. Kretzschmar 2012:3).

Ivelina Nikolova in her 2017 article *Modern morality that gives life to vices: Glimpses of the image of moral decay in Bulgaria*, examines the phenomena that led to the appearance of modern morality in Bulgaria. She also considered how aspects of this morality broke down during political changes. Consideration of the assessments of the dramatic changes after 1990, and the impact of globalisation on the social, political and Christian life in Bulgaria provides for parallels between the Bulgarian and South African situations. Nikolova describes moral decay as a 'deep crisis':

... 'crisis' means a phenomenon or set of phenomena in the private or public plane, unstable or dangerous conditions affecting the individual, group, community or society. The crisis is considered as carrying negative changes to security, economy, politics, morality, society or the environment, spirituality and Christian life and many other spheres of human life, especially in the sudden emergence of these phenomena.

(Nikolova 2017:1)

Gauging from the foregoing it is fair to accept that the similarities between the South African and Bulgarian situations, and now further accentuated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, justify the view that South Africa is in a crisis, a moral and social crisis. The breakdown of morality in South Africa and the contrasting fact that as a nation South Africa implores God to protect and bless her, raises the question as to why South Africa is still shying away from seeking a solution based on spirituality and religion to redress the waning ethical narrative of South Africa. History under the Zuma administration shows that the efforts by Government to establish control over morality by means of creating a civil organisation to guide and establish morality amongst its populace was less than successful. The pressures brought on by the recent COVID-19 pandemic has led the current President Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, to implore the protection of God on two occasions during April 2020. He concluded all his addresses on the lock-down status with the words; “God bless South Africa” and God protect our people” a public recognition and outcry that South Africa still depends on the grace of God.

The mere existence of the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM), whose origin dates to a meeting in June 1997 between President Nelson Mandela and key South African Faith Based Organisation leaders appear to have had very little impact on bringing about the moral regeneration hoped for.

The MRM’s continued focus and work twenty-five years on reflects a distinct alignment to the political discourse of the ruling Government in the country. Father Mkatshwa (n.d.) stated that:

Whilst the president’s war against corruption and state capture is critical, the murder epidemic should be heard more forcefully. When the minister of police confesses that South Africa is like a war zone the situation must be very grim. ... Government cannot use ordinary measures to combat an extraordinary/abnormal national threat. Citizens cannot live in a state of perpetual fear for their lives. There is an urgent need for *rage* and action

(<https://www.sowetanlive.2018-09-21> emphasis added).

A culture of 'violence to fight violence', reflected by *rage* in this instance, seem to be adopted by the MRM in their support of the Minister of Police, Minister Bheki Cele. Yet in sharp contrast, the same Chairperson Father Mkatshwa (n.d.), calls for the Government in the guise of the Zondo Commission to act 'ethically' when dealing with perpetrators of State Capture when he states, "They must absolutely do everything they legally and *ethically* can to rid us of this deadly virus" (<https://city-press.news24.com/20180824> emphasis added). Such contrasts and the very neutral stance adopted during the iCareWeCare programme implemented by MRM before the elections in 2019, are sure to create even greater uncertainty and delay in establishing a culture of ethical conduct.

Professor Tinyiko Maluleke in the *Ecumenical Consultation Report, 23-26 March 2003*, stated that, "We must move away from the two extreme models of church-state interaction: lapdog or cat and mouse" Are we seeing a lapdog or cat and mouse phenomenon forming between State and MRM? When considering the MRM's *Charter of Values* and the links to the Government officials - workshops on Moral Regeneration under the leadership of Deputy President Jacob Zuma (n.d.) produced the booklet *Freedom and Obligation*, and a national Consultation in November 2001 proposed the establishment of the national Moral Regeneration Movement or MRM (<https://www.mrm.org.za/index.php/about-us>), it suggests that a lap dog relationship exists between the two bodies. This makes for a relationship that would be difficult to support and achieve the required moral successes to build an ethical populace. This situation resonates with Allan Verhey who says, "Any government's failure to act in ways coherent with the cause to which its citizens are loyal can result in a crisis of confidence" (Verhey 2005:341).

The appalling state of morality as reflected thus far and expressed in terms of statistics reviewed from the Crime Stats data 2009 - 2018 indicates an increase in criminal incidents from 2,195,292 to 2,204,2920 (12%) over the period 2009 – 2018 ([www.crimestatssa.com/national.php](http://www.crimestatssa.com/national.php)) and requires urgent action and attention. The accompanying leadership and structural failures, at institutional, private, civil and social levels combined with the flailing efforts to overcome these, especially in the light of the call from the Constitution that God should protect and

bles the people of South Africa, requires a different focus and approach to addressing the problem.

Bayaga & Jaysveree quotes Smit and Liebenberg (2003) when they continue with a view that, "Literature suggests that in order to address this value crisis, South Africans need to practice values that will promote nation-building, safe and stable schools and societies, and a sense of pride in themselves and their country" (cf. Bayaga & Jaysveree 2011:208). Albeit that not all evils and ailments can be corrected in a singular attempt, the research goal of the study is to argue that the best approach in addressing the moral crisis in the South African society and contribution to the moral restoration in this society is a virtue ethical one, within;

*A Virtue Ethics Construct for the Restoration of an Ethical Society in South Africa.*

### **1.3 Literature overview**

Kotzé and Loubser (2018) found that South Africans have softened in their traditionally conservative attitudes towards homosexuality, prostitution, abortion and euthanasia (but not the death penalty) (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2018:1). Comparing this finding to the view held by Hauerwas (1983:52) that no satisfactory alternative has been found to replace Christianity as world view and cult for sustaining the *ethos* of civilization moves us to consider in which way ethics vested in religion should be considered for the restoration of morality. When considering the comments of Prof De Villiers<sup>4</sup> in *A Christian Ethics of Responsibility* it becomes clear that Ethics of Responsibility could provide an adequate framework for dealing with issues of public morality. The question exists whether Christian Ethics is inherently a responsible enough ethic that demonstrates from a theological perspective, enough room and positive motivation to develop Christian Ethics (De Villiers 2003: 33-36). This would require a different ethical approach. Providing empirical insights into Christian South Africans views

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing Prof E De Villiers was from the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, Faculty of Theology, University Pretoria.



on morals and ethical conduct, the findings of Parboteeah<sup>5</sup>, Hoegl<sup>6</sup> and Cullen<sup>7</sup> (2008) when surveying 63,087 respondents' (of which 2,882 are South African) orientation towards ethics and its relation to religion manifest in their disapproval of certain ethical conduct (Parboteeah et al 2008:3087-389). They focussed primarily on the cognitive, affective and behavioural components of religion in relation to the justification of suspect ethical behaviours (Parboteeah et al 2008: 390-391

### **1.3.1 Virtues**

When considering the New Testament, virtues do not form a central theme and accordingly they, "... offer some accounts of character traits which are especially appropriate to, or inconsistent with, Christian life" (Porter 2001:99). Considering Paul in his formulation of faith sees faith hope and love as the guiding ideals of Christian, which is considered more important for Christian ethics. Subsequently, faith hope, and love came to be identified as the paradigmatic theological virtues, seen in contrast to the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, justice.

The incorporation of virtue ethics as the preferred ethical construct for the moral regeneration proposed in this study is further strengthened by the view which states that, "...virtues build in a kind of flexibility, even ambiguity, that is not so evident in the languages of law and duty" (Porter 2001:206).

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Understanding the South African Christian context and how Christian ethics crystalizes into a construct for restoring morality requires a reflection on and inclusion of Majority World Christianity. *Majority World* Christians as defined by Hill (2016) are those in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Oceania (Hill 2016:16). It is therefore of value for this research to consider the experiences and views held by Majority World Christians with regards Christian ethics and virtues.

### 1.3.2 Christian ethics

When considering Christian ethics, questions of justification and authorisation becomes one of epistemology, in other words they require answers that are derived from explicitly religious sources. Such sources *might* be the church, understood both as an institution and as a community of fellow believers (cf. Jones 2001:16). Hauerwas in his *Reforming Christian Social Ethics: Ten Theses* (1981), remarks in Thesis1 that, “Christian social ethics too often takes the form of principles and policies that are not clearly based on or warranted by central convictions of the faith” (Hauerwas 1981:111). If then Christian social ethics, as per Hauerwas, do not provide for a clear faith-based approach, Porter previously stated, “It has become something of a common place to regard virtues as the proper expression of the Christian life, in comparison with which the language of law and duty is regarded as derivative, excessively philosophical, or in some other way sub - Christian” (Porter 2001:203).

For Christian ethics to sustain and deliver on the promises of the new way of morality proposed by this research, requires that the theological virtues of *faith*, *hope* and *love*, be contextualized in terms of their grammatical interpretation. Although the etymology of a word requires attention it is not critical as it does not *always* shed light on its *current* significance, it is however advisable that an exegete of Scripture takes notice of the established etymology of a word. The current use of the words is far more significant and of importance for the interpretation than its etymological meaning (cf. Berkhof 1980:67- 68) and will receive further attention in this study. The paraphrasing of 1 Cor 13:13 by Du Toit in the *Mirror Bible* which reads as, “Now persuasion and every pleasurable expectation is completed in *agapē*. Faith hope, and love are in seamless union.

*Agapē* is the superlative of everything faith and hope always knew to be true about me! Love defines my eternal moment” (Mirror Bible 2012:153), brings to life the ethos hoped for in the expected moral regeneration. When considering the theological virtues of faith hope and love as virtues to be pursued, it will lead to an agent centred moral theory finding embodiment in a theory of ethical judgment and which is further espoused in his work.

### **1.3.3 Ethical judgments**

Ethical judgments form part of everyday life, and this requires the researcher to consider a suitable theoretical model for the incorporation of ethical judgments into the process of moral regeneration. The theory espoused by Tödt<sup>8</sup> (1978) provides a suitable framework. Tödt’s theory provides for a framework or orientation and analysis in a methodical approach. The scheme has been tested with respect to both its analytical and its orientative function and has been discussed with diverse groups in student tutorials and pastoral conferences (cf. Tödt 1978:109). Etienne de Villiers further holds the view that Tödt’s theory does not assert that moral agents always chronologically or psychologically follow the six steps he distinguishes. De Villiers does however concede that these six steps are always *logically presupposed* in the formation of all moral judgements, even though those who make moral judgements are often not aware that it is the case (cf. De Villiers 2013: 138). The comments of De Villiers (2013) that questions the acceptability of the Tödt theory as being an acceptable normative theory for our time is investigated and considered within the ambit of it being a suitable theory for the making of ethical judgments.

### **1.3.4 Agents**

For any change to be successful there exists a need for agents, people and institutions to accept, embrace and drive the required change. Not only does this fall to leadership but should it be the focus of leaders. Christian leaders will be required to step up to the plate so to speak and pick up the mantle of the regeneration of morality in South Africa and be the champions of the new

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<sup>8</sup> Prof Tödt (1918 -1991) was professor in Theology at University of Heidelberg Germany.

proposed ethic. Desmond Tutu in Hill (2016) previously quoted, reminds us that “To talk about ‘*ethical leadership*’ is to speak from experience, not because you were a perfect leader, but because you were thrust into difficult situations, wherein you had to deal with a variety of scenario’s and maybe you helped to see humanity prevail” ( cf. Hill 2016:183).

Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015) adds to the ethical dimension of Christian leadership the dimension of spirituality when they state that, “In addition to including vital ethical dimensions, Christian leadership is also based on Christian spirituality” (cf. Kessler & Kretzschmar 2015). They adopt a definition of Christian leadership that defines a leader as a person that is followed by others. And therefore: A Christian leader is a person who follows Christ and whom other persons follow” (Kessler & Kretzschmar 2015). The responsibility for ethical conduct reaches further than the church and its leadership. Hauerwas<sup>9</sup> (1983) in his work *The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics*, defines Christian leaders as a people of *virtue* – specifically, the *virtues* necessary for remembering and telling the story of the crucified saviour (Hauerwas 1983:378 emphasis added).

Any attempt to restore the levels of morality and institute a culture conducive to moral regeneration will require the assistance of the private, public and business sectors. Fourie<sup>10</sup> in *Can Christian Ethics be used to Engage Business? A (South)African Consideration*, mentions that Christian ethics may well be exclusively practised by the church and can theoretically be used to engage the business world (cf. Fourie 2012:50). The ‘how’ need to be investigated and will receive attention in his research. The research gap identified follows.

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<sup>9</sup> Prof Hauerwas was a long-time professor at Duke University, serving as the Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School with a joint appointment at the Duke University School of Law.

<sup>10</sup> At the time of this writing Willem Fourie was at the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria.

## 1.4 Research gap

During the past ten years, 1998 and on towards the end of 2018, South Africa experienced an incomparable decline in morality. Despite the best efforts of the ruling Government, the decline continued to include decay at a personal, organisational, private enterprise, governmental and institutional levels. From the highest levels of leadership to the lowest levels of society, degradation manifested in actions of fraud, murder, rape and false Christian doctrine. The moral fibre of a dominant Christian country has become brittle and tacky with very few strands still hanging onto some respectable form of morality. The Church as the main stay for providing moral guidance has increasingly experienced challenges of her own. Christianity was challenged by issues ranging from the acceptance and standing of gay members within the Reformed tradition to gender and sexual abuse within the Catholic tradition and violence and people abuse based in dogmatic decline in the African Independent tradition.

The South African society and schools are experiencing a moral and social crisis. This crisis is evident in the social ills that are experienced daily (cf. Bayaga & Jaysveree 2001). The Education Labour Relations Council (2003) suggests that there is an urgent need to establish ways of finding answers to the value crisis in South Africa which include, drug/alcohol abuse, crime, HIV/AIDS, and the practicing of negative values, such as dishonesty, that are prevalent among children (Bayaga & Jaysveree 2011:209).

The contribution of this study is to research the Christian virtues faith, hope and love thereby to provide a construct framed on the work of Tödt and based in Virtue ethics as a normative theory for the restoration of morality in South Africa. This becomes especially relevant when read in the light of the opinion raised by Wolfgang Huber (2012) when in his work, *Christian Responsibility and Communicative Freedom. A challenge for the future of pluralistic societies*. He states that in a rather lengthy, but relevant and guiding quote;

The crisis of modernity needs an answer. The answer implies a new awareness of the cultural roots of personal identity, of religious forms in which humans reflect the relatedness of their lives, and of institutional

forms that are necessary to define conditions for a good life. But these perspectives emphasized in our days by many communitarian philosophers and theologians must be related in a constructive way to the liberal heritage of the Enlightenment, namely, the respect for freedom of conscience, for others as for oneself. To acknowledge that we coexist within the same society with individuals and groups who form their personal and collective identities with the help of different cultural and religious sources than we do, means at the same time to accept and to shape actively the multicultural and multireligious reality of the technologically advanced societies.

(Huber 2012:26)

The research gap identified poses several challenges to the researcher and although not all of them can be addressed within the scope of this study, the prevailing restoration of a degraded morality remains the focus. The methodology identified and to be followed will strengthen the proposed approach and focus the study on the aspects that stand to deliver the most applicable concepts in support the construct to be developed and presented.

## **1.5 The methodology**

This study will be applying the *quantitative method* of research which will be sourced from existing literature and presented in support of the views heralded by the researcher. Embarking on a journey to propose and find an alternative model for dealing with the moral realities currently being experienced in South Africa will require the consideration and inclusion of existing quantitative research, models and theory vested in historical theoretical ethics and Christian ethos.

This study aims to incorporate recent empirical research highlighting the relevance and importance of people's responses to and opinions of morality and ethical conduct. It will further consider the current and historical position of morality in South Africa focussing on the political and social breakdowns that enhanced the degeneration of ethical conduct and morals during the past ten to fourteen years. Considering reasons for moral degradation and pitching it against recent research paves the way for theoretical reflection and the creation of a Christian imperative which is founded on the Gospel and stooled in Christian Virtue Ethics.

The proposed research will identify the breakdown of morality and the causes there-of within the South African society. It remains important to define the populace that will be researched. Defining the relevant concepts within the ambit of Christian and virtue ethics as well as reflection on Scripture moves the research into the domain of finding a proposed solution. Once this has been established then a theoretical model will be applied, and the most prevalent change agents identified. Realigning the initial goals and outcomes will lead to further recommendations.

The theoretical findings and proposals are built into a theoretical construct and presented as an alternative which provides the opportunity to influence and change the decline of morality in South Africa. The objectives of this research are;

- To identify and expose moral breakdowns in South Africa and its influence on the population
- To engage empirical research and theorems that can serve as a model to build and influence a new ethical reality in South Africa
- To expose and substantiate the virtues of faith, hope and love as a Christian ethic vested in virtue ethics for creating a universally accepted morals in South Africa
- To identify future related research opportunities

### **1.5.1 Research findings on ethics and morals**

Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen (2008), using data collected from 63,087 respondents in forty-four countries, which included 2,882 (which is 4,5% at a reliability level of 0.78) South Africans, found support for three hypotheses. These centred on the cognitive, affective and the behavioural component of religion and that they are negatively related to ethics (cf. Parboteeah, Hoegl & Cullen 2008:387). In comparing these findings with the normative study undertaken by Cornwall et al (1986), which included the dimensions of cognitive (knowing), affective (feelings) and behavioural (doing) they considered the manifestations of each of the above components and discussed the likely link with justifications of ethically suspect behaviours (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:389). They further stated that, "Three of the four measures of religion considered in our empirical analysis

show the expected negative relationship with individuals' unwillingness to justify unethical behaviour" (Parboteeah et al 2008:394).

Kotzé and Loubser (2018) found in their research that South Africans have softened in their traditionally conservative attitudes toward homosexuality, prostitution, abortion and euthanasia (but not the death penalty) (cf. Kotze & Loubser 2018:1). These findings do not mean that South Africa has become a nation of liberals, but rather that the changes that have occurred in a relatively short period of time are nevertheless remarkable and important. Many South African Christians are now affiliated with (*historically*) non-mainline churches such as the AIC's. Respondents who belong to AIC's also often appear to be conservative in their outlook (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2018:9 emphasis added). Accordingly, many adults claim to try to be good role models for their children, and to impart in them values that they think are worth living by. However, despite that, the children still seem to do what they like and do not want to listen to adults, whether these adults are parents, teachers, or other community leaders (cf. Bayaga & Jaysveree 2011:209).

De Villiers (2003) in considering whether *A Christian Ethics of Responsibility* could provide an adequate theoretical framework for dealing with issues of public morality, came to conclusions that it would provide a certain level of guidance to the research findings of researchers mentioned above (De Villiers 2003 :33-36). He however poses an important question for consideration in context of the research mentioned, "*How can a Christian Ethics of Responsibility deal with issues of public morality?*" The emphasis being on the 'How', provides for further consideration of the applicability of an Ethics of Responsibility as a possible vehicle for the restoration of morality. In the arena of life and morality, the world of politics plays an important and in some cases a life sustaining role, McKenny remarks that on the, closer examinations of sexual ethics and political ethics it was found that, responsibility is inadequate, or at least insufficient, as substantive principle. An alternative is to attempt to assert or reassert norms in areas of life open by modern developments. It is however the alternative from McKenny that is to apply theories of virtue to these areas (cf. McKenny 2001:251).



In relation to and as a reflection on the views and opinions that go before, Hauerwas's (1983) view that at a popular level many continue to assume there must be a close connection between religion and morality. But this is not the dominant philosophical view. Many still assume religion is essential to motivate us to do good, which is an indication, that no satisfactory alternative has been found to replace Christianity, as worldview and cult, in sustaining the *ethos* of our civilization (cf. Hauerwas 1983:51-52).

### **1.5.2 Majority world Christianity**

Understanding the South African Christian context and how Christian ethics crystalizes into a construct for restoring morality requires a reflection on and inclusion of Majority World Christianity. "*Majority World* Christians are those in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and Oceania" (Hill 2016: 16). It is important to acknowledge and apply that which we can learn from how Majority World Christians express the Ethics of the Kingdom of Christ. Holmes in this instance examines alternative views of what is good and right; it explores ways of gaining the moral knowledge we need when we ask why we ought to do right; and it brings all this to bear on the practical moral problems that arouse such thinking in the first place (cf. Holmes 1984:10). When considering the afore mentioned and reflecting on Augustine we find that Christianity includes nations Augustine considered at the time as non-Christian yet close enough to be considered inclusive, thus not calling them Christian but regarding their philosophies close to it ;

"... we include all who have been held wise men and philosophers among all nations who are discovered to have seen and taught this, be they Atlantics, Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythians, Gauls, Spaniards or of other nations – we prefer these to all other philosophies, and confess that they approach nearest to us"

(Augustine 2016:226).

When Augustine's thinking is juxtaposed with Modern World Christianity it requires further scrutiny of Christianity and its value and implication for the countries it

interacted with as it seems paramount and hence worth a reflection on Christian Ethics and virtues.

### 1.5.3 Christian ethics

Gareth Jones (2001) holds the view that when one speaks of Christian ethics, the questions of justification and authorisation becomes ones of epistemology. These questions then require answers that are derived from explicitly religious sources. The church being one of such sources should be understood both as an institution and as a community of fellow believers (cf. Jones 2001:16). Scripture which is undeniably linked to the church as the paramount criterion for discernment and guidance is positioned when considering virtue ethics, as a primary source for reflection on such virtues (cf. Porter 2001:98). In the Old Testament appeals are to God's Law and the wisdom traditions as the answers to moral questions, and an absence of focus on virtues. For Barton practical wisdom covers matters like Jew-gentile relations, how to avoid idolatry, food and sex rules, household order, work and obligations to those in authority (cf. Barton 2001:63). When considering the New Testament, virtues do not form a central theme. They do however, "... offer some accounts of character traits which are especially appropriate to, or inconsistent with, Christian life" (Porter 2001:99). The influence of the traditions of Israel, Rome and Greece refracted through the Jesus narrative and the influence and experiences of the Holy Spirit in daily life makes for a very complex environment so that it is not possible to talk about 'ethics' in the normal sense of the word (cf. Barton 2001:63). Thus, Cahill concludes that, "... relating scripture to ethics is a complex interpretive process" (Cahill 1996:5).

Hauerwas in his *Reforming Christian Social Ethics: Ten Theses*, remarks in Theses<sup>1</sup> that, "Christian social ethics too often takes the form of principles and policies that are not clearly based on or warranted by central convictions of the faith" (Hauerwas 1981:111). This highlights the complexity identified and listed by other scholars. The church's first task however is to help gain a critical perspective on those narratives that have captivated our vision and lives. Hauerwas states that by doing so, the church may well help provide a paradigm of *social relations otherwise thought impossible* (Hauerwas 1981:115 emphasis added).

Standing on its own, love as the ethic for moral regeneration, received much scrutiny, not the least from Hauerwas (1972) who says that to view Christianity as primarily an ethic of love is wrong because moral experiences revealed that such an ethic is insufficient to provide an acceptable form of moral behaviour. He further suggests that Christianity as a way of life should be opened to the charges of 'falsification' and not only our theological beliefs (cf. Hauerwas 1972:227). Christianity is viewed as a way of life that should undergo the same tests of truth and falsity as all other forms of life and is not viewed as a primary ethic of love, faith and hope. The consideration of the Christian triad of faith, hope and love provides a lens which facilitates the foundation for a Christian virtue ethics approach.

Barton (2001) asks that if there is no such thing as 'New Testament ethics' and the ethics of the epistles' is an abstraction, then how may the epistles and Christian ethics be related? (Barton 2001:66). The most common answer to this question is to separate the descriptive and normative tasks and then order them sequentially (Barton 2001:66). This allows the historian to ask what the text meant in their original historical context whereafter the results are handed to the ethicist to draw whatever conclusions are possible a function to be applied later in this research when we consider the theory of Tödt (1978) in his *Theory of making ethical judgments*.

The focus of this study is not only of a religious nature and asks questions as to how the Christian virtues of faith hope and love as a normative theory will assist in restoring morality in society. Society comprises of several elements and in the foregoing study material it was found that the both the government and private sector in South Africa are lacking in acceptable levels of morality and ethical conduct. If the ethicist must draw a conclusion, then what would it be with regards

to South Africa? Fourie<sup>11</sup> (2016) and Naudé<sup>12</sup> as well as Fourie (2011) provides some useful insights into a South African perspective and then an Africa centric view in this regard. It is Willem Fourie who in his 2012 article, *Can Christian Ethics be used to Engage Business? A (South) African Consideration*, asks the question, "... whether it is at all possible for the church to address the business world by applying its particular ethical resources, and – should this be possible – what form such engagements could take" (Fourie, 2012:46). Professor Piet Naudé in conjunction with Willem Fourie (2011) in considering corporate social responsibility and transparency in South Africa, concluded that a fundamental ethical question in South Africa is whether business people would be motivated to implement social responsibility and transparency from their inner moral convictions because it is the right thing to do in a deontological sense or whether the reality of business ethics are driven by compliance to the law which is legally enforced and not being seen as a moral imperative (Naudé & Fourie 2011:203). It remains to be seen whether the guidance from the Church and the alignment of business to assist in restoring morality and ethical conduct as a product of conviction will be successful. Fourie (2012) is of the opinion that it is possible to use the ethics practised by Christians to address the business world. The forming and positioning of morality as either an innovator or impediment in development receives further attention from Fourie (2016). This becomes relevant for consideration when understanding that South Africa is seen as a developing country. Christian ethics' main stay remains virtue ethics which will form the basis for the approach to moral regeneration in South Africa.

According to Stone (1999) the ultimacy of the love imperative does not mean that it stands alone. It is a summary of Christian ethics and as an essential feature

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authenticated by the teaching of Jesus himself. It is rather nurtured in community, founded in the nature of God, expressed in hope, and applied in a suffering world and as a result of its uniting function, implies community (cf. Stone 1999:29).

Virtue ethics as the chosen vehicle for the restoration of morality requires closer scrutiny.

#### **1.5.4 Virtue ethics**

The incorporation of virtue ethics as the preferred ethical construct for the moral regeneration proposed in this study is supported by the view held by Porter (2001). She espouses virtues as the proper expression of the Christian life, in comparison with which the language of law and duty is regarded as derivative, excessively philosophical, or in some other way sub-Christian. This provides for a kind of flexibility, even ambiguity in virtue ethics which is not so evident in the languages of law and duty (cf. Porter 2001:203). Hauerwas (2001) in reflecting on the work of MacIntyre (2007) strengthens the belief that virtue will suite future restoration efforts better than a pure narrowed Christian ethical perspective. Central to this approach is the Christian moral life which requires a teleological conception of human existence. Such a conception provides direction rather than forever being a movement between the 'back and forth' (Hauerwas 2001:87).

Virtue ethics grounded in its purpose serves as a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices through the good of the whole human life. This allows for the good of human life to be conceived in unity. It will prevent subversive arbitrariness invading the moral life and will enable us to specify the context of certain virtues adequately (MacIntyre 2007:203). The summary lists of character traits that Paul provides in Galatians 5:22 and onwards, provide a basis for Christian reflection. The formulation by Paul of faith, hope, and love as the guiding ideals of Christian life is important for Christian virtue ethics. Subsequently, faith, hope, and love came to be identified as the paradigmatic theological virtues, seen in contrast to the cardinal virtues (Porter 2001:99).

#### **1.5.5 The ethic of faith, hope and love**

1 Corinthians 13: 13, "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (Holy Bible NIV1994). The historical interpretation of this

text by Mare (1994) reflects that the words '*and now*' introduce Paul's conclusion that there are faith, hope and love - they, remain now and forever. By faith and hope remaining in eternity Paul means that trust in the Lord begins in this life and will continue forever. The hope which begins now in the Lord (Rom 8:24-25) will expand into an eternal expectation of his perfect plan for our eternal existence with him. Love is the greatest of these three graces because through faith love unites Christians personally to God (1Jn 4:10,19) and through God's love (Rm 5:5) we are enabled to love one another (Jn 13:34-35). Love is communicating grace and identifies us as children of God (Jn 13:34-35; 1 Jn 4:8 et al.) (cf. Mare 1994:644).

The related Mirror Bible text, which is a paraphrased version, reads as follows: "Now persuasion and every pleasurable expectation is completed in agape. Faith, hope and love are in seamless union. Agape is the superlative of everything faith and hope always knew to be true about me! Love defines my eternal moment" (Mirror Bible 2012:153). This version brings to life the ethos of the moral regeneration hoped for in this research.

Berkhof in his *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (1980), reminds the exegete that, "The Bible was written in human language, and consequently must be interpreted grammatically" (Berkhof 1980:67). The three virtues for which Christian ethics is rightly renowned, *faith, hope and love* (cf. Keown 1995:208) requires further consideration in the context of their grammatical interpretation. Although the etymology of a word requires attention it is not critical as it does not *always* shed light on its *current* significance, it is advisable that an exegete of Scripture takes notice of the established etymology of a word. The current use of the words is far more significant and of importance for the interpretation than its etymological meaning (Berkhof 1980:67- 68) and will receive further attention in this study.

### **1.5.6 A theory for making ethical judgments**

Tödt provides a theoretical sketch that consists of a scheme that in the past assisted in studies related to the problem of violence and opinions of church bodies concerning public issues (Tödt 1978:108-109). This theory further provides a framework or orientation and analysis in a methodical approach. The scheme has been tested with respect to both its analytical and its orientative function.

Tödt's view that the human life (*Lebenswelt*) is intertwined with a multiplicity of norms, many of which have assumed a life of their own allows for this theory to be considered as providing a suitable framework for positioning of the construct proposed (Tödt 1978: 109-110).

De Villiers (2013) espouses that Tödt excludes the intuitive moral judgements that play an important role in everyday life from his analysis (Tödt 1988b:55), thereby acknowledging the valid insight of the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and the Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas that *moral virtues*, and not so much moral norms, play a pivotal role in providing moral guidance in everyday life (De Villiers 2013:140).

De Villiers makes it clear that, although Tödt does not assert that moral agents always chronologically or psychologically follow the six steps he distinguishes, Tödt does assert that these six steps are always *logically presupposed* in the formation of all moral judgements, even though those who make moral judgements are often not aware that it is the case (De Villiers 2013).

### **1.5.7 Leadership as the agent for change**

Mr Mandela, the first democratically elected President of South Africa advocated *ethical leadership* and called a generation of African and world leaders to it. The one virtue that all leaders require to act ethically is that of faith. Christian leadership does not happen in a vacuum and is dependent on the church and society it serves to achieve the desired goals (cf. Hill 2016:182).

H. Richard Niebuhr said that faith as human confidence is central and a conserver of value and that human loyalty as a cause seems to manifest itself almost directly in politics ... as it does in religion. Indeed, in that sense all people and all human communities 'live by faith' (Niebuhr 1960:64). Leaders and more specifically Christian leaders need to find their moral compass within their church tradition and express their morality through the community of believers as it manifests itself in the church and community. Verhey (2005) stated that Christian ethics that aims to be practical will nurture the renewal and reform of the moral discourse and discernment of the churches (Verhey 2005:11). O'Donovan elegantly reminded the

Christian fraternity, that ethics by 'way of reminder' will always be an evangelical discipline, remembering and telling 'the gospel of God. If it fails to be an evangelical discipline, then it fails to be Christian ethics and fails to nurture the obedience of faith. And if it fails to be a practical discipline, then it fails to be Christian ethics and to nurture 'the obedience of faith (O'Donovan 1986: 11).

A certain level of complexity is created by the views espoused before. Tolerance is required and contextualised when considering that leadership should be cognisant of the crisis of modernity and that it needs an answer. An answer of this magnitude will require and implies a new awareness of the cultural roots of personal identity, of religious forms in which humans reflect their relatedness of their lives and that of the institutional forms necessary for a 'good life'. This further requires a deeper understanding for the collective and personal identities formed by their cultural and religious sources and thereby acknowledging and accepting the multicultural and multireligious realities of our technologically advanced society (Huber 2012:26). All the above requires a more in-depth level of research and investigations into the prevailing situation in South Africa.



## CHAPTER 2

### ETHICS AND RELATED RESEARCH

#### 2.1 Introduction

The international research conducted by Parboteeah, Hoegl and Cullen (2008), *Ethics and Religion: An Empirical Test of a Multidimensional Model*, included South African respondents and provide for the opinions and orientation of people with regards to certain ethical and moral questions and made valuable contributions to comparing the ethics and religion relationship. They stated, "... we provided detailed and broad-based evidence that religiosity is related to justifications of ethical behaviour" (Parboteeah et al 2008:395).

Kotzé and Loubser (2018) in *Christian Ethics in South Africa: Liberal Values Among the Public and Elites*, provides a Christian perspective on some of the most importantly debated topics in the country. One of their most significant findings was that, the South African public has gradually become more accepting of the liberal values of the constitution, a product of elite-driven transition to liberal democracy (Kotzé & Loubser 2018:1). The research of Parboteeah et al (2008) and Kotzé & Loubser (2018) as well as the work of De Villiers (2003) will serve as basis for understanding and guidance in this research. This will serve as departure point on the journey to assess and present Christian virtue ethics as a possible solution for the restoration of the moral degradation in South Africa.

#### 2.2 Knowledge, feelings and behaviour

Parboteeah et al (2008:389), considered the cognitive which is knowing, the affective which represents feelings and the doing which is behaviour within a conceptual framework created by Cornwall et al (1986). These are manifestations likely to be linked to the justification of ethically suspect behaviours.

The knowledge component of religion represents the cognitive aspect (De Jong, Faulkner & Warland 1976 in Parboteeah et al 2008:389). Cornwall, Albrecht, Cunningham & Pitcher (1986) found that this dimension establishes itself in the personal or private religious beliefs. These beliefs are inter alia that God and life after death exists. Parboteeah et al (2008) supports Tittle & Welsh (1983) and

Weaver & Agle (2002) in stating that, “Most religions and the consequent religious beliefs incorporate strong teachings about appropriate ethical behaviours” (Parboteeah et al, 2008:389). For example, the Ten Commandments provide guidelines as to what conduct would be considered ethical and unethical for the Jews, whilst classical Hindu writings spell out ethical values for Hindu’s on how to treat parents and elderly.

Parboteeah et al (2008) concludes that, “... religious beliefs are negatively related to justifications of unethical behaviors” (Parboteeah et al 2008:389). It is therefore reasoned that strong religious beliefs implies strong religious teachings which in turn will discourage unethical behaviour and is it unlikely that such strong religious beliefs will encourage or justify unethical behaviour. When considering the view espoused by Conroy & Emerson (2004) in Parboteeah et al (2008), it reflects that believers in God fear being caught by an omniscient God and will therefore evade acting unethically to avoid chastisement. Such a utilitarian approach assesses the cost of engaging in unethical behaviour against the reward of not partaking in such unethical actions.

The affective component of religion encompasses feelings toward religious beings, objects or institutions (Cornwall et al 1986:227). The emotional attachment or spiritual commitment of people towards religion is reflective of the degree of their commitment to their God and the religion. In its private form, the affective component refers to the subjective mode of religion and is reflected in the degree to which people are committed to God or some deity (Cornwall et al 1986: 228). For the benefit of this study, Tittle & Welch (1983) in Parboteeah et al (2008), reached a very important conclusion when they deduct that most religions and sacred groupings promote moral behaviours and that these groups also tend to emphasize such behaviours. Further they found that the emotionally attached are more likely to internalize values that will consistently promote ethical behaviours (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:390).

A premise that this research ascribes to is aligned with the finding of Parboteeah et al (2008) that strong religious feelings act as a deterrent for deviant and unethical behaviour. Although thoughts of this nature may cause discomforting cognitive feelings, those holding high religious commitments are less likely to

commit or condone unethical behaviour. The more spiritually committed the people are the less is the likelihood that they will act unethically (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:390).

The 'doing' manifestations of religious beliefs is seen as the behavioural component. De Jong et al (1976) in Parboteeah et al (2008:390) sees religious practice as an indicator of the value individuals place on religion. This manifests through religious values, which include participation in church events, praying communally and privately, and making monetary contributions to their church. Heightened involvement and awareness of church and attendance leads to greater value being attached to religion and people 'consuming' it (Meyers 2000 in Parboteeah et al 2008).

Religious practice as an attitude requires people to think about the frequency of their religious activity. Thinking about this creates a clearer and exact account of religion in their lives (Smit et al 1999 in Parboteeah et al 2008). When I compare Weaver & Agle (2002) as quoted in Parboteeah et al (2008: 390) to Meyers (2000) I find that unethical practices and behaviour are condemned by those exposed to religious teachings and ideals within a church or other religious establishment.

Meyers (2000) in Parboteeah et al (2008) found that people participating in church related activities and displaying the above behaviours form highly valued social networks. Bradley (1995) states that these social networks provides for social support which leads to improved social relationships. The mentioned influence of the cognitive, affective and behavioural components on the individual when dealing with ethical dilemmas and the importance of these components with regards to ethics and religion provide valuable and supportive research findings for this study, although the affective-cognitive aspects of the human belief system remain a mystery.

Veldsman<sup>13</sup> in his insightful and thought-provoking work, *With reasons of the heart before God. On religious experience from an evolutionary-theological perspective*,

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poses a question “What does the affective-cognitive dimension of being human entail?” He answers the question through the intellectual dissection of emotion from a theological and neuroscientific perspective. He provides valuable insights and direction to the study at hand (cf. Veldsman 2014). It is not within the scope of this study to fully consider the work of Veldsman. It does however raise very important perspectives, and the study will gratefully consider the applicable opinions. Veldsman’s point of departure is relevant and provides for valuable progression in this regard. He makes use of Pascal’s words: “The heart has its reasons which reason does not know” and “(i)t is the heart which experiences God and not the reason” (Veldsman 2014: 425). Accepting that the focus on the heart introduces the dimension of irrational thinking into the scientific academic dialogue, Veldsman continues that constructive re-introduction of ‘this irrationality’ into the contemporary science–theology discourse will lead to a critical addressing of this accusation and maybe more importantly provide more complete and richer insights into personhood (cf. Veldsman 2014). In this regard and significant to this study, Veldsman asks the question, “What does an affective-cognitive understanding of personhood entail?” (Veldsman 2014:426). A well-constructed and directive answer in this regard is valuable in this context, especially when regarded in relation to the South African situation and its relevancy to individuals within communities and their expectations.

From the preceding studies, it is evident that reason is very much alive and in control of the responses to the questions posed by the researchers Parboteeah et al (2008), Kotzé & Loubser (2018 & 2017) as well as Bayaga & Jaysveree (2011). The personhood encountered in these studies reflects as pragmatic and religion/value driven within their communities and worlds. This provides valuable behavioural insights into the communities in South Africa and provides a scientific base of justification to this study. It would however be lacking and poorer if it does not consider the view heralded by Veldsman. The insights espoused by Veldsman will be considered to shed light on the affective-cognitive dimension of the personhood and arrive at a more complete view of being human.

Being human implies that there will be an affective-cognitive dimension which enriches our understanding of life – that of consisting of human flesh and life-

giving blood. “Humans are the way that life knows life” (Veldsman 2014:427). It is in humans’ perceptive of life that the momentous and distinct representation of human life is found - its interaction with reality (cf. Veldsman 2014:427). Reality and understanding and the exploratory journey thereof to achieve meaning is nestled in the *heart*. Veldsman (2018) sees the heart as the seat of human life, and the fountain of meaning and personhood. He states that the body cannot survive without the heart ‘pumping blood’ and metaphorically there cannot be life if not ‘pumped’ by meaning, “... in whatever cultural-philosophical and psycho-sociological manner it finds historical-contextual reflective expression” (Veldsman 2014:428). Thus, the heart is the symbolic evocative term for the seat of life as it blends knowledge and emotions, through this it provides for opportunity to limitless likeness on all live forms (cf. Veldsman 2014:428). Should the heart be the seat for emotion and knowledge the question as to where the brain fits in becomes requires further attention.

Veldsman (2014) leans on the work of Gijs Dingemans, “*Het brein geeft te denken*” (2012) which concludes that, “We are our brains” (cf. Veldsman 2014:428). Suffice to mention that when Dingemans state that we are ‘more than our brains’ the wholeness of the personhood is displayed through the adoption of the systems theory and work of Sicco de Jong. This provides for a system where the human with its sub-systems can be viewed in entirety and in each of its parts whilst remaining a wholeness that exists at the same time (cf. Veldsman 2014:429).

This becomes more relevant when considering the complex nature of the morality that prevails in the South African society in general and more specifically as portrayed in the work of previous scholars. Our environment has as much an influence on us as have the interactions that we encounter through our brain. It becomes a kind of ‘counting together’ or as Dingemans refers to it as ‘optelsom’, made up from various languages. These languages - which represent the natural sciences, philosophy, psychology, religion amongst others - create for Dingemans a ‘*new religious understanding*’ specifically that of emotion and rationality, to which we now turn with Veldsman (cf. Veldsman 2014:429).

The work of LeDoux and Damasio as extrapolated by Veldsman (2014) provides new dimensions into the affective world of the person and accordingly emotions are entrenched in the human's biological nature (cf. Veldsman 2014:430-431). LeDoux in his work *The Emotional Brain* (1996) confronts us with questions relevant to the prevailing moral culture experienced in South Africa. What leads us to feel the emotions of fear, anger, love, hate and joy? Do our emotions control us, or do we control them? For LeDoux (1996) "... emotions are a subjective experience, a passionate invasion of consciousness, a feeling" (Veldsman 2014: 442). LeDoux is of the opinion that emotions are different from conscious feelings, and that they are created at a much deeper level in the brain. LeDoux recognises similarities and differences between conscious emotions and conscious thoughts but states that, "... emotional feelings involve many more brain systems than thoughts" (Veldsman 2014:432). Damasio in *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999) states that emotion and rationality go together. This closely intertwined understanding of the relationship between rationality and emotion provides the broader framework from where life emerges (cf. Veldsman 2014:433). This being something that was not clearly distinguishable from the previous works referenced in this study. Feelings however now become a focal point. These arise mainly from the conflicting consciousnesses identified by Damasio. Feelings according to Damasio, is "the realisation of a nexus between an object and an emotional body state" (Veldsman 2014:434). Happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise, and disgust are the six primary or universal emotions. They are according to Damasio, defined patterns of chemical and neural responses. These responses create adaptive behaviour which ensures that the organism maintains life (cf. Veldsman 2014:434).

According to Damasio emotions are bodily effects whilst feelings are mental effects. Emotions do not require any thinking and are essentially automatic. Emotions provide foundations for feelings and precedes feelings. Veldsman further considers two statements by De Sousa related to emotions. In context of Stoker's religious contribution, these show that "... emotions are distinct from moods but modified by them and ... emotions are reputed to be antagonists of reality." (Veldsman 2014:435). The continued focus and relevance of Veldsman's view to this study centres on these considerations. These considerations strengthen the

findings of Tittle & Welch (1983) in Parboteeah et al (2008) when they deduct most religions and religious groups tend to emphasize and promote moral behaviours, and that it follows that if people are emotionally attached, they are more likely to have internalized values consistent with promotion of ethical behaviours.

(Parboteeah et al 2008:390).

We previously aligned our thinking with that of Parboteeah et al (2008) when they found that deviant behaviour is discouraged by strong religious moods which will limit unethical behaviours as strong believers will confront behaviours potentially conflicting with their ideals. This in turn then could bring on discomforting cognitive dissonance. To avoid being judged by their religion and belief system Individuals with high religious feelings and commitment will be less likely to condone ethically suspect behaviour. A higher number of spiritually committed people will likely condemn unethical behaviours which are inconsistent with their own belief systems (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:390). This requires a further focus on the standing and contribution of religion, values and ethics in South Africa and the influence of these in bringing about moral regeneration in the country.

### **2.3 Religiosity, liberal values, ethics and religion**

In their 2017 study, *Religiosity in South Africa: Trends among the Public and Elites*, Kotzé & Loubser, found that anyone interested in the role that religion will play in South Africa society will benefit from their findings. In their measurement of religiosity and values they compared the views of Protestants, Roman Catholics, members of the African Independent Churches (AICs). They also included people who define themselves as not having a religious denomination. In addition, they distinguished between the preferences of Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa and isiZulu speakers. Finally, and where data permitted, the attitudes displayed by the general public were compared to that of the South African elites (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:2).

The data interpreted by Kotzé & Loubser (2017) originates from the World Values Survey 2013 (WVS) which conducted every 5-6 years and is the most extensive survey of its kind. The Elite Survey 2013 however only included South African parliamentarians, at the exclusion of elites from media, business and so forth that

was previously included. Therefore, they included the 2007, 2013 comparative view, of the elites, which increased from 100 in 2007 to 142 in 2013. The total number of respondents included in the 2013 survey were 3,531 (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:2).

Kotzé & Loubser (2017) is of opinion that the Elite Survey makes it possible to compare how the values of parliamentarian elites – who make South Africa's laws and help govern the country – differ from that of the public. The religious groups included in the survey were from the protestant, Roman Catholic, AIC's (African Independent Churches) and non-religious traditions. Kotzé & Loubser (2017) found that there was a decline in the Protestant sample from 39% to 22% whilst the Roman Catholic participation increased from 16% to 25%. The AIC's remained the same at 23%-26% with a slight increase in non-religious people from 22%-27% (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:2-3). The 2013 data showed that mainline Protestants has lost its position as majority Christian grouping in South Africa. Christian groups forming part of the study are now similarly represented. WVS respondents were categorised according to their home language with the four biggest language groups in the country being included, which is English, isiXhosa, isiZulu and Afrikaans speakers (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:3).

Kotzé & Loubser (2017) found when asked whether belief in God is necessary to be a moral person, 76%-82% of all Christians agreed with the statement. There was also a high agreement amongst all believers that all religions should be taught in schools 76%-84% (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:9-10). In their 2018 research, *Christian Ethics in South Africa: Liberal Values among the Public and Elites*, Kotzé & Loubser further found that the three moral issues homosexuality, abortion and capital punishment were arguably the biggest and most enduring of the heated debates on values in South Africa (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2018:2). Utilising the same data set as in their previous research, the main conclusions drawn when comparing the 2006 and 2018 studies are;

- With the exception of the death penalty the population grew more liberal towards the moral aspects under review;
- The general public mostly espouses greater conservatism than the elites;
- Protestants remained to be more conservative in their views than others.



Despite increased liberalism South Africans remain quite conservative and importantly, although South Africa have not become a nation of liberals, there is a change of heart in evidence. Attitudes towards the most controversial practices have changed significantly and it is remarkable that these changes occurred over a very short time frame (Kotzé & Loubser 2018).

When comparing the findings of Parboteeah et al (2008), the WVS (2013), and that of Kotzé & Loubser (2017 & 2018), correlations evident amongst the responses of participants, despite the measurement periods being years apart. Such correlations, albeit not completely conclusive, allow for a reasonable amount of deduction. The importance of belief in God and other beliefs such as belief in hell (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2017:6) and the strong evidence found in support of these aspects correlates positively with the findings of Parboteeah et al (2008) when they tested for the *belief in religion* dimension under the cognitive component and found that the concepts of heaven and hell had a reliability measure of 0.85. This reinforces the conceptual aspect of religion as for example the belief in God (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:389-392). These correlations are important and true for the study and strengthens the view that moral regeneration based on a deeply rooted and religious dimension remains viable.

I found a more important correlation, that of morality. Parboteeah et al (2008:390) identified that the *affective component* of religion, leads to higher spirituality and spiritual commitment. When Kotzé & Loubser (2017) asked their respondents about the “necessity to believe in God to be a moral person and have good values” 76%-82% of the sample said ‘yes’ (Kotzé & Loubser 2017). Parboteeah et al (2008) found that the ‘doing’ of religiosity provides a positive correlation between valuing religion and consuming religion (cf. Meyers, 2000 in Parboteeah et al 2008: 390). Ordinary people have begun to grow more accepting of the sometimes offensive rights of others and further many South African Christians are affiliated with non-mainline churches such as the IAC’s. Respondents who belong to the AIC’s also often appear to be conservative in their outlook (cf. Kotzé & Loubser 2018:11). The 2017 research shows that South Africa remains a very religious

country. Most people, even those classified as non-believers, believe. Although waning in importance, God remains important in their lives. Less people, Christians included, consider God very important with the number of people who consider God to be unimportant being small. “God has become less important to some people, but by no means unimportant. ... God is still highly important to those of the country’s parliamentarians that profess Christianity, which happens to be the majority” (Kotzé & Loubser 2018:11). The theoretical implications in Parboteeah et al (2008) elevated the affective component as the best indicator of religiosity with regards to ethics as it leads to the emotional reaction people have to religion. The affective component negatively correlates with the justification of ethically suspect behaviours thereby providing support for the claimed relation between religious conviction and ethics (cf. Parboteeah et al 2008:395).

The preceding conclusions and findings allow for the study to consider the validity and applicability of a Christian Ethic of Responsibility as a theoretical framework for the restoration of public morality in South Africa.

## **2.4 A Christian ethics of responsibility**

In his article, *A Christian Ethics of Responsibility: Does it provide an adequate Theoretical Framework for dealing with issues of Public Morality?* De Villiers (2003) investigates the possibility of whether the “ethics of responsibility” as espoused in Europe can be applied to South Africa. At the outset De Villiers (2003) raised his concern at the discontent with regards to defining the concept, “... [amongst] exponents of a Christian Ethics of Responsibility, there is very little agreement on the definition of such an ethics” (De Villiers 2003:23). Further consideration of the views held by De Villiers (2003) in understanding the Christian Ethics of Responsibility’s possible success in South Africa, is valuable.

The inadequacy of the theological methods followed in addressing topics of communal morality during the previous politically dispensation in South Africa failed due to liberation theology and apartheid theology being unable to make sharp distinctions between, “... theological convictions on the one hand and political, economic and social convictions on the other hand. Both approaches were confident that theological convictions would directly translate into political,

economic and social programmes and policies” (De Villiers 2003:24). According to De Villiers, the church theology approach accused liberation theology and apartheid theology of defending and idolising rules and approaches favouring certain groups in the social order (cf. De Villiers 2003:24). With the beginning of the new dispensation in South Africa, the church theology with its own Christian voice on the issues of public morality grounded in apartheid was discredited. The adherents of liberation theology and church theology now have diminishing influence on the democratic government that was brought about by its policies and a liberal constitution, which insists on the parting of religion and state (cf. De Villiers 2003:24). This creates difficulty and makes it virtually impossible for the government to accept or favour the distinctive views of any sacred group, let alone the individual views of a ‘particular sub-group’ which forms part of a religious group (cf. De Villiers 2003;24). Suffice to remain with this reasoning for now as we will return to the role of the church as a moral agent later. The question remains as to whether Christian Ethics of Responsibility could still provide an adequate theoretical framework for the restoration of morality?

Three exponents of Christian Ethics of Responsibility, William Schweiker, Wolfgang Huber and Johannes Fischer agrees with Hans Jonas, that an Ethics of Responsibility should be developed. They however believe that it should be a *Christian* Ethics of Responsibility (cf. De Villiers 2003:26 emphasis added). It is significant that the three exponents do not agree on a definition for this ethic. De Villiers (2003) broadly summarises the three possible definitions purported by Schweiker, Huber and Fischer proposing considerations that could improve their approaches;

For Schweiker “strong” versions of such an ethics would include theories of normative ethics, which take responsibility as fundamental normative principle – although he makes an exception for his own Christian Ethics of responsibility. For Fischer it is rather one basic type of category of normative ethics amongst others, which strives to spell out what the good is we owe to others. Fischer would classify as Ethics of Responsibility all normative ethical theories that engage the new task to achieve this. For Huber it includes all normative ethical theories that

engage the new challenges about responsibility in our time and are characterised by certain features.

(De Villiers 2003:29)

The disparity flowing from the attempt to define Ethics of Responsibility is confusing. It does not help to establish a Christian version of such an ethics and fail to provide an adequate theoretical framework for dealing with issues of public morality (cf. De Villiers 2003:30). To identify and apply an Ethics of Responsibility adequate for our time, the necessity of defining the term 'responsibility' is required in qualifying such ethics. In what sense then is Ethics of Responsibility the new ethics that we need for our time. Having responsibility, a fundamental first ethical principle surely distinguishes a Christian Ethics of Responsibility from other normative theories of ethics but *does not seem viable* (cf. De Villiers 2003:31 emphasis added).

Responsibility as Christian ethics is seen by others as out of fashion. Consider the reason as theorized by McKenny;

Perhaps the recovery of virtue ethics has made it [responsibility ethics] obsolete. Much of virtue ethics appeals to the same phenomenon that motivated the turn to responsibility: namely, the recognition that certain areas of life (or perhaps the whole of it) are not easily brought under determinate norms yet are still morally significant.

(McKenny 2010:39).

In the arena of life and morality, the world of politics plays an important and in some cases a life sustaining role, McKenny remarks that examinations of sexual ethics and political ethics indicate that responsibility is inadequate, or at least insufficient, in these fields as substantive principle. An alternative could be to attempt to assert or reassert norms in areas of life through modern developments. Another alternative is to apply theories of virtue to these areas (cf. McKenny 2001:251).

In relation to and as a concluding reflection on the views and opinions that go before, Hauerwas can be quoted when he states that;

For even though at a popular level many continue to assume there must be a close connection between religion and morality, this is not the dominant philosophical view. ... That many still assume religion is essential to motivate us to do good is an indication, however, that no satisfactory alternative has been found to replace Christianity, as worldview and cult, in sustaining the *ethos* of our civilization.

(Hauerwas 1983:51-52)

Now think of a doctrine – any Christian doctrine between 200 and 2000(CE). Then multiply it by historic confessions. Divide the answer by denominational variations. Add a suspicion of heresy. Subtract the original doctrine. Now what are you left with? Probably just about the sum of what theology and *ethics* have in common in the mind of your average Christian – not much (cf. Wright 2009:19 adapted at italics). In conclusion, it is reasoned that a Christian Ethics of Responsibility will probably not provide a suitable framework for addressing the restoration of morality in South Africa and that the consideration of an alternative framework would be required.

Working on research reflecting the South African situation with regards to morality, begs the question what could be gained from the way Christianity is exercised in countries across Africa and the world? In order to answer these questions, the South Africa context within the greater Christian world requires closer scrutiny. Stephen Bevans in Hill (2016) postulates that, “By 2025 fully two thirds of Christians will live in Africa, Latin America, and Asia .... The ‘average Christian today is female, black, and lives in a Brazilian favela or an African village” (Hill 2016:13).

## Chapter 3

### MAJORITY WORLD CHRISTIANITY

#### 3.1 Introduction

Modern World Christianity is a concept created by Graham Hill (2016) in his work *Global Church: Reshaping our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalizing our Churches*. Majority World churches are indigenous churches that are redefining how churches look in the twenty first century. The decisions on how these churches will respond is important (cf. Hill 2016 :13). The concept of Majority World Christianity will be considered in contextualising the current South African ethical position within the traditions of Christianity in South Africa. Bevans, Schroeder and Luzbetak (2005) postulate that, “We are now living in a “world church” where most Christians are [from the Majority World]”. In this regard David Barrett’s statistical studies have basically confirmed the shift, and Philip Jenkins has predicted that by 2025 fully two-thirds of Christians will live in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Scholars are unanimous in acknowledging the accuracy of the facts (cf. Bevans et al 2005:69).

Majority World Christians are found in the continents of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Oceania (Hill 2016:16). The Christians in South Africa by and large represent Majority World Christians. The West has much to learn from indigenous cultures and the Majority World ethics. Such lessons should ideally focus on the cultivation of *applied ethics*, that is the ethics associated with politics, power, war and peace, sexuality, family criminal restoration, truth telling, religion, medicine finance and economics, globalization and care of creation (cf. Hill 2016:185).

#### 3.2 Majority world Christians expressing the ethics of Christ and his kingdom

Majority World thinkers and pastors often discuss applied ethics, but they pursue the “discipline of theological ethics less commonly” (cf. Hill 2016:185). St Augustine when reflecting on philosophy and philosophers in *The City of God*, compared to ‘Christian man’, resonates centuries later with the position adopted by Hill above:

And though the Christian man, being ignorant of their writings, does not use in disputation of words which he has not learned – not calling that part of philosophy natural ... , or physical , which treats of the investigation of nature; or part rational, or logical, which he deals with the question how truth may be discovered; or that part moral, or ethical, which concerns morals, ... he is not, therefore, ignorant that it is from the one true and supremely good God that we have the nature in which we are made in the image of God, and that doctrine by which we know Him and ourselves, and that grace through which, by cleaving to Him, we are blessed.

(St Augustine 2016:227-228)

Within Majority World Christianity ethics is grounded in the theological ethics of the Old Testament. Majority World Christianity's ethical reflection is biblically faithful, culturally sensitive, prophetically and concretely applied (cf. Hill 2016:186). This aligns with Philip Jenkins in *The New Faces of Christianity; Believing the Bible in the Global South (2006)*, where he found that a significant level of correspondence exists between the ethical concerns of the Old Testament and those of the Majority World (cf. Hill 2016: 186-187). Majority World thinkers however also apply their thinking to and include the ethics from the New Testament. In this regard Hill (2016) refers to Samuel Waje Kunhiyop who focuses on theological themes in both Old and New Testament to build a biblical foundation for African Christian ethics (cf. Hill 2016:187). Kunhiyop (2008) is of the opinion that community is central to both African and biblical ethics and that African ethics is inconceivable outside of human community (cf. Kunhiyop 2008:65-66).

Expressing ethics within a specific cultural realm, demands that we listen to that culture when we construct Christian ethics. It was found that culture affects our interpretation of the Bible and that our application of Scripture to ethical problems is always sociocultural (cf. Hill 2016:187). In recognizing that ethical challenges are best approached within a cultural setting based on the relevant belief system and involving the sociocultural elements allows for a multi-faceted approach. When Hauerwas (1988) views the work of James Gustafson, *Christian Social Engagement vs. Irresponsibility*, he finds that Gustafson assumes that the only option for Christians is either *complete* involvement in culture or *complete*

withdrawal (cf. Hauerwas 1988:102). Yeager (2010) provides support to the opinion of in comments on the work, *Christ and Culture*, of H. Richard Niebuhr (1951) and concludes that co-dependency exists within historical location and that people do not chose to be social beings. They further remain immeasurably dependant on their fellows, and neither have they chosen their culture but rather they became conscious of a society as established among human works (cf. Yeager 2010:467).

Therefore, cultures will struggle with their own very specific ethical challenges. Ethical problems take centre stage from culture to culture and global ethical issues inform these cultural challenges, and vice versa (cf. Hill 2016:188). To this effect, Nikolova (2018) emphasised that the, “Decay in morality in Bulgaria went through a difficult period, which is still ongoing ... [the] crisis is considered as carrying negative changes to security, economy, politics, morality, society or the environment, spirituality and Christian life...” (Nikolova 2018:2). South Africa currently finds itself in a similar position as Bulgaria. In Omsk Oblast (southwestern Siberia) Baptists believe that the key ethical issue of our time is relief and refugee work (Hill 2016:188). These examples reflect that different cultures experience different challenges but that they are influenced by the global trends and even more so in the time of the COVID -19 pandemic. This represents three distinct geographical areas within the Majority World of Christianity, each valuing different breakdowns in society and possible ethical outcomes as solutions. Culture is seen to play a major role in ethical consideration and prioritization of these challenges. The prevailing cultures within these countries and their ethics are almost always focused on community (cf. Hill 2016:188).

It follows that culture is created within and focuses on a community and when ethics are expressed within a certain cultural context, then that culture influences the ethics expressed. This is a very valuable observation and relevant to the South African situation. In traditional cultures the community stands central and the individual sees themselves entirely within the community (cf. Hill 2016:188). John Mbiti (1969) states;

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist except corporately .... The community must therefore make, *create* or produce



the individual; for the individual *depends* on the corporate group...  
Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and  
what happens to the whole group happens to the individual. Therefore,  
the individual can only say. "I am because we are, and since we are,  
therefore, I am".

(Mbiti 1969:108 -109)

In such a context, and as per Kunhiyop (2008) in his work *African Christian Ethics*, morals and ethics are completely social whether practised by the individual or the community and wholly based in relationships. He also places community and relationships at the core of the theological construct of Christian ethics and starts with the Trinity. In Christian ethics, God the Father is the *norm*, with Jesus the *model* and the Holy Spirit is the *power* (cf. Hill 2016;189). The view of the Trinity as espoused by Kunhiyop (2008) is reflective of the view heralded by Basil of Caesarea as quoted by Guton (2000);

While affirming that the Holy Spirit is 'inseparable and wholly incapable of being parted from the Father and the Son', he yet held that it is necessary to distinguish: 'the original cause of all things that are made, the Father; ... the creative cause, the Son; ... the perfecting cause, the Spirit. I would gloss; the Father originates; he creates through the Son; and perfects through the Spirit.

(Guton 2000:214).

The Trinitarian relationships and actions shape the understanding of the ethical community and as such exemplifies love, sacrifice, reciprocity, mutuality and self-giving. Thus, ethical teachings and positions are meaningless without ethical integrity as this principle is true in all *cultures*: the most persuasive moral voices live consistent moral lives (cf. Hill 2016:190 emphasis added). It is one thing to speak about holiness and ethics, it is another to support this message through credible witness and ethical integrity. Being witnesses then infers upon the agent ethically acceptable levels of morality in relationships. Richard (1988:75) posits that true morality is never a concern with how we live our lives in isolation, it is a concern to participate most fully in human relationships.

Christian faith and formation are not individual matters, but depend on a community of believers, and continues to propagate that, all our morality is social – we are inherently social - and, as Durkheim and many others have clearly indicated, what makes us so uniquely human is the degree to which we are social beings. Our ability for relationships is our most distinctive characteristic (cf. Richard 1988:75). Relationships, or the ability to engage into relationships, community, culture and tradition in a very real sense, spans and links the traditions of Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and Majority World Christianity. It is therefore then that Majority World, indigenous and Western theologies are equally contextual. They are equally culture bound. They are equally particular to their time and location. There is no place, then, for ethnocentrism, colonialism, or elitism. There is no place for theological, missional, cultural, or institutionalized arrogance (cf. Hill 2016:27). This brings to bear a greater responsibility on the South African Christian community and acts as a valuable guide in the consideration of a Christian ethic as the vehicle for moral regeneration in the country. Clerics, Government, society at large and business should all heed the call to eradicate the institutionalized arrogance that prevails throughout the country.

### **3.3 Majority world christianity and the church**

Just a few short decades ago most of the Christian believers were found in the global north and west. This has however changed significantly as a rapidly swelling majority of Christians are now found in the south and east of the world. If Rip Van Winkel woke up after half a century and tried to locate his fellow Christian believers, he would find them in startling places. These Christians are voicing their faith in astonishing ways, under amazing conditions, with amazing relationships to values, principles, politics, and raising astounding theological questions that would not have seemed possible when he fell asleep (cf. Noll 2009:19-20).

Throughout the world, including South Africa, the pious churchgoer is a thing of the past and is now replaced by the responsible Christian as an independent citizen in the realm of morality and culture (cf. Moltmann 2010:14). Academics such as Hill holds true that the church as a religious and accountable institution remains the cornerstone of the ethical community when he agrees with Padilla &

Yamamori (eds 2004) that the church reveals *kingdom* ethics as a foretaste of Jesus' inaugurated kingdom (cf. Hill 2016:189). Being obedient to Jesus then results in *lived ethics*. This means that our personal and corporate *integrity* supports our ethical positions which reflects in Hauerwas (2015), *The Work of Theology, How the Holy Spirit Works*, that pointing to Jesus means that Jesus can only be known through the mantra, "No Israel, no Jesus. No Church, no Jesus (Hauerwas 2015:39). This is meant to remind us that the God we worship as Christians is a God who wills to be present to his creation in a startling fashion.

Majority World Christianity places strong reliance and emphasis on the role of the church within glocalization. *Glocalization* is a term developed by Japanese economists and popularized by Roland Robertson, it means that the local (the local, contextual, homogenous) and the global (the global, universal, heterogeneous) interconnect (cf. Hill 2016:26). This leads to the enrichment of local, regional and global theologies and practices which leads to a healthier church which becomes more missional a becomes a truer expression of the kingdom. Western societies have shifted away from Christendom and have become post-Christendom cultures (cf. Hill 2016:416). Hauerwas (2015) critiques the exitance of Protestantism and its relevance within the ethical realm of theology by stating , "... I see no reason why Barth and Aquinas, clearly two of the major theologians in the Christian tradition, cannot be used to help form the future of the church in a world Christians no longer control" (Hauerwas 2015:65).

In speaking about the *Rebirth of the Church in Sun of Righteousness, Arise!* Moltmann<sup>14</sup> (2010) emphasises the evolution of the Church, "After the hierarchical church of God the Father, Christianity came to know the brotherly church of God the SON. Today we are experiencing the charismatic church of God the Spirit" (Moltmann 2010:25). The unity of the church is established through the brotherhood of Christ not through a patriarchal hierarchy. This unity represented by way of hierarchy is replaced by the covenant, a covenant with free and equal men and women joined with each other in an open inviting friendship. Such

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14 Prof Moltmann is a German Reformed theologian who is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen.

friendships manifesting in relationships based in faith on hope and through love. Hence, “The general priesthood of all believers’ thrusts toward a political community in which human dignity and human rights of all are observed” (Moltmann 2010:23). Such strong views and statements will raise several questions. Does this mean a new church with a new covenant post-Christendom; what is the view of Christianity; the position of Scripture; where and how does spirituality form and function; how is ethics expressed and the relationship between ethics and church; what is and how does the church fulfil its social role?

Stuart Murray (2004) sees the post-Christendom as the culture that emerges when the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story whilst the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in influence (cf. Murray 2004:19). It is however Philip Jenkins (2006) that pulls the Majority World Christians views on Christianity and the Church together when he states that Asian, African and Latin American believers have views on Scripture;

- they respect the authority of scripture in matters of morality,
- they honour the Bible as an inspired text tending toward literalism,
- they show a special interest in supernatural elements of miracles, visions and healings in Scripture,
- they believe in the continuing value of prophesy,
- and they venerate the Old Testament, which is considered as authoritative as the New (cf. Jenkins 2006:4).

*“The Church is a Social Ethic”* reverberates the words of Stanley Hauerwas since 1983. In his work *The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics* (1983) Hauerwas identifies that the first social task of the church is to be the church – the servant community and that every ethic must be a social ethic (cf. Hauerwas 371:1983). Hauerwas continues and is very clear about his view that a Christian ethic cannot be a minimalistic ethic. This implies that Christian ethics is not written for everyone, but for those people who descend from the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Jesus, since Christian ethics presupposes a consecrated people who

strive to live truer to God's story, and thus it cannot be a minimalistic ethic for everyone (cf. Hauerwas 1983:373).

Reflecting critically on Hauerwas' view that the Christian ethic cannot be a 'minimalistic ethic' as experienced in the 'third-world countries' (which he does not define) but could it reasonably be accepted that the Majority World Christianity of Hill requires clarification. Hauerwas (1983) states that the church helps the world to understand what it means to be the world and the world is God's world, therefore God's 'good creation' (cf. Hauerwas 1983:375). It is undisputable that not the whole world however believes in God and his supremacy, redemption, mercy and grace. Should the church choose to ascribe to the world its tenants for existence and role within the context of Christianity, then the Christian ethic cannot be a 'minimalistic ethic'. Hauerwas in the following rather lengthy but necessary quotation from his 1983 work, *The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics* confirms this;

As Christians we will at times find that people who are not Christians manifest God's peace better than ourselves. It is to be hoped that such people may provide the conditions for our ability to cooperate with others for securing justice in the world. Such, cooperation, however, is not based on a 'natural law' legitimation of a generally shared 'natural morality'. Rather it is a testimony to the fact that *God's kingdom is wide indeed.*

(Hauerwas 1983:376-377 emphasis added)

Considering that the Christian ethic may thus not be a "minimalistic ethic' it is valuable to consider how Majority World Christians view the Christian ethic?

### **3.4 Ethics in majority world christianity**

The future never tends to be the same as the past and the truth is that the future isn't emerging from any *one* context. It's emerging globally. And it's especially emerging from the Majority World, especially when considered in the context of religion and Christianity specifically (cf. Hill 2016:419). This creates the opportunity and allows the European and American philosophy of life to consider the global missional worldview. The overarching theorem for Majority World Christianity rests

in the Global Missional Church model which consists of the three pillars of *mission*. Hill (2016) describes it as a grounding of the missional ecclesiology in the missional nature of the triune God (the *missio Dei*) whilst shaping the missional ecclesiology around *God's* mission in the world and, thirdly the expression of the missional ecclesiology according to the missional nature, structures, ministries and purpose of the church (cf. Hill 2016:426). In establishing and cultivating a new morality in South Africa this three-pronged approach theorem could serve as basis from which to approach the change, which will in nature morph into missional character.

Considering the Christian ethic of faith hope and love as central to this work, raises the question of whether this ethic is at all relevant to Majority World Christianity? It was previously asked how the Majority World Christianity view the study and work of the Holy Spirit. Considering this question, it should suffice to reflect on, *Pneumatology* which studies the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. Hill (2016) states that, "*Missional pneumatology* is the study of how the Holy Spirit empowers the church for mission and witness" (Hill 2016:435). It thus seeks Spirit-emboldened witness and releases the gifts of the Spirit as it joins the Spirit in restoring humanity in all creation (cf. Hill 2016:435). "In this way, it confronts eco-poverty..., moral decay, political injustice, ... and social oppression, and human exploitation. And it seeks to cooperate with the Spirit as he brings, peace, restoration, *love faith* and *hope*" (Hill 2016:435 emphasis added).

The principle of ethical teaching and positions being meaningless without ethical integrity is found in all cultures, "The most persuasive moral voices live consistent with moral lives" (Hill 2016:190). Living lives contradicting ethical teachings and positions will inevitably discredit such ethical learnings and positions. When applying these principles to Majority World Christianity it manifests in key themes identified by Hill (2016) these being; (1) political ethics; (2) financial ethics; (3) scientific and biomedical ethics; (4) sexual and familial ethics; and (5) ecological ethics (cf. Hill 2016:191). Not all identified areas of applied ethics concern this study directly and therefore the following receives closer attention: political ethics, financial ethics and sexual and familial ethics. The former relates to 'social ills' that

could be influenced to bring about positive change through the Christian graces of faith hope and love.

*Political ethics.* The first key theme is that of political ethics as experienced by Majority World Christianity (cf. Hill 2016:191). Within the Majority World Christianity Christian political ethics is about the church's relation to philosophies, political agents, processes and policies in the light of the rule and reign of Christ. God charges Christians with challenging and supporting the government rule, the challenge comes when the rule is oppressive, perverted, demonic, idolatrous and self-edifying. Christians are called to resist and defy and even die when necessary. (cf. Hill 2016:191). On the other hand, it is for Christians to support their governments in their efforts towards peace, justice and law and order. "We recognise governments and their agencies as gifts of God" (Hill 2016:191). Amidst this turbulent and challenging task, Christians are reminded that they should diligently protect their political independence, something that was seen to be dissipating in South Africa post 1994.

The relationship between state and church is complex and has ever increasing nuances that challenge both parties in their continued relations. Kunhiyop in Hill (2016) is of the opinion that three important principles should govern the relationship between church and state: separation, transformation, and involvement (cf. Hill 2016:192). As for separation, the church and state must remain separate. In transformation, the church seeks and strives for transforming the world, including its ethics and political systems. Involvement from the church is aimed at healing and transformation of society being God's creation and in respect of the duty placed upon man as per the Creation narrative. John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*, as quoted by Stone (1999) espouses that the dangers to be avoided in public policy, "... are the dangers of chaos founded in antinomianism and the dangers of tyranny founded in the elevation of political rulers to contend with the rule of God. Government is necessary and provided by God for welfare of humanity" (Stone 1999:131). This charge provides a challenge to the modern-day Christian in South Africa;

This feeling of reverence, and even of piety, we owe to the utmost to all our rulers, be their characters what they may. This I repeat the oftener, that we may learn not to consider the individuals themselves but hold it to be enough that by the will of the Lord they sustain a character on which he has impressed and engraven inviolable majesty. But rulers, you will say, owe mutual duties to those under them. This I have already confessed. But if from this you conclude that obedience is to be returned to none but just governors, you reason absurdly.

(Calvin 2008:986-987)

Calvin is of the opinion that the political realm should not be left to its own devices, and neither subjected to internal guidance of the Christian conscience (cf. Calvin 2008:987). As previously demonstrated, South Africa felt the full force and impact of the actions of political leaders that were left to do what they do best, that is being politicians, in abeyance of any church guidance or some guidance manipulated and controlled by the state. Since Calvin the church was permitted to restrict the state from legislating in matters of faith. There is wisdom in Calvin's insight, which stated that ethical guidance for the inner Christian life is different from laws for the state. This is true where ethical guidance for inner Christian life varies among religious groups, and it remains helpful to remember that social legislation and government are different from our finest personal ethical insights (cf. Stone 1999:131). This is a valuable opinion to apply to the current and future South African situation.

South Africa has a religiosity, which is multi-religious on paper but very Christian in practice, firmly penned into the Constitution and governed by it as such. The final word for consideration falls to Barth (1981) when in his *Theses on Church and State* he wrote as if reflecting on the South African Constitution and what was to be;

8. The state for its part cannot be tied in principle to any form of the church. It recognizes and supports the church insofar as its own purpose is grounded and included in that of the church. Thus far it is neither nonreligious nor non-confessional. But it is super-confessional insofar as it is tolerant in face of the confessional division of the church, in principle



assuring the same freedom to all church bodies within the framework of law.

(Barth 1981:521)

The Christian ethic of faith, hope and love and especially the faith ethic becomes the vantage and departure point for the church in restoring morality.

*Financial ethics.* The second key theme of the applied ethics experienced by Majority World Christians is that which plays out in the financial sphere. Hill (2016) rightfully states that Majority World thinkers write voluminous on the topic and that it would be impossible to cover all their views and theories. Therefore, we define financial ethics as ethics to do with finances and economics and do financial ethics includes such things as poverty, aid, development, economics, markets, globalization and business (cf. Hill 2016:194).

Fourie espouses that a concept closely related to morality is that of 'moral economy' (Agola & Hunter eds. 2016). This concept holds great importance for South Africa. Fourie further developed this concept in reference to Walsh-Dilley (2013) whom understands that a moral economy exists as a dual system, "a system of livelihood institutions and practices [and] ... mode of inquiry" (cf. Agola & Hunter 2016:178). The important take away for this is the observation by Fourie from Walsh - Dilley (2013) that the system is orientated towards being influenced and structured by moral dispositions and norms which in turn could be over-ridden and pressurised by economic pressures being brought to bear on them (cf. Agola & Hunter 2016:178). Fourie maintains that such an integrated approach is embedded in social relationships and moral understandings that are built up over time. In comparing the theorem of Sayer in Walsh-Dilley (2016) as applied by Shah (2009) and Hossain and Kalita (2014) to corruption in India and food price hikes in selected economies, Fourie highlights this for the South African context. This theorem states that the moral economy does not regard economic behaviour only to be motivated by self-interest and calculated rational valuation, but also by moral values (cf. Agola & Hunter 2016:178). This highlights the importance and support the thinking that an approach based on virtue ethics will provide a sustainable return to morality in South Africa.

Economic prosperity and growth however have two faces. Samuel Escobar in Hill (2016) mentions that on the one hand the middle class of Asia, Africa and Latin America have grown at an astounding rate and that five hundred and twenty five million Asians are now middle class whilst the Brookings Institute through Homi Kharas estimates that 64% of the world' middle class will live in Asia by 2030 and that the middle class will consist of almost five billion people (cf. Hill 2016:194). There is however another face to this phenomenon and that is that a great proportion of people are driven into extreme poverty in Asia. This however is not only an Asian phenomenon but a global occurrence. The inequality gap is also widening in countries like America and Australia.

Sobrino (2001) in his work *Redeeming Globalization Through Its Victims*, posits that suffering on a massive scale is unjust and cruel; it prays on innocent, defenceless people, and is a product of the world of power which includes economic, military, political, media, some-times even the church and universities. Sobrino (2001) rather views a struggling people as being generous and content in a way of life that stands in contrast to a world obsessed with capital and wealth and individuality. It follows that it means a way of life that is humanizing rather than consuming and greedy and individualistic (cf. Hill 2016:196). Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* 2013 stated that the problems of the poor need to be radically resolved by rejecting that absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and addressing structural causes of inequality. If this does not happen, no solution will be found for the world's problems (cf. Hill 2016:196). Reflecting on above theories, models, plans and debates related to how the ethics of finance, economy, wealth and the poor should be dealt with it is inevitable to consider the words of Jesus when he, as recorded in Matthew 26: 8 -11, emphasises to the disciples that the poor will always be present. Even in the challenges of finding the perfect ethic for dealing with poverty and economic imbalance Jesus' command is to find peace. Jesus' preceding words from Scripture is that we should always work at bringing his peace rather than solve all the poverty in the world. Having said that, it remains a challenge to find the balance that will provide a world at peace with itself and its people. In this work, the ethic of faith hope and love and especially the ethic of hope attempts to address this ethical challenge.

The third ethic espoused by Majority World Christianity as key theme that requires focus within the scope of this work is that of *sexual and familial ethics*. Change is inevitable and the Majority World cultures are not immune to these changes. Change is brought about by globalization, the media, economic prosperity, political shifts and cultural power. These have an influence on perspectives related to sexuality, gender and family, but to mention a few (cf. Hill 2016:201). Don Richardson (1974) in Hill (2016:201) is of the opinion that Majority World ethics cover such issues as patriarchy and matriarchy, masculinity and femininity, feminism and womanism, misogyny and sexism, abortion and conception and parenthood and marriage. It is in this ethical sphere that the ethic of love finds its departure for a wider influence into the community, culture and world. This ethic explores a myriad of relationships between the various spheres identified by Kunhiyop (2008) who mentions that the issues of pornography, rape, sexual exploitation, incest, predatory violence, human trafficking, prostitution, female circumcision, and paedophilia remains the challenges to be solved (cf. Hill 2016:201). South Africa is not immune to these issues and as per earlier statistics provided these are some of the most burning issues experienced in the country.

Richard (1988) when exploring *Ethics and the Ecclesial community*, refers to Gustafson who in his attempt to establish a theocentric ethic, stresses the important role of communities in moral discourse. Gustafson writes:

The purpose of moral discourse in communities is not in most cases to come to unanimous conclusion, though there are occasions when this is proper. It is to help form the 'consciences' of persons, to educate their rational activity, to enable them to think more clearly and thoroughly about the moral dimensions of life in the world. It is to hone more sharply their moral thinking from which choices and actions in part flow.

(Gustafson in Richard 1988:60)

The importance of the community at large is described by Hauerwas in *A community of Character*, as authority that is grounded in a community's self-understanding, and embodied in its habits, customs, laws, and traditions whilst it is this embodiment that constitutes the community's commitment to provide the means for an individual to approach the truth (cf. Richard 1988:59).

In conclusion, Majority World Christianity is based in a theocentric approach. A value approach espoused by Huber (2012), which relates to the dignity of difference or the dignity of the different, provides for a credible platform and approach to the current situation in South Africa. This is especially evident in that the Christian understanding of the human person is based on the conviction that all humans are created in the image of God. The fact that these Christians are ends in themselves and not merely means to an end, allows them to correspond to God as responsible and responsive selves (cf. Huber 2012:37).

South Africa cannot be divorced from the Majority World as there is more synergy than differences between Major World Christianity and Christianity as it manifests and exist in South Africa. Within the modern secular constitutional order there is no limit to preclude that only secular arguments should be heard. Huber makes it clear that religions in Europe and in South Africa as well as the Judeo- Christian traditions played a major role in searching for a democratic society (cf. Huber 2012:36). It is from these premises; South Africa being part of the Majority World and religion's contribution also in South Africa to democracy that we consider Christian Ethics and the graces of faith hope and love in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### CHRISTIAN ETHICS

#### 4.1 Introduction

During the past 2000 years a creative interplay between scripture, philosophy, and circumstances had a shaping and lasting effect on the formation of Christian moral thinking. No set of principals about right or wrong action that was formed out of a tradition of thought and practice that could be evaluated came into existence. There are however a lot of moral guidance and instruction in the Bible and within church teaching to be found in the early centuries of the church. This did not however evolve into or involve any Christian teaching or action that would have suggested anybody was going to take time to do ethics (cf. Wells & Quash 2010: 84). Christian ethics eventually, as we will see later, played into a widespread view of its surrounding environment. This environment suggesting that, "... ethics is about universal laws and rights on the one hand, and individual decision-making on the other, rather than being about formation of character through a rhythm of corporate practice" (Welsh & Quash 2010:85).

In this work the publicness of ethics is very much the focus and hence the universality and applicability of the ethic becomes important. More so the relevance of Christian ethics and graces applied to the model proposed and within the contemporary South African context. This study cannot but align with the view of Marshall when he states that, " I have the uncomfortable feeling when I read books designed to help Christians think ethically that they sometimes simply make matters worse and leave me in a greater state of confusion and indecision than when I started" (Marshall 1995:22). Hopefully this work will not have the same effect. The origins, relevance, practicality and theoretical prudence of Christian ethics are further considerations of this study.

#### 4.2 The origins and development of Christian ethics

##### 4.2.1 The early church fathers

The notion of Christian ethics is a modern invention as there was a time that Christian ethics did not exist as supported by both Wells and Quash above and

Hauerwas (cf. Hauerwas 1997:37). Hauerwas is quick to clarify that although Christian ethics did not exist at some time in history, it did not mean that Christians did not think and act out how to best live their lives as Christians, also a view held by Wells and Quash. Pagans and Christians who choose to be disciplined in philosophy or theology had fully indulge in these practices in order to gain the virtues required to be a philosopher or Christian (cf. Hauerwas 1997:37). It was everything and anything that constituted a person's life.

Explicit treaties on Christian ethics do not appear in Scripture or in the literatures of the Patristic writers. This does not however mean that they were indifferent to providing direction to the church. There was no distinction between theology and pastoral direction as is currently the case (cf. Hauerwas 1997:37). There existed differences between the fathers along their theological presuppositions and method. Their understanding and task and nature of moral discourse differed as did their capacity as moralists and theologians in what was to be regarded as typical of patristic ethical teaching (cf. Gould 1995:35). Without going into the detail of the work of the patristic Fathers it should suffice to reflect on a summative overview of their most important contributions and thinking.

The prescriptive character of the patristic moral teachings is illustrative as we find it in the *Didache* the well known church order from the second century and the *Apology* of Aristides, also a second century text. The ethical section of the *Didache* sets forth a primitive catechesis of moral requirements for a sinless Christian life within a specific Christian community (cf. Gould 1995:36). To encapsulate what the *Didache* generally espoused would be an exhortation to humility and innocence or as per Gould, "... neatly encapsulates what may be called the theological substance, or, better, the spirituality of the ethic of non-resistance: 'accept willingly the circumstances of your life, and see them as useful, for God is present in them'" (Gould 1995:38).

Whereas the *Didache* spoke to Christians the *Apology* of Aristides is a work of information and persuasion on behalf of Christianity to an at least nominal non-Christian audience. At first Christianity and its works are identified and positioned as the goal for those who do not follow the commands of the creator. The Christian ethics espoused is clearly grounded in the theological belief that God the creator

determines and commands what is appropriate behaviour for his creatures (cf. Gould 1995: 38-39). Secondly, Aristide's presentation of Christian ethics is sharply demarcated by its beliefs and practices from competing claims on religious allegiances. Price (1990) in Gould uses as an example Aristide's description of Christian sexual ethics that conforms to the Christian teaching about sexual restraint to emphasize the unique purity of the Christian community in contrast to the pagan world (cf. Gould 1995:39).

Monastic ethics as reflected by the Egyptian monastic movement and contained in known the *Apophthegmata Patrum* which translated reads, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, are collections of sayings and stories. Gould (1995) believes that these had an influence on the formation of Christian ethics; "One of the most important of these is certainly that placed by the Desert Fathers on the avoidance of judgment or condemnation ... and prevention of conflict" (Gould 1995:41- 42). In this regard Abba had to not only be a wise and trusted teacher but also an example of the monastic life and guiding others from personal experience gained out of the monastic life led (Gould 1995:42). Regards a monastic life and its developments, Hauerwas mentions that the monastic practice of drawing on each other's spiritual direction monks in Ireland established the private confession to a priest where the forgiveness of sins is offered after suitable penance (cf. Hauerwas 1997:39). This led to the establishment and development of the books called *Penintetials* which helped the confessor so that the appropriate penance could be given. These later gave rise to the *Summae Confessorum*. A clear tradition was well-known in the *Penetentials*, in canon law and in the *Summae Confessorum* in which ethics was distinguished from theology and doctrine (cf. Hauerwas 1997:40).

Tertullian's work, *On Patience*, may well be the first treatise by a Christian that represents a moral topic. On the other hand, it might not have been any different than his other theological and pastoral work (cf. Hauerwas 1997:38). In his work, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Augustine shaped work that would later be Christian ethics. Hauerwas states that Augustine suggested, "... that the fourfold division of the virtues familiar to pagan philosophers could rightly be understood only as forms of love whose object is God" (Hauerwas 1997:38). Augustine thus

says; “Temperance is love keeping itself entire and incorrupt for God; fortitude is love bearing everything readily for the sake of God; justice is love serving God only, and therefore ruling well all else, as subject to man; prudence is love making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it” (Augustine 1955:115). Augustine’s conflict with the Pelagians resulted in a particularly rich treatise dealing with the topics of free will grace, marriage and concupiscence (cf. Hauerwas 1997:38). Augustine’s *City of God* is an important narration of human history, wherein the earthly city does not know God and its order is based on violence whilst the heavenly city does not recognise differences and hence the one true God is worshipped (cf. Hauerwas 1997:38-39).

Hauerwas reminds the reader that although the contributions of the Church Fathers and Augustine were important in shaping Christian thinking about Christian living, the penitential tradition was as important, if not more important (cf. Hauerwas 1997:39). Paul insisted that the evil doers be rooted out of the community, but nothing is said about receiving back such an evildoer after penitence and redemption (cf. 1 Cor 5) an issue that was only resolved at the Council of Nicaea in 325. This was particularly significant since often the sin committed had been apostasy during times of persecution. Sins involving idolatry, adultery, and/or homicide all required public penance, which was quite onerous and available only once in a person’s life (cf. Hauerwas 1997:39).

The inseparable unity between the theological dimension of Christian living and ethics is best exemplified in the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. Despite all subversions of Aquinas’ intentions deriding his work as a representation and defender of ‘natural theology’, the structure of his *Summa Contra Gentiles* as well as *Summa Theologica*, “... draws upon the image of God as the artist, such that all realities are depicted as exiting and returning to God” (Hauerwas 1997:40-41). The debate to position the *Summa* as an argument for the independence of ethics, is to place the Christians’ journey to God squarely within the doctrine of God (cf. Hauerwas 1997:41).

A final word on the Church fathers falls to the view of Hauerwas when he states that, “Aquinas’s understanding of moral life is one that assumes the primacy of the



virtues for the shape of Christian life” (Hauerwas 1997:42). This being a view heralded by the work being undertaken in this study.

#### **4.2.2 The reformation**

Although the development of ethics during the Middle Ages are not less important, it was overshadowed and to a certain extent went amiss due to the dramatic and profound effect that the Reformation had on shaping the thinking of both Protestant and Catholic Christians about life. “It is not as if Luther and Calvin in their own work mark an entirely new way of thinking about Christian life, but certainly the forces they unleashed changed everything ... neither of whom distinguished between theology and ethics” (Hauerwas 1997:42). Throughout the Reformation there was an intensification of the appeal to scripture. During the Reformation however, which was a diverse movement consisting of agendas and methods and which reflected the diverse backgrounds and challenges of individual reformers, ethics received very little if any mention. In this regard McGrath (1995) clarifies, “It is therefore potentially misleading to speak of ‘*the Reformation approach to ethics*’, as if there was one single outlook typical of the movement. Instead, we must consider several trends within the Reformation, which collectively make up a coherent approach to ethics” (McGrath 1995:48).

McGrath (1995) ascribes the major causes influencing ethics during the Reformation period to four factors. These are: A new importance of the bible, A new hermeneutics; The *analogical* sense – an interpretation that interprets passages to indicate the grounds of Christian hope, these being;

*The tension between magisterial and radical reformations* – The reformation was not homogeneous. There was a major divide between the so-called magisterial reformation and radical reformation. The magisterial approach held a more positive approach and attitude towards magistrates and secular authority in general whilst the Radical Reformation rejected any notion of involvement in secular affairs (cf. McGrath 1995:51). “Many of the radicals despaired of the secular order, regarding it as virtually beyond redemption. ... Holiness can only be maintained by totally withdrawing from society – a view which sociologists dub the ‘sectarian’ mentality or the ‘privatization of Christianity’” (McGrath 1995:51). The

radical approach viewed Christian ethics as only pertaining to the Christian community and that community alone. It reflects strongly in and continues within the Anabaptist refrain (cf. McGrath 1995: 51).

In contrast it is found that the magisterial Reformation affirmed the world, arguing that this was the proper place for Christians and their calling. Christian ethics thus related both to Christians and to the society in which they were called to live out their vocation (cf. McGrath 1995:52). Important for this study is what Hauerwas states in this regard;

Yet the polemical terms of the Reformation could not help but reshape how ethics was conceived in relation to theology. Faith, not works, determines the Christian relationship to God. Moreover, works became associated with “ethics” particularly as ethics was alleged to be the way sinners attempt to secure their standing before God to avoid dependence on God’s grace.

(Hauerwas 1997:42).

Central to Luther’s doctrine of salvation stood the dogma of justification. This raised the question as to why it was required to do good works and thus what would be the motivation for ethics? It does raise two points of relevance. The first being that no amount of moral action can earn our salvation. Secondly works are done in response to our justification. “They are a natural expression of our thankfulness to God” (McGrath 1995:54). McGrath continues;

The transformation of humanity is a prerequisite for reformation. Or, as Luther put it, ‘it isn’t’ good works which makes an individual good, but a good individual who does good works’. The New Testament, he argues, particularly the Pauline writings, emphasize that this transformation is to be understood as *God’s transformation of us*, rather than our own attempt to transform us: thus, Paul speaks of the ‘fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), drawing attention to the fact that this ‘fruit’ is the result of God’s action within us, rather than our action independent of God.

(McGrath1995:54).

One of the most characteristic features of Reformation spirituality remained the transformative encounter between the believer and the risen Christ, brought about through faith (cf. McGrath 1995:55).

This however contributed to the tension between law and grace for the Protestant Christian. Hauerwas is of the opinion that the Protestant Reformation changed the language for how Christians understood 'ethics', but not only that, far more importantly were the changes in the ways Christians related to their world (cf. Hauerwas 1997:43). It however became less clear amongst Protestants what it meant to be a Christian in the face of the attempts to 'do' ethics. The 'how to' of ethics became an increasingly more challenging field for theologians and how to relate it to theology as it was assumed that, "... ethics is an autonomous discipline that is no longer dependent on religious conviction" (Hauerwas 1997:43).

#### **4.2.3 The contemporary context**

The Reformation was characterised as the movement of Christian activity which moved away from the monasteries and into the marketplace. In this happening then the question remains whether Christian activity that moved into the market would influence dogma, remained relevant (cf. McGrath 1995:53). In this regard Hauerwas questions both dogma and Constantinian Christianity and although dogma is extremely important, he continues that equally significant was the question of whether the habits of Constantinian Christianity should be continued. He further views the isolation of doctrine from ethics as a Constantinian strategy (cf. Hauerwas 2015:59). A conflicting view then exists, but Hauerwas clarifies his position in that he recognises the magisterial Reformer's recovery of the Christological centre of Christian faith as expressed in the justification of faith through grace as singular significance. However, as Protestantism developed Hauerwas mentions that, "... the emphasis on justification became divorced from Christology and as a result justification by grace through faith became a description of the anthropological conditions necessary to have 'faith'" (Hauerwas 2015:59).

This prepared the grounds for the development of Protestant Liberalism and the subsequent moralization of Christian Theology, which allowed for Kant's attempts

to save Christian convictions by construing them as ethics and thereby becoming the greatest representative of Protestant liberal theology (cf. Hauerwas 1997:45). Kant sought to ground ethics in reason itself since in Kant's words, 'It is there I discover that what I do can only be unconditionally good to the extent I can will what I have done as a universal law' (cf. Hauerwas 1997:44). Thus, an ethics based on reason alone can be distinguished from religion, politics and etiquette. After this Protestant liberal theology became but a series of footnotes to Kant's work (cf. Hauerwas 1997:45). To illustrate this point it is valuable to consider that protestant theologians were no longer sure about the metaphysical status of Christian claims. Christian convictions were anchored in anthropological generalisations or ethics to keep them meaningful. Secondly, Jesus was no longer viewed as the resurrected Messiah, his significance was to be found in his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Lastly theology or at least Protestant liberal theology became ethics, "... but the ethics it became was distinctively Kant's ethics dressed in religious language" (Hauerwas 1997:45).

Schleiermacher who formed part of the romantic revolt against Kant's rationalism, devoted no section to ethics in his great work, *The Christian Faith*. Karl Barth however rightly argued that Schleiermacher's work was ethical in his drawing people into the education movement (cf. Hauerwas 1997:45-46). Hauerwas quotes Karl Barth on Schleiermacher in stating "Schleiermacher's entire philosophy of religion, and therefore his entire teaching of the nature of religion and Christianity was something secondary, auxiliary to the consolidation of this true concern of his, the ethical one. The fact that in academic theory, he ranked theology below ethics, is but an expression of the state of affairs" (Barth in Hauerwas 1997:46).

Schleiermacher's thinking and work led to the position where it became unclear as to where ethics should be placed. The proper placement of ethics could either be in 'dogmatics' or in 'practical disciplines' (cf. Hauerwas 1997:47). This debate raged on and according to Hauerwas the debate in the United States, a debate which included Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey and James Gustafson, could not resolve this fundamental issue (cf. Hauerwas 1997:48).

It is most probably in the thoughts and work of Barth that we find a level of solace with regards to this fundamental question. Hauerwas (1970) regards Barth as the

greatest Protestant theologian of the century and emphasises that for Barth there can be no ethics that is not from beginning to end theological (cf. Hauerwas 1997:48). John Webster (1995) as recorded in Hauerwas (1997) describes Barth's ethics as based on the assumption that all moral problems are to be solved through the correct theological description of the moral space. These descriptions contained more than just the description of the moral agent's consciousness. For a Christian moral ontology to be successful, it needs to be a depiction of the word of humans as enclosed and governed by the creative, redemptive and sanctifying work of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit (cf. Hauerwas 1997:49). This thinking from Barth will be used as a guideline for the thinking and action of this study and similarly provide a cornerstone for it.

### **4.3 Christian ethics and non-Christians**

To attempt to fully answer the question as to the importance, relationship and influence of Christian ethics to non-Christians within the confines of this study would be a task near impossible, therefore we return to the mainstream thoughts and views on the applicability of Christian ethics to society and how it was shaped through time by different theologians and ethicists.

McGrath (1995) is of the opinion that the most important contribution of the Reformation to Christian ethics is not especially ethical but rather vested in two leading ideas. The first being that of Luther who views that Christians are meant to be ethical in the world, and not in isolation from the world. Secondly Calvin who insisted that the proper place for the believer is in the world and provides theoretical justification for ethical action in the world which avoids the danger of merely echoing what the world happens to say (cf. McGrath 1995:57). It was the Quaker William Penn (1644-1718) who captured this aspect of Reformation spirituality when he wrote, "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavours to mend it" (McGrath 1995:59). Brown (1995) reports on Hauerwas and Yoder's approach to war and peace, when he mentions that both calls the Christian community to be set apart, "... living the ethics of Jesus, but bearing no responsibility to transform the world, because there can be no shared ethics between Christian and non-Christian. The church is there to invite and cajole, rather than to permeate the society in which it

is set” (Brown 1995:69). These contrasting views on Christian ethics becomes challenging for modern day Christians as it would suggest that the church and Christians are to react and live in a way reminiscent of the times when the church withdrew into itself to solve its own internal struggles. The work of Hauerwas previous referred to in this study, goes to great lengths to distinguish between the personal and social ethics of the Christian and the role of the church. Hauerwas returned to the greater portion of reality when he surmised that at times, we will find that people who are not Christians manifest God’s peace better than we ourselves. He further articulates the hope that such people may provide conditions that will allow us to cooperate with others for securing justice in the world. He is of the belief that cooperation which come about in this way, is not based on a ‘natural law’ but legitimation of a generally shared ‘natural morality’. It rather becomes a testimony to the fact that God’s kingdom is *wide* indeed. Therefore, the church and the body of believers, the congregants, have *no right* to determine the boundaries of God’s kingdom, for it is their happy task to acknowledge God’s power and to make his kingdom present in the most surprising places and ways (cf. Hauerwas 1983:373 -377 emphasis added).

The acknowledgement from Hauerwas that no one has the right to limit the work of God’s kingdom and acknowledging that God’s kingdom is indeed wide allows space and reflection to gain further insights and align to the thinking and work of several other authors. Brown(1995) in his critique on the related view of Hauerwas and Yoder raises the acute issues of contextuality and contrast it in reference to Jesus’ reaction to the oppressed and vulnerable when he states that, “In his life and teaching Jesus clearly demonstrated what to do in love when one’s own private interests are threatened” (Brown 1983:69). Love remained the underlying assumption, but as emphasised by the post-Constantine church, “... it was now a love required to act in defence of the threatened other, and it is one thing to abandon one’s own interests; quite another to sacrifice a weak vulnerable other” (Brown 1983:69). The modern approach that focusses less on the Biblical role and guidance within Christian ethics when compared to the overbearing approach of the previous millennia is highlighted in the increasing specialization which leads to Christian ethicists tending to be rather weak in their use of the Bible and in detecting parallel or related issues in doctrine. Moltmann is a rare example of a

major theologian who is equally competent when writing on both morals and doctrine (cf. Brown 1983:73). The use of doctrine and ethics in support of each other and in combination becomes critical when considering the possible environmental and cultural influences it can exert and be exposed to. It is therefore necessary to also consider how the Christian ethic is relevant to the place, time and space where it finds itself.

In the above regard Brown mentions that, "Christian ethics could thus only be enriched by a wider frame of reference" and that Moltmann and Pannenberg as students of Barth, already "... strayed far from their teacher's intransigence on this subject..." (Brown 1983:74). In, *The Context of Christian Ethics*, by Bonhoeffer, 1955 it is stressed that 'The ethical', cannot be detached from reality. Christian ethics is always a matter of correct appreciation of real situations and of serious reflection upon them (cf. Boulton, Kennedy & Verhey (eds) 1994:281). What Bonhoeffer stresses is that not only are the facts of the situation of importance but that it also involves the evaluative description and location with a perspective and view of the situation (cf. Boulton et al 1994:281). Such an approach necessitates reflection on whether Christian ethics needs to be broader and more applicable or even 'universal', rather than being a limited application to the Christian community alone and influenced by its cultural context. Hence a confluence and theoretical convergence of possibilities are considered with regards to the application of Christian ethics for a South Africa in need of rescue from the quagmire of moral filth and deception.

Moltmann (2010) in his exposition on the final judgment says that the view that God is the enemy of unbelievers (with the possible persecution of unbelievers as God's enemies) is wrong, nor is he the executioner of the godless. God has consigned *all* men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon *all* (Rom. 11:32). He continues that we must view and respect all human beings, whatever they believe or don't believe, as those on whom God has had mercy. Had Moltmann ended his rhetoric at this point the case for Christian ethics applying to Christians alone, would suffice. He however continues with the statement that, whoever they are, God loves them, and that Christ has died for them and thus God's Spirit works in their lives too and that makes it very difficult to be against

them (cf. Moltmann 2010:144). Hence, “Can this universalism be realized through a *global ethic* resting on the golden rule, ‘Do as you would be done by?’ After all, this rule can be found in both Confucius and the Bible” (Moltmann 2010:145 emphasis added). If at the final judgment God is not the enemy of non-believers it will be difficult to exclude non-Christians from Christian ethics , after all it ;

... is not about a constellation of influential theologians but about relocating Christian ethics from the academy to the church, from the theories of philosophers to the practices of disciples, from the dilemmas of the textbook to the habits learned in Sunday school. Its claim is that it is in sacrament and sermon, in food kitchen and at hospital bedside, in daily prayer and in annual church finance meeting, rather than in John Rawls’ original position or Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative, that the heart of ethics truly lie.

(Wells & Quash 2010:203-204)

The Protestant positions on ethics is of special interest to this study. In his findings on the work of Gustafson, Richard (1988) writes, “While Gustafson is determined to begin his ethics from a historical and social starting point, he is nonetheless interested in arriving at some universal perspective” (cf. Richard 1988:40). This departure point leads on to the point that ethics must begin from within a specific tradition and attempt to establish a universal significance. Gustafson sees ethics as being universal and not restrictive. The rational rather than religious basis for ethics adopted by Gustafson becomes clearer when considering that, while religion and in this instance Christianity, is grounded primarily on experience of God (*reason*), and not ethical considerations, it can powerfully motivate an ethical decision (*justification*) (emphasis added). Thus, the morally good and the theologically good cannot be collapsed into one, one can qualify the other (cf. Richard1988:38).

Gustafson’s awareness of the fact that “the cultural context conditions visions and ways of life” gives rise to a very specific determination, one in which morality and specifically religious morality is socially embodied and ‘ecclesially’ determined (cf. Richard 1988:39). Wells & Quash (2010) says of ecclesial ethics within Christian ethics;



“...ecclesial ethics suggests that Christian ethics *should* first be concerned with life made possible in Christ for Christians. It is not that Christians are better or more deserving of attention *than others*; it is that Christians are (or *should* be) those who look first to the transformation brought in Christ, rather than the contours of human society, for sources of ethics”

(Wells & Quash 2010:180 emphasis added).

Clearly there is no intention to exclude non-Christians from the arena of ecclesial ethics, which is as stated a strand of Christian ethics. Gustafson in his work, *Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective*, posits that, “The central issue is that Christianity always claimed its historical particularity – the biblical events and their record – to have universal significance and import” (Richard 1988:41).

With compelling clarity Gustafson experiences the person of Jesus Christ as the medium through which God’s universal purpose for humankind and the rest of creation is experienced (cf. Richard 1988:41). Thus, for Gustafson the belief in Jesus Christ can and does lead to specific ethical decisions. “One can be moral for ‘religious’ reasons; morality can be grounded in theological beliefs. What is specific about such grounding for Christians is the person of Jesus Christ” (Richard 1988:42). Gustafson is very clear that morality is not simply grounded in reason, ‘... but in the experience of God as revealed and proclaimed in the person of Jesus Christ’ (Richard 1988:43). Gustafson views Christian ethics as an intellectual discipline that renders an account of this experience. It further draws the normative inferences from it to guide the conduct of the Christian community and its members. The practical implication for the community members being the direct assistance in discerning what God is enabling and requiring them to be and to do (cf. Richard 1988:43). Gustafson thus believes that, in the community and *its members* it is inferred that a set of beliefs and commands may be of universal value.

Religion can be one of the ways in which humans can be motivated to make ethical decisions. Gustafson believes that ethics as such cannot be anything else but human. For religion as a motivator, even Christian religion, the ultimate test is; what kind of moral agents does it foster, as it is not privileged to any special

'supernatural' characteristics (cf. Richard 1988:45). Gustafson clearly has an empirical emphasis embedded in his position, "This emphasis is accompanied by a desire to move from the particular of the Christian tradition to the universal of human existence" (Richard 1988:45).

It seems impossible to have a philosophical theology, or a metaphysics or a cosmology, based on reason alone and from which follows ethics based on reason alone (cf. Richard 1988:46). Gustafson's view is that convictions about God and God's relation to the world are to be found within the Christian tradition, but also within the larger human community. Such convictions may not involve the person of Jesus Christ, but they will reveal 'particular potentialities and values to human life and thus that human beings have an accountability for the ordering of life, and a distinctive value within it'. There is a certain form of the human which gives us knowledge of the essence of the human. One must assume continuities of experience which presupposes that humanity has a nature as well as a history (cf. Richard 1988:46).

The foregoing asks whether South Africa with its current moral and social trails and temptations is ready for and not crying out for a fresh approach and to a living Christian ethic? An ethic that is ecclesial whilst it becomes universal in its application to a very diverse society which is struggling to find itself in a developing democracy that is being pounded by the injustices of the State and being ravished by its own the populace? This consideration becomes significant when reflecting on the view from Tödt (1978) and the bridge he provides for the consideration of virtue ethics as the preferred approach to bring about change in South Africa. Tödt (1978) states that when ethics is conceived too narrowly, if it only seeks to answer one question, 'What ought we to do?' then equally fundamental is the other question, 'How can we live?'. This includes the third question-dimension of ethics, the question, 'Who are we, and what ought we to become?' (cf. Tödt 1978:113). Because of its flexibility and in a sense ambiguity virtue builds a language that is not evident in the languages of law and duty as per our understanding above. This makes for a fruitful ambiguity as it seemingly holds together two inconsistent perspectives on moral life, which it further continues to integrate in a systematic way (cf. Porter 2010: 206).

All of which provides for the consideration of an ethics construct to address the South African situation. The construct receiving further attention is that of virtue ethics and will be further developed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### VIRTUE ETHICS

#### 5.1 Introduction

When considering virtue ethics in the South African research context, it becomes a plausible vehicle for the process of transformation from a morally corrupt and bankrupt society into one that will at least reflect some sense of morality and ethical conduct. Hence it will require the researcher to define and investigate the origin and practical application of such an ethic.

The moral-sense theorists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, including David Hume (1711-76), grounded morality in feelings of approval and disapproval towards the motives driving the actions observed. He went on to link motives to virtue and importantly for further work in this study, stressed that, "... the passions and desires which give rise to the virtues do not depend directly on reason, which differs from the passions precisely in that it cannot move us to action" (Porter 2001:104).

Porter (2001:96) is of the opinion that a virtue is a trait of character or intellect and that such a trait or intellect is praiseworthy and admirable to the broader society in which it is found as displayed by individuals. Hauerwas (1988: 265) posits that virtues are timeful activities. In considering the South African context, this dimension of virtue ethics elevates it to a morally achievable level and goal. Behaviour formed through habitual actions can be influenced, either in the positive or negative way, and this has an influence on the shaping of virtues, which in turn, is possible, because the virtues bind our past with our future by providing us with continuity of self (cf. Hauerwas 1988:265). When virtue ethics is understood as a process of systematic and critical reflection and related to topics which could include social change, it stands to undergo criticism and development. This applies to both Christian and non-Christian societies (cf. Porter 2001:96).

The rootless I as phrased by Colin Gunton in relation to existentialism and consumerism, succumbs to the concept of virtue when the individual no longer stands naked as per the attempts of modern moral philosophy and theology with the human will intact again (cf. Nation & Wells (eds) 2000: 211). This is better

understood in terms of the degree and kind of passions and actions appropriate to a situation (cf. Porter 2001:98). These contributions remind us that we are created within a temporal narrative and finding our being in time as intrinsic to our shape and form (cf. Gunton 2000).

As individuals' certain traits of character or intellect are which we strive for, especially when they are admirable and desirable. This is of significance to this study. Even of greater importance is the relative stability and dispositions which are not easily lost and should provide for consistency in action. If this could be achieved successfully within South Africa, it should lead to a more stable and ethically moral society and foster a more desirable culture of inclusivity amongst a diverse people.

Despite the numerous criticisms against virtues it has flourished since early on in Christian ethics. Although unsystematic and pastoral in orientation, it continued to encourage and identify the traits of character which served as deterrent to sinful actions. As an example, humility was posited as antidote to pride (cf. Porter 2010:205-206). This leads us to further investigate the sources from which virtues initially originated.

## **5.2 Sources**

The sources that contributed significantly to the formation of the Christian view on virtues, are the theories of virtue that emerged from the Greek antiquity, which were further developed in the Hellenistic Roman empire and secondly the ideals of virtue as found or implied in scripture (cf. Porter 2001:97). It was Socrates (469 – 399 BCE) who according to his scholar Plato (428 – 348 BCE), challenged the ideals of virtue continuously to raise the virtuous life to a more adequate conception of virtue (cf. Potter 2001:97). The most distinctive aspect of Aristotle (384-322 BCE) with regards to virtue was as simplistic as virtue being equal to knowledge. Aristotle considers virtues to include appropriate emotional responses, as well as correct judgements (cf. Porter 2001:98). This is a position further supported by the thinking applied during this study. The most distinctive aspect of Aristotle's theory of virtues is his doctrine of the mean, according to which the *virtues are stable dispositions* leading to *reactions* and *behaviour* in accordance

with a mean as *determined by practical wisdom* (cf. Porter 2001:98)(emphases added). The mean is best understood For example, anger would be an appropriate response to the sight of woman and child abuse. This approach will be further expounded in the portion dealing with Moral Formation below following on from the Sources.

According to Porter, Cicero (106 – 43 BCE), a Roman statesman and philosopher, exercised significant influence on Christian ethics. This was mainly driven by his ability to express Hellenistic philosophy in forms accessible to the Latin-speaking Romans of his time. These philosophies being, "... Stoic in origin, which was to be formative for medieval Christian reflection on the virtues. Specifically, he endorsed the Aristotelian / Stoic view that virtue should be understood as a disposition to act in accordance with right reason" (Porter 2001:98-99). The fourfold division offered by Cicero that was to transform and transport virtues into practical wisdom were prudence, justice, courage and temperance. These under the rubric of primary or cardinal virtues, was to be highly influential in the medieval period (cf. Porter 2001:99).

Turning to the second primary source for Christian reflection on the virtues, that of scripture itself, it appears that there are not much to be said about virtues. Porter (2001) is of the opinion that, "In the Hebrew scriptures there is no term corresponding to 'virtue' and while much attention is given to moral questions, these are generally answered by appeals to God's law and the wisdom it confers" (Porter 2001:99). The very 'black and white' character of much that is said about ethics in the Old Testament, especially in the wisdom literature and in the prophets, is rather disappointing (cf. Barton 2014:158). Barton (2014) in focussing on the view of Hauerwas purported in *Vision and Virtue*, where Hauerwas reasons that character, not decision, is the primary ethical category, finds Barton arguing that the similarity between the Old Testament discourse on virtue ethics and wisdom literature, commandments and precepts operates from a stable moral disposition which leads to people's ethical decision flow, in as much that the most interesting aspects of the moral life are not those in which difficult decisions are required in marginal cases or dilemmas, but rather those that relate to the general tenor of a person's day to day life (cf. Barton 2014:158).

Barton's view is that, people do not come to a moral issue as *tabula rasa* (with a blank slate) when they may decide between good or evil. They come with their character already formed, and the good infallibly chose the right way, the bad the evil way. It is not a matter of weighing up difficult cases, or of making hard decisions on morally ambiguous issues, but of acting from one's inner character, intuitively choosing what is the best course of action (cf. Barton 2014:159). This 'intuitivity' will be further explored in the work below. The Old Testament however had no place for the modern concept of virtue ethics, either everyone was good, or everyone was bad, or wise or foolish. There was very little space for moral progress. As an example, Moses as recorded in Deut. 30:15, lays the choice between good and evil, and life or death before the people. If people then come to moral dilemmas with a clean slate, then Barton (2014) surmises that, "Ethical choice is a once-for-all affair which sets one's feet either on the way to life or on the way to death; there is no half measures" (Barton 2014:159). Although Hans Heinrich Schmid contrasted the 'black-and-white' moral judgements of the Israelite wisdom literature with the subtler picture from the Egyptian wisdom, the attitude persisted through time and it is found clearly at Qumran where good and evil people are arranged against each other in a war of sons of light and sons of darkness in the War Scroll and in Community rule (cf. Schmid in Barton 2014:160). Vermes (1997) records the foregoing as; "Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of injustice spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the prince of light and walk in the ways of light, but the children of injustice are ruled by the Angel of darkness and walk in the ways of darkness" (1QS 3:19-22 in Vermes 1997:101). Although conversion is possible as per the example found in Ezekiel 18:20ff, where the wicked man can suddenly turn around and become a righteous man, just as a righteous man can lose his good character overnight.

A final reflection on the Old Testament moral absolutes applied as virtue ethics is drawn from Harry P Nasuti who argues that, when in narrative, people are described in terms of who they are rather than merely what they do, which draws the reader into the story and creates empathy for the characters (cf. Nasuti 1986: 9-23). The narrative approach in the case of Joseph forgiving his brothers and the Nathan and David narrative and David's reaction, is viewed by Martha Nussbaum

as an example of virtue ethics coming into its own (cf. Barton 2014:161). Hence, we find heroes and villains and nobody in between. The Old Testament mainly reflects black-and-white thinking and no doubt there was a lot of it in Israel society in most periods, as there is in modern society (cf. Barton 2014:161). With some form of moral code and morals being present during the Old and New Testament narrative, the formation of such morals in today's context requires further investigation. The influence of the current and imminent narrative requires consideration as this will assist in placing moral formation and virtuous living in context.

### **5.3 The virtue moral interplay**

In the quest of finding an ethics based solution to the moral degeneration that has permeated the South African society during the past decade and understanding that individuals are part of communities and that behaviour is both individual and group dependant, with both individuals and groups displaying characteristics that are influenced by religion, culture, society at large and institutions, requires closer scrutiny as to how moral formation takes place. Such theoretical foci, approaches and relevant models will contribute to the understanding and formulation of a Christian ethics-based solution. The understanding of moral formation and the elements and factors contributing to such formation and adoption of such morals is important to the understanding and ultimate success in impacting the behaviours that would require the desired change and outcome.

In understanding the interplay between virtues and morals and how these manifest either separately or in conjunction and interdepend of each other will further allow for greater clarity when considering actions to influence and bring about change and as such the two sides of the same coin receives closer scrutiny.

Virtues are generally regarded as praiseworthy traits of character. They are at times considered admirable, or even valuable traits of intellect. The early Greek philosophers however focussed on traits that are praiseworthy and not only valuable. Since then the association between virtues and morals persisted (cf. Annas 1993: 47). The Christian virtue ethic has had many theological cases brought against it, mainly these charges were based on the notion that it



encourages a false sense of own goodness and reliance on that goodness rather than on God's grace. It was further professed that a language of virtues has pastoral value but if carefully analysed it is nothing but a disposition of the moral laws of the Old Testament. It was further said that anything beyond such an approach would constitute spiritual or theological mysticism (cf. Porter 2010: 205-206).

The reasoning of the ambiguity of virtues rests in the question posed by Porter when she asks, 'Yet if virtues are morally good in themselves, how can they be expressed through morally bad actions?' (cf. Porter 2012:207). Viewing independent virtues themselves would pose no problem in this regard, should one however contemplate that it is almost inevitable to lack some virtues while possessing others provides a challenging thought. Should generosity, fairness and bravery present itself in conjunction with unjust, imprudent or callous behaviour, it emphasises the instrumentality of virtues. The theses of the unity or connection of virtues however addresses this problem in that if someone can act unjustly or callously then it suggests that the opposite virtue is lacking. Thus, seeming generosity is not true generosity and so on for the other examples. In such a way the instrumentality of virtues is then avoided (cf. Porter 2012:208).

Virtues are not only correlated with vices which present themselves as bad, but also with similitudes which in some ways resembles virtues but are indeed not necessarily good. The distinctions amongst virtues, vices and similitudes are not only philosophical expedients, but run through human moral judgements. It would be a mistake to conclude that the differences between virtues, vices and similitudes will eliminate any ambiguity in the language of virtues. The most telling indication of the ambiguity of virtue language is found in the quality (vice or similitude) that is bad but yet found admirable or attractive, we think of the quality in a wicked soldier that shirks the possibility of death through bravery and find that we are strangely attracted to it (cf. Porter 2012: 209). This would however prove to be a fruitful ambiguity when viewed from the standpoint of Christian ethics. Porter explains it as follows, "Because the languages of the virtues can be given both positive and negative values, and sometimes both together, it provides a

uniquely helpful framework for formulating and reflecting on similar problems arising within Christian thought” (Porter 2012: 209).

Defining virtues has proven to be a challenging exploit, over ages there has been several academic endeavours to reduce several definitions into one. A contemporary of Aquinas, Peter Lombard, taking into account Aquinas’ thinking with regards to virtues being impossible without God’s grace, crafted the well-known definition, “ Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by means of which one lives rightly, of which no one can make bad use, which God brings about in us (II *Sentences*, 27.5)” (Porter 2012:213). This definition is especially adopted as it reflects on the thinking to be followed when considering the formation of the morals below. It is however possible to create a pure non-Christian philosophical virtue. Throughout the thirteenth century however the use was not to purely deny human virtue out of hand or in similar fashion, to equate virtue with grace. It was Aquinas who not only identified the political but the three theological virtues [faith, hope and charity (love)], the latter which can only be infused by God. These are distinguished from the third category, the infused cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. Whilst God only can infuse the theological virtues Aquinas is of opinion that the cardinal virtues can be obtained through the proper development of natural powers. The cardinal virtues are infused in charity (love) and they cannot exist without charity (love) and neither is it possible for charity (love) to operate without the cardinal virtues (cf. Porter 2012:215).

It is reasoned that morality can also be viewed as patterns of relationships that are developed in groups and which is motivated and explained by specific topics of concern to those groups (cf. Fourie 2016: 176). Although the work of Fourie is set in the context of morality and physical development, the fundamentals considered provide for a useful basis of departure when considering that the working definition of morality was reconstructed as ‘a collection of moral values’ (cf. Fourie 201:180). In his work Fourie comes to the very important and insightful question of “Is an individual, in terms of the conception of moral formation, at the mercy of groups?” leaning on the work of Tuomela (2007) who identifies and distinguished between the I - mode and We - mode it is important to consider that a person acts both as an individual and as a group member(cf. Fourie 2016:186). During earlier

references in this work the Majority World Christianity was used to position South Africa within the African and Majority World Christianity context, of relevance is the fact that the research undertaken by Tuomela( 2006 and 2007) and used by Fourie was done amongst African nations. Although no specific mention is made of religion or religious connotations in the research findings the rationality of individuals and groups are expressed to be universal. In the we-mode Fourie highlights that Tuomela (2007) find two central elements within the 'thick-we perspective'; those are 'for-groupness' which relates to the acting and thinking that are 'collectively accepted' and used by members when they are part of the group. The second element is the 'collective commitment' which 'dynamically' glues the members of the group together (cf. Fourie 2016:186 -187). In the I-mode we find the individual as per Tuomela (2007), in the "most uncomplicated sense" this is the person apart from any group membership. These positions of existence as related to morality becomes even more important when we listen to Fourie (2016) when stating that the person functions both as individual and group member and emphasises, "This is some sort of moral space in which a person navigates between different moralities and ultimately, albeit dynamically, integrate different moralities" (Fourie 2016:187).

Wolfgang Huber states that, "Morality has to do with the question 'what we owe to each other" (Scanlon 1998); ethics has to do with the question as to what it means for a person to lead a good life" (Huber 2012:36-37). Here both our relationship with groups and as individuals are important. Considered at the group and individual levels, the first question, related to morality, requires answers that can be universalised. The second question and which is related to ethics, needs answers that may differ from person to person, from culture to culture, from religion to religion (cf. Huber 2012:37). Huber makes the assertion that Christian ethics and therefore by implication virtue ethics, should include an element of universalism it should be open to interpretation from different cultures and religious backgrounds, as he calls it 'a perspective universalism'. As humans we do distinguish between questions of ethics and morality in daily life. Ethical reflections include both considerations, moral and ethical questions, whilst Christian ethics include the Golden Rule, which is; to love our neighbours as we love ourselves (Mt 22:37-39) , this approach transposed to the broader society will developed a

morality as well as ethical perspectives that has the capacity to respect differences and deal with the coexistence of people who differ from one another (cf. Huber 2012:37). The forgoing reminds of what Huber refers to as ‘the dignity of the different’. He continues with the understanding that all human beings are created in the image of God and being responsible and responsive selves. Persons being ends in themselves and not only means to an alien purpose (cf. Huber 2012:37). This serve as a stark reminder that a respected guiding moral principle in the twenty-first century is that of dignity of the different and not dignity of difference. This needs to be applied during times where cultures reflect the brokenness of human existence which could escalate to the levels where human endeavours become instruments of arrogance and of superiority (cf. Huber 2012:38). This is a moral to be learned and applied in South Africa, in the quest to salvage the country from total moral degradation. Christian ethics means the same as moral theory or moral philosophy practised by Christians especially in a country where most of the population still profess to be Christian.

#### **5.4 Moral formation**

Huber argues that not every difference is good and acceptable or should be ‘dignified’. He aligns with Sacks, in that not all diversity has a place in an ‘ordered complexity’. The important question to consider is not whether the difference of culture have an inherent dignity, but rather whether the cultures respect the equal dignity of humans (cf. Huber 2012;38). When considering the statements by Huber and applying the same to the prevailing South Africa morality there should be a further consideration to develop. I would argue such a consideration to be that of how moral formation takes place within individuals and society. Gaining better insights into this dimension could provide for better understanding and implementation of actions to improve such levels of morality.

Before I move on, I want to briefly present an overview of the Stages of Human Development: Optimal Parallels as per Fowler, which will assist in us journeying through the dynamics of human development and assist us to position and understand the development of morals and the moral self-better.

Considering the information in the table below, *Table 1: Stages of Human Development: Optimal Parallels*, we find that Kohlberg views the first instances of

moral and or ethical formation to start at the age of around 7-12 years when heteronomous morality starts to emerge. Kohlberg is applying Piaget's general cognitive theory and cognitive stage concept to the moral domain development (cf. van der Ven 1998:189). When van der Ven comments on the development stages identified by Piaget, we pick up from his fifth remark which relates directly to field of study at hand.

**Table 1: Stages of Human Development: Optimal Parallels.**

<i>Eras and Ages</i>	<i>Erikson</i>	<i>Piaget</i>	<i>Kohlberg</i>
Infancy (0-1 1/2)	Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust (Hope)	Sensorimotor	–
Early childhood (2-6)	Autonomy vs. Shame & Doubt (Will)	Preoperational of Intuitive	–
Childhood (7-12)	Industry vs. Inferiority (Competence)	Concrete Operational	<i>Preconventional level .</i> 1.Heteronomous Morality & 2. Instrumental exchange
Adolescence (13-21)	Identity vs. Role Confusion (Fidelity)	Formal operational	<i>Conventional Level .</i> 3.Mutual interpersonal relations
Young adulthood (21-35)	Intimacy vs. Isolation ( Love)	–	4.Social System & Conscience
Adulthood (35-60)	Generativity vs. Stagnation (Care)	–	<i>Postconventional Principled Level</i> 5. Social Contract, Individual Rights
Maturity (60 -)	Integrity vs. Despair (Wisdom)	–	6. Universal Ethical Principles

(Adapted from Fowler 1981; 52)

Although development is based on cognitive stages the functioning is not restricted to the cognitive domain because there exists a basic relationship between cognitive development and moral development (cf. van der Ven 1998;192). Kohlberg views this relationship as a parallel event as cognitive development occurs in the form of structural changes and at the same time moral development takes place in the moral domain. Kohlberg (1981:138) states: “Although moral stages are not simply special applications of logical stages, logical stages must be prior to moral stages, because they are more general. In other words, one can be at a given logical stage and not the parallel moral stage, but the reverse is not possible” (van der Ven 1998:192). Important to our understanding and related to the previous point is that in stages 3 and 4 of the Kohlberg theory,

the child cognitively differentiates between one form of guilt which relates to informal group disapproval (stage3) and in stage 4, to formal institutional dishonour (cf. van der Ven 1998:194). The ability and readiness of persons to act according to their cognitive moral stage depends to a large extent on their symbolic definition of the situation in terms of the rights of the individual or group versus the duties of the other individual or group (cf. van der Ven 1998:194). Furthermore, it is important, and more so in the South African context, to take note that moral judgment within a moral dilemma will require that the rights and duties distributed between two or more people is done by proper definition of the roles and responsibilities of the people in it (van der Ven 1998:194).

Kohlberg in his broadening of the definition of a 'principled person' to include stage 5 and extending the concept to include stages 3 and 4 related to the heteronomy of conventional morality in smaller communities and the larger social system, allows for the approach to be applied to the South African situation. This should however not be applied without noting the concerns raised by van der Ven when he asks, 'where does morality start?'. Stage 6 would be that starting point, and which would limit the influence and application thereof in terms of developing people's moral abilities. When we align our thinking with that of Habermas which states that, "... the moral character of judgment and action depends on the extent to which it is oriented to the moral universality of justice and can be legitimised from this universality as well (Habermas 1983: 169ff)" (van der Ven 1998:224). It is reasonable to align the Kohlberg view with that of Habermas when Kohlberg importantly states that an act of moral proportions that is in accord with stage 6 principles in a situation may be defined as a moral act (cf. van der Ven 1998:224). This allows for consideration in provisioning the approach to the South African context.

## **5.5 Justice and love in the Christian religion**

The idea that justice is embedded in the Kohlberg stages 1 to 6 through a wholeness of lifestyle, worldview and religiosity requires a closer look at justice and religion. In the modern, liberal and market orientated societies justice has taken on the shape of fair relationships for government commerce and industry and hence the good for society. Justice is understood as a goal to strive for in

future and all be it a goal it remains a matter of eschatological hope (cf. Stone 1999:37). In Christian ethics justice remains closely related to love. The practical way of living and relating in love to the neighbour is reflective of seeking justice. Although the neighbour is protected, visited, and provided for in concrete human needs justice is perceived differently by different humans and groups of humans as their interests are different and driven by different motives. Individuals and groups generally view justice from their own perspectives. This view from Stone which rings true in South Africa today states that, "All are equal recipients of God's love, but that expression of love in life is thwarted by systems and by other individuals. Justice is present ontologically and eschatologically; historically it is struggled for by those committed to it" (Stone 1999:38) and requires action and commitment from all those calling themselves Christians.

Some comments by Stone on the 1954 work of Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* helps to contextualise our South African situation at the hand of the principles provided; Firstly, adequacy means that justice is dynamic and relative to each society. Equality as the second principle finds its expression in hierarchy where equal rank is treated equally and within a democracy, all are recognised as equal in certain aspects of life. Equality is a recognition of the demand that every person should be treated as a person. In a free society it follows that the principle of personality elevates liberty to an essential principle of justice. When the reflection of love is seen as central to justice, then the unresolved tensions of equality and liberty are contained in the principle of community, comradeship or solidarity (cf. Stone 1999:43-44). Tillich's overarching principle of justice is love and that love requires the other principles including the adequacy of the understanding of justice in its historical setting whilst Niebuhr's view reflects strongly on the dialectic relationship between love and justice. For Niebuhr love is the way in which people live together if they are not selfish and seeking to fulfil the greatest good for their neighbour (cf. Stone 1999: 43-45). The question whether this level of theoretical principles can be practically applied within a South African environment, provides a challenging and exciting opportunity.

## 5.6 Emotions and their role

Thomas Aquinas's scheme of passions, which is lauded for its logical clarity is criticized for the absence of empirical references. Other approaches such as the behaviouristic and phenomenological despite their positive points are criticized as well. With the phenomenological approach being slated for not linking feeling and context whilst the behaviouristic ignores the processes occurring within the individual and focus mainly on the external stimuli that leads to the response (cf. van der Ven 1998:293).

In searching for an acceptable model van der Ven suggests that *The Cognitive Interaction Theory of Emotions*, covers most aspects of emotions in the three groups – neurophysiological, motor or behavioural-expressive and the subjective-experiential, and then provides a conceptual scheme that takes these aspects into consideration and adequately localises them (cf. van der Ven 1998:294). A better understanding of the formation and role of emotions within the religious ambit and the influence it has on the moral and ethical conduct of individuals will prove to be valuable to the study. In this regard the view espoused by Veldsman in his article, *With reasons of the heart before God. On religious experience from an evolutionary - theological perspectives*, previously referred to, is especially valuable for use in this study. Veldsman starts his work with the provocative question formulated by Blaise Pascal (1623- 1662) in his posthumous work *Pensées* (1670) that reads, “the heart has its reasons which reason does not know” and “(i)t is the heart which experiences God and not the reason”. Introducing the metaphor of ‘the heart’ immediately re-introduces the scholarly debate of irrationality that is often raised by inter alia John Locke, David Hume and Rene Descartes (cf. Veldsman 2014:430). This debate and the relevance of emotions being slated as irrational requires a critical review and as such, we endeavour to do the same. Emotions need to be liberated from the understanding that it is only an inner feeling or sensation that reflects a physiological causal connection to the object in question (cf. Veldsman 2014:430). In answering the question, “What does an affective-cognitive understanding of personhood entail?”. Veldsman journeys through the understanding of the heart as the seat of human life, the role of the brain, emotions and rationality and then affectivity and cognitivity, and as enticing as it might be to accompany him on the whole journey,



time and space only allows for a brief sojourn. In no way do we intend to detract from the scientific work discussed below and the findings other than to refer to scripture where Paul when reflecting on prayer in Romans 8: 27 says, “And he who searches our *hearts* knows the mind of the Spirit...” (Holy Bible 2005: 1849) wherein the *heart* metaphor is explained at p.2049 of the same source as related to Revelation 2:23 in that the mind refers to the will and affections whilst the *heart* is the designated centre of rational life<sup>15</sup>.

Let us then depart on this brief journey with the opening quote from Veldsman, “The affective-cognitive dimension of being human – that is, of being persons of flesh and blood - represents a constitutive dimension of personhood that enriches a holistic understanding of life” (Veldsman 2014: 427). Understanding this dimension, and especially that of *Emotion vs Rationality*, and *Affectivity and Cognitivity* more fully and in relation to the rationality provided by the previous scholars and theorists through their model and theorems, it will provide the much-needed integration into our construct for regeneration of morality. The work, *The Emotional Brain* (1996) of Joseph LeDoux an American neuroscientist and *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999) by the Portuguese–American neurobiologist Antonio Damasio is used to present new insights into the affective dimension of personhood which shows that our emotions are rooted in our biological nature (cf. Veldsman 2014:430-431). The full creative produce of their work will not be exploited but only those directly related to our study.

When questions like what happens in our brains to make us feel fear, love, hate, anger, joy and do we control our emotions, or do they control us when asked calls for deep interventions. For LeDoux the origins of human emotions exist as a part

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15 The Ancient Hebrew Anthropology as contained in the same NIV source under *Heart, Breath, Throat and Intestines: Ancient Hebrew Anthropology* infers that the word *leb* (usually translated heart) can be used literally for the physical heart (e.g., Ex.28:29) or metaphorically for several aspects of personality. Often *leb* indicates the seat of emotions, such as fear, lament, regret, joy, comfort, love, anger, etc. (e.g., Ps 27:3; Pr 19:3)

of complex neural systems that evolved over time and enables us to survive. He believes that unlike conscious feelings emotions originate in the brain at a much deeper level. For him, LeDoux, emotions represent a “subjective experience, a passionate invasion of consciousness a feeling” (cf. Veldsman 2014:432). Briefly LeDoux states that our brains can detect danger even before we experience the feeling of being afraid. The brain can initiate physical responses such as sweaty palms, heart palpitations and the like, meaning that emotions can occur without cognitive processing in the cortex. He further, and more important to our study, points out that, “... emotional responses are hard-wired into the brain’s circuitry, but the things that make us emotional are learned through experience”. This could be the key to our understanding and even changing of our emotional make up (cf. Veldsman 2014:432). At the centre of these functions are the amygdala, the small area hidden within the temporal region of the brain which LeDoux views as the heart of the emotion system. The amygdala is involved in appraising emotional meaning and can process the emotional significance of individual as well as complex stimuli. It is this appraisal of emotion that cognitive researchers agree on to be the key to how particular emotions are produced in response to events (cf. Veldsman 2014:432).

Veldsman infers that from the outset Damasio is clear that self-consciousness and emotion go together as does rationality and emotion. He, Damasio, continues that emotion constitutes the support system without which the edifice of reason cannot operate properly, and it is within the relationship between rationality and emotion that the broader framework of life can be understood (cf. Veldsman 2014:433). For Damasio there is no consciousness but self-consciousness especially when related to knowledge or feelings of emotions. Self-consciousness represented as the core consciousness is seen as the second state of the mind or brain and can represent the relations between representations of objects and representations of the soma. Feeling then becomes the realisation of a connection between an object and an emotional body state (cf. Veldsman 2014:434). Damasio identified six universal emotions, those being happiness, sadness, fear, anger, surprise and disgust, these he believes are defined as patterns of chemical and neural responses, and of which the function is to assist the person by maintaining life through adapting its behaviour. Veldsman continues in his footnotes that Damasio

further identified secondary and social emotional distinctions, namely embarrassment, jealousy, guilt and pride. There also exist background emotions which are well-being or malaise, calm or tension, fatigue or energy, anticipation of dread (cf. Veldsman 2014:434). All of these emotions play a role in the daily living of people and especially when we consider the prevailing moral landscape in South Africa there can be little doubt that these are continuously present in the lives of many people who are dealing with the harsh realities of corruption, murder, theft, rape, illness and incompetence displayed throughout the public and in instances the private sectors. The foregoing becomes especially pertinent and alive when we consider that Damasio states that these emotions are the result of a set of brain structures being activated and that it monitors and regulates bodily states related to the optimal physiological values within the processes known as homeostasis and homeodynamics. Yet it appears that the physiology of emotion is not easily described and this is due to the complexity of the activated structure and the feedback reactions. Emotions are bodily and automatic responses which do not require thinking and manifest as mechanisms for the regulation of life, while feelings are mental things, the mental representation of the state of the organism's body and are preceded by and founded on emotions (cf. Veldsman 2014:343-435). If then the effect of emotion is bodily behaviour which is guided by the neural maps and neural maps lead to feelings which in turn reflect on how well the body is reacting to the map (cf. Veldsman 2014:435). Reflecting on the foregoing a question arises as to whether this could have an influence on whether a person will react virtuously or not to a specific situation?

In this regard Van der Ven (1998) says that, "Of course emotions do influence one's freedom to varying degrees, while sometimes even preventing a person from being himself/herself, but generally emotions, as they occur psychodynamically more or less in healthy people, do not absolutely eliminate the person's responsibility" (van der Ven 1998:301). It could generally be expected that people should react in a virtuous manner when confronted by daily realities. Following on from the previous thought we wish to link up with Veldsman where he focusses on the following two statements from De Sousa that says emotions are;

- "Distinct from moods, but modified by them" and

- Emotions “are reputed to be antagonists of rationality” (cf. Veldsman 2014:435).

In focusing specifically on emotions and feelings within the religious context, we turn to the further views of Veldsman related to Stoker and his positioning of affectivity and cognitivism. Stoker in *Is Faith Rational?* (2006), reasons that emotions are not related to any idea (cognitive content) or judgement (any specific cognitive activity) hence Veldsman continues that in the light of the expository neuroscientific contributions of LeDoux and Damasio, it is possible to revise and develop Stoker’s philosophical-religious viewpoint (cf. Veldsman 2014:436). The two viewpoints that are related to this study and which is further extrapolated by Veldsman are;

- That there is more to affectivity than emotions. Affectivity encapsulates all aspects related to feelings, emotions and moods. Strasser in following the thinking of Stoker (2006:178ff). looking at religious affectivity, argues for a layered perspective on emotions. He sees mood as representing the deepest undifferentiated layer of affectivity.
- Stoker (2006:180) states that mood exposes, or lays bare our existence or as stated by German philosopher Martin Heidegger ‘our thrownness.’ Thrownness is a concept introduced to describe humans’ individual existences as “being thrown” into the world. Mood as a pure feeling represents our ‘finding of being in the world’ or specific ‘felt state of mind, pure being-in-the-mood’ (Stoker 2006:180 quoting Strasser). This represents a characteristic of being human or belonging to existence (cf. Veldsman 2014:436-437).

Stoker (2006:179) remarks that mood and emotion influence our thought and behaviour. As human beings the whole consists of *bios*, *pathos* and *logos* and in viewing affectivity as layered we attempt to do justice to the different aspects of humanness (cf. Veldsman 2014:437). It is our undifferentiated feelings of belonging and emotions that converge in our thoughts and actions in our hearts. What takes place in the heart is the internalising and personification of thoughts and knowledge. It is Stoker (2006:184) that sees the heart that unites and

integrates what reason or knowledge separates or fragmentises. Veldsman quotes LeDoux (1996:33) when he states that; "... people normally do all sorts of things for reasons they are not consciously aware of (because the behaviour is produced by the brain systems that operate unconsciously) and that one of the main jobs of consciousness is to keep our life tied together into a coherent story, a self-concept"(Veldsman 2014:438).The implications identified by Veldsman with regards to the neuroscientific insights that help us make sense of our personhood and religious experiences can no longer be ignored and those that are viewed as influential to the underlying study of virtue ethics are;

- our emotions are part of our affective dimension, that is feelings, emotions and mood and these are layered,
- our emotions constitute a support system without which the edifice of reason cannot operate, and
- our emotions represent the evolutionary embodiment of the logic of human survival.

These insights can be encapsulated as the description of the affective-cognitive dimension of personhood (cf. Veldsman 2014:438). The very informative interpretive directions identified by Veldsman allows for us to close this topic. To the question, "If emotions embodied the logic of survival, what does it entail for personhood and for religious experience?" Veldsman offers an answer that brings to bare support for how we view virtue will support the regeneration of morality, when he says;

In my opinion, this represent a very exciting and deep possibility to unfold and understand the Christian message along the anthropological lines not of the survival of the strongest (which we already know is surely not true), nor survival of the those that merely adapt the best to their environment and circumstances ( which we know is very important) but survival of those that 'take care' ( which we know present us with a deep biological and profound religious insight).

(Veldsman 2014:439)

Veldsman purports that it is the 'mind-heart' that experiences God. In this there are certain implications and one that we specifically want to highlight, putting it in dogma-historical terms. Veldsman is of the opinion that both Augustine and Pelagius had it right in that there are situations in life in which our ability to choose is greatly or even completely impaired by our biological make-up. Important to this study, is the implication by Veldsman that there are life situations in which we are very capable of making free- and responsible - decisions. It remains our responsibility to discern between these two (cf. Veldsman 2014:439-440).

In weaving these insights together we find that emotions do not only shape our worlds or life but that it represents the very being of being human, which is the affective-cognitive characterising of the personhood that allows for religious experiences and which will help us live in faith, hope and love as guiding virtues in the regeneration of morals in South Africa.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ETHICS OF FAITH HOPE AND LOVE

#### 6.1 Introduction

A question worth considering, especially in the light of the precarious levels of civil and private morality, is whether the Christian values of faith hope, and love presented as a Christian Virtue Ethic can serve as a means of moral regeneration in South Africa? In *Jürgen Moltmann's Ethics of Hope* (Harvie 2009), Moltmann view the whole of humanity as being worthy of the hope of righteousness which is received by all through the Christ-event and which leads to the right for all to experience the love of God. Which implies that the practical ordering of society by Christians is dependant on the love of Christ rather than the rule of Old Testament law. The translation of love into the language of law means that the rights of one's neighbour and the acknowledgment of the other persons worth and that dignity is anterior and the theological basis for human rights (cf. Harvie 2009:181). This will challenge every individual and group in the country to stop and take stock of how they deal with their neighbour. As this study is concluded South Africa finds itself in the throgs of the COVID-19 virus pandemic and is there shimmering signs of people and organisations turning to their neighbour and starting to get involved within and outside their communities and neighbourhoods to assist in providing relief. The values of hope and love is coming into their rightful place. As for faith it is the one value that most if not all is clinging to, the affirmation, 'this too shall pass' is seen more and more on social media channels, formal organisational communication and verbalised by the State President, Members of Cabinet, friends, colleagues and even complete strangers.

Karl Barth's (1981) train of thought is especially relevant in this regard. He reflects on the command God has set before man as a command within the triad of concepts (faith, hope and love) which is ready at hand for the purpose of fulfilment of God's graces of justification and sanctification that leads to acts, good acts by the person. Barth (1981) has the Pauline sequence of faith, love and hope in mind as they are characterised by the fact that they describe a real attitude and action on man's part. Man is called to believe, love, and hope which is a work and in the strictest sense the work of God on man (cf. Barth 1981:59).

Before moving onto the ethics of faith hope and love we take a brief step back and clarify the concept of regeneration which is by implication the focus of this work. What *regeneration* is defined as, “ the act or an instance of bringing something back to life, public attention, or vigorous activity” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/>).

In biology, *regeneration* is the process of renewal, restoration, and growth that makes genomes, cells, organisms, and ecosystems resilient to natural fluctuations or events that cause disturbance or damage. Every species is capable of *regeneration*, from bacteria to humans. Spiritually, it means that God brings Christians to new life or "born again" from a previous state of separation from God and subjection to the decay of death (Eph 2:4). Furthermore, there is the sense in which regeneration includes the concept "being born again" (Jh 3:3-8 and 1 Pt 1:3 emphasis added). Which is reflected in the thinking of Barth (1981) when he states that both sanctification and justification is received through God's grace, total and real effective grace. He continues that the one to whom God is gracious, in other words the one to whom He not only promises forgiveness of sin through Christ, but whom He both justifies and sanctifies, this is the person who does good acts (cf. Barth 1981 :59). The use of the terminology justification and sanctification requires a brief closer look to contextualise it within the study. In consulting the New International Bible Dictionary (1987), based on the NIV, these concepts are defined as;

*Justification* - “that judicial act of God by which, on the basis of the meritorious work of Christ, imputed to the sinner and received through faith, God declares the sinner absolved from sin, released from its penalty, and restored as righteous” (New International Bible Dictionary 1987:559). Thus, meaning to be placed in the right relationship with God. Although this is an act of God, it necessarily leads to change in the life of the believer who now will be able to walk in the Spirit and thereby bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit and serving righteousness for God also brings new birth and a call to whole hearted commitment (cf. New International Bible Dictionary 1987:560).

*Sanctification* – “The process or result of being made holy.” (New International Bible Dictionary 1987:894). When the term is used in relation to people, as it also



refers to things and place that are set apart and consecrated unto God, it can refer to the practical realization within them of consecration to God; that is, it can have a moral dimension. Because believers are holy in Christ, they are to be holy in practice in and through the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. New International Bible Dictionary 1987:895). Barth (1981) speaks of the biblical triad of concepts that is at hand in the Pauline sequence of faith hope and love to assist us in better understanding these concepts (cf. Barth 1981:59). In this study and although we depart from the Christian tradition, we attempt to create a more universal understanding and application for these graces to include wider traditions, religions and cultures in our application and understanding.

## **6.2 Faith**

Fowler (1981:292) states that what keep human's human is their capacity for trust and fidelity. As per our previous references and as per suggestion from Fowler (1981), Tillich and Niebuhr challenges us in asking about faith that will widen our scope beyond the specific domains of belief and religion (cf. Fowler 1981:9). An approach such as this will bring challenges that we will have to expand on as we progress. Although previous research quoted still presents South Africa as a predominant Christian country the other mainline religions in South Africa, Islam and Hinduism may only represent around 7% of the population but remains important for the Countries moral regeneration. The distinction made by the late Wilfred Cantwell Smith in *The Meaning and End of Religion*, as quoted in Fowler (1981) makes a seminal distinction between religion and faith, when he views religions as "cumulative traditions" which represents the various expressions of people in the past. Faith at a deeper level is more personal than religion as it is the individual or groups way of responding to transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through the cumulative traditions (cf. Fowler 1981:9).

In the words of Fowler (1981) a cumulative tradition may consist of text of scripture or law and may include narratives, myths, prophecies, accounts of revelation and so on. It could further also be visual and include other kinds of symbols, oral traditions, music dance, ethical teachings, theologies, creeds, rites, liturgies, and a host of other elements (cf. Fowler 1981:9). Faith and religion are both viewed as dynamic and each grows as it interacts with the other, they become reciprocal.

The cumulative renewal of tradition is proving capable of evoking and shaping the faith of new generations, it therefore says that, "Faith is awakened and nurtured by elements from the tradition" (Fowler 1981:10). The reciprocal event then being when these elements become the expression within the faith of the new adherents and the tradition is modified and refreshed thus gaining new vitality (cf. Fowler 1981). As per Fowler (1981) and my own understanding of the real world, the afore mentioned is an ideal - Smith recognised as did many other scholars that the relationship between faith and religion has become somewhat problematic. "Faith is meant to be religious" Smith espouses (Fowler 1981:10). In fact however faith struggles to be formed and maintained in many persons who especially feel that they have no access to viable cumulative religious traditions (cf. Fowler 1981;10). Smith indicated that the source of this problem stems from us not understanding faith religion and belief correctly. The very deep reality and shape of faith in both the individual and corporate setting is crucial in the person's life. Smith found that irrespective of religious traditions being a majority or minority, the contemporary religio-historical knowledge showed that the variety of religious *belief* is greater than imagined. And like mannered the finding was that similarities in religious faith also turned out to be greater than expected (cf. Fowler 1981:10).

Faith contrasted to belief is well distinguished by Smith when he takes belief to be 'the holding of certain ideas', and in religious context arises out of efforts to translate experiences of and related to transcendence into concepts or propositions, whereas faith is much deeper and richer, more personal. The rather lengthy but valuable description of faith as seen by Smith is;

... engendered by a religious tradition, in some cases and to some degree by its doctrines; but it is a quality of the person not the system. It is an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbour, to the universe; a total response; a way of seeing whatever one sees and of handling whatever one handles; a capacity to live at more than a mundane level; to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension.

(Smith in Fowler 1981:11)

Faith is the quality of human living it is the relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent of concepts and propositions whilst beliefs are fashioned. (cf. Fowler 1981:11). Barth (1981) echo's this when he states that without faith we live without necessity, we have no calling and we know of no order (cf. Barth 1981;60). We are once again confronted using metaphoric language when Smith refers to faith being an alignment with the heart. When Smith states that faith 'involves an alignment of heart and will, a commitment of loyalty and trust' it creates a connection with the work of Veldsman (2014) which states that ; "One of the most powerful metaphoric descriptions for one of the most significant dimensions of the quest for human life on its journey in search of and explicating meaning ... is the *heart*" (Veldsman 2014:428).

As the etymological meaning of a word does not always shed light on its current significance the current meaning remains of greater importance to the interpreter (cf. Berkhof 1980:67-68). The meaning of the word *faith* within different languages is of importance. It is the Hindu term for faith, *sraddha*, that perhaps put it best; "It means, almost without equivocation, *to set one's heart on*" (Smith in Fowler 1981:11). To be able to set one's heart on someone or something requires that you have 'seen' or 'sees' the point to which you are loyal. Faith requires vision and is a mode of knowing, acknowledgement. The Hebrew (*āman* he' mîn, 'munäh), the Greek (*pistuō*, *Pistis*) and the Latin (*credo*, *credere*) are according to Smith in Fowler (1981) all words for faith parallel to those in the Buddhist, Moslem and Hindu sources (cf. Fowler 1981:11). The root origin of the word is however not the same as in the modern sense. For the ancient Jew or Christian it would have had no meaning to say that they believe in God, the reason being that the existence of God was taken as granted and there was no issue with it. The Latin term *credo* provides a better understanding as it usually translates to the Christian credal statement 'I believe' (cf. Fowler 1981:12). For about three hundred years, from 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century, and by way of secular usage, the English words believe, and belief underwent evolutionary change. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century meaning of the word 'believe' had the same meaning as 'to set the heart upon'. To believe meant to 'hold dear' or 'to love' with the common roots of the Old English words *leof*, *liof* (dear, beloved) being the edifice for the German word *Glaube* (faith) that formed the verb

*geleofan, gelafen, geliefen* all meaning to hold dear to love and to consider valuable (cf. Fowler 1981:12).

The claim that faith is a generic feature in the human struggle to find and attain meaning and that it may or may not find religious expression, is rejected by many. It is Christian critics, especially from the Protestant neo-orthodoxy with strict allegiance to the Reformation, that holds faith as solely the gift of God's grace given uniquely in Jesus Christ (cf. Fowler 1981:91). In keeping the dynamic existential nature of faith in mind it is distinguished from religion and belief by Fowler (1981:92). Faith is in its most formal and comprehensive state described as:

People's evolved and evolving ways of experiencing self, others and the world (as they construct them)

as related to and affected by the ultimate conditions of existence (as they construct them)

and of shaping their lives' purpose and meanings, trusts and loyalties, in the light of the

character of being, value and power determining the ultimate conditions of existence (as grasped in their operative images – conscious and unconscious- of them).

(Fowler 1981:92-93)

Fowler (1981) acknowledges that the foregoing characterization of faith is formidable in its formalisation but ask that it be seen in context of faith being social and relational (cf. Fowler 1981: 93). Going back in history and to a time when the author and perfecter of our faith Jesus Christ (Heb 12;2), roamed the earth, there were many faith narratives that required Jesus' attention and in which not all the actors were from the Jewish tradition or belief system and none of them Christians. Two that however stand out in relation to the context of the formalisation of faith as per Fowler above and the concept of faith being '*generic*'. In turning our attention to Scripture, Matthew 14: 22-31 provides the account of Jesus walking on water and the more dramatic incident of Peter joining Him

captures our attention. The disciples terrified out their wits by the storm that was raging are confronted by a man walking on water during the storm this raises their fear to the next level. Jesus however comforts them by confirming His presence, the storm does not die down, but their anguish subsides and Peter a Jew a follower of the Lord is brave enough to test the Lord by questioning Him. Doubt rather than faith drives Peter in asking whether it is indeed Jesus. The invite from Jesus confirms the question of Peter and he now responds by leaving the relative safety of the boat. Walking towards Jesus is now an act of faith as Peter is walking on water but once he notices the storm – the waves- he falters and begins to sink calling out to be saved. Jesus immediately rescues him and then follows these words from Jesus, “‘You of little faith’, he said, ‘why did you doubt?’” (Matt 14:31). The ‘little faith’ Jesus refers to is the Greek, *oligopistos* meaning having little faith (cf. Goodrick & Kohlenberger III, 1999:1576). Jesus speaks to a Jew and questions the faith of a Jew not a Christian at the time acknowledging that faith was present in the individual but that his personal doubt overcame his faith. To Jesus faith did not only belong to those who followed Him, in this instance the faith of His follower and disciple Peter, a Jew is the object of His concern.

The Matthew narrative, Matthew 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 depicts the faith of the centurion and provides for another example of faith not belonging to the cradle of Christianity alone. A Roman centurion approached Jesus to ask for the healing of his servant. Jesus is not in the immediate vicinity of the sick servant but on His way to the house of the centurion. The Lukan and Matthew narratives provides the perspective of the authors, information that tells the reader that the centurion does not deem himself worthy of Jesus even entering his house. At this Jesus commends the centurion for his faith and the servant is healed. Once again Jesus is not perplexed by the nationality, tradition or belief system of the subject - a Roman - but purely in the faith displayed by the centurion. Here Jesus uses the word *pistis* referring to belief, trust with an implication that actions based on that trust may follow (cf. Goodrick & Kohlenberger III, 1999: 1583). It is in the words of Fowler (1981) that he reflects the actions and attitude of Jesus as we experienced above, “‘Wherever we properly speak of faith it involves people’s shaping or testing their lives’ defining directions and relationships with others in accordance with coordinates of value and power recognised as ultimate” (Fowler 1981:93).

As per our earlier reflection on tradition/culture and how its evolutionary evolution influenced religion and tradition/culture becoming a new form of religion we found that Christians claimed faith to only belong to them. Faith might not solely belong to the Christian and may not always be related to religious experiences or founded in traditions or culture. The final and real question is not whether Muslim, Jews, Buddhists, Taoists Confucianists or Christians are correct but rather that all have faith. The real question as Fowler posits it is; "... will there be *faith* on earth, and will it be *good* faith – faith sufficiently inclusive so as to counter and transcend the destructive henotheistic idolatries of national, ethnic, racial and religious identifications and to bind us a human community in covenantal trust and loyalty to each other and to the Ground of our being"(Fowler 1981:293). This question being particularly pertinent to the South Africa of today and in which as a majority Christian country would be a travesty of faith should we shy away from the words of Barth (1981) as he reminds us; "If the question of faith, which is the question of God, were not put to us first and supremely, then we could treat the ethical ambivalence as a matter of intellectualistic scrupulosity which a healthy person would do best to avoid as much as possible, pushing it aside, acting carelessly and wickedly, leaving it to the good Lord and to ethicists"(Barth 1981:256).

Faith is clearly one of the most important concepts in the New Testament. It's importance and relevance are accentuated throughout. Faith meaning that one will abandon all trust in oneself and one's own resources. Faith meaning that one casts oneself unreservedly on the mercy of God. Faith thus implies complete reliance on God and full obedience to God.

## **6.2 Hope**

Hope it would seem, is a psychological necessity, if man is to envisage the future at all. Even in the absence of any rational grounds for it, man continues to hope (Douglas 1972:535). This seem to be the one single anchor that most people in South Africa and throughout the world hang onto whilst the COVID 19 pandemic is

sweeping through the world. The electronic message from Prof. Andrew Nicol<sup>16</sup> (Head of Trauma at Groote Schuur Hospital) embodies this when he on 23 April 2020, at the end of a lengthy message on the dangers of the CORONA Virus says at his point 13, in discussion with other medical professionals, “Normal is dead. Let that sink in. But *hope* is very much alive!” “Hope, would of course, be mere fantasy and fanaticism if it were just an unrest of spirit” (Barth 1981:60). Webster (2010:291) states that Christian hope is a moral phenomenon and that in its derivation it is one of the clues to Christian character. Before hope is a set of attitudes or undertakings it is dually the divine subject of ‘Jesus Christ our hope’ (1Tim 1:1 NIV) and shares with other Christian virtues – most of all faith and love – that its human exercise is a work of the Holy Spirit (cf. Webster 2010:291). The persons that display this hope becomes agents of it and therefore it becomes visible in their activities and abstentions as they dispose themselves in the world. Christian hope represents an internal spacious cluster of theological complex realities which provides moral orientation (cf. Webster 2010:291). In South Africa it will be ultimately up to the Christian communities to take that lead and live the Christian hope in the light of the Christian gospel. One of the goals of this study is to expose and substantiate the virtues of Faith Hope and Love as a Christian ethic vested in Virtue ethics for creating universally accepted morals in South Africa, such a goal necessitates reflection on what an ethical community should look like. Harvie (2009) in his book on, *Jürgen Moltmann’s Ethics of Hope. Eschatological Possibilities for Moral Action* refers to Bonhoeffer’s early work when he speaks of ‘a fundamental synthesis between social and individual beings’ (cf. Harvie 2009:178). This synthesis of the individual and the social provides the constitutive within which Bonhoeffer understands the personhood and frames the individual and collective of the human. Harvie (2009:178) provides a rather lengthy quotation from Bonhoeffer which contextualises the view;

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But the question remains whether, besides the single individual person, there might not be an individual collective person in which the individual participates – one that transcends all individuals but would be incomprehensible without the correlate of personal, individual being .... It is not as if many persons gathered together, now add up to a collective person. Rather, the person comes into being only when embedded in sociality, and the collective person comes into being together with the individual person. It is neither prior to, nor a consequence of, the individual.

(Harvie 2009:178)

This rather involved quotation has direct ethical implications and with regards to the individual and collective person it becomes clear that an ethical community can only be built upon such integrated persons (cf. Harvie 2009:179). This leads us to consider as Moltmann puts it, 'the dignity and rights' of individuals and communities. Reflecting on all of humanity Moltmann as per Harvie (2009), holds the opinion that all are sinners whether they are Jews or Gentiles and that the new hope of righteousness that was received through the Christ event allows for all to experience the love of God. This love when translated into the language of law, means the rights of one's neighbour and acknowledgement of the other person. Moltmann as such understands dignity as anterior to the theological basis for human rights (cf. Harvie 2009: 181).

The eschatological approach as adopted by Moltmann states , "This ethics, then, is Christologically funded, *eschatologically oriented*, and pneumatologically implemented" (Harvie 2009:184 emphasis added) and without refuting it not considered to be the sole approach to hope. When rooting the theology of Christian hope in the doctrine of the Trinity it prevents an exclusive orientation towards an eschatological approach. Webster (2010) states that hope is simply not a correlate of a divine futurity or coming of God, is, "... rather a disposition which is related to the entirety of God's dealings with his creatures, past, present and future" (Webster 2010:295). Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is reflective of how far back we must reach into the practices of Christian hope. Webster (2010) views Christian moral hope as beginning with the perfection of the triune God. He is of



the opinion that Christian hope and hence hopeful Christian action rests not simply on what will be, but on what will be as the fulfilment of God's steadfastness as Father, Son, and Spirit. Hope is thus hope in God's steadfast love (cf. Webster 2010:295). Barth (1981) whom we earlier referred to says that the hoping person gladly, willingly and joyfully look beyond the present and away from himself (cf. Barth 1981:515). Christian hope then is the prayerful seeking with God for our future and for the goodness and our conduct therein. Like faith and love hope bridges the gap between God and man with the glory going to God as the gap is not removed but breached by God in the resurrection of Christ. With Augustine in *Confessions* VII,11 Barth rejoices "It is good for me to cling to the Lord" as faith does it with respect and love with hot necessity, hope does it with what has already become the present felicity (see Barth 1981:514-515).

In elucidating the historical condition of Christian hope, theology seeks to develop a moral ontology. In other words, it attempts to understand the kind of place the world is and the kind of creatures people are; and what it says about both the individual and the world as it builds on what it understands the theology of God to be. It looks at history and the agents, the creator – triune God – and the created, the human person in fellowship with God. Theology secondly portrays the 'ends' of history that is, '... the *telos* of created reality and persons in which their natures will be perfectly realized" (cf. Webster 2010:296). It is as previously mentioned not quite correct to relate Christian hope only to the eschatological element of history. Although Christian hope is an expectation and is orientated towards "the expected future of God's kingdom', as stipulated by Moltmann (1999:286). Thus, as per Moltmann's understanding the experience of Christian hope is not just an intrusive 'sabbath' a moment in time in which 'the laws of this world are suspended and only the righteousness of God counts' (cf. Moltmann 1999:280). It is rather based on the judgment that the true 'law' of the world is God's plan for the fullness of time, which is now at work and which will be fulfilled in future (cf. Webster 2010:298). In conclusion it is stated that a moral theology of hope generates moral ontology and looking back at God's work of creation and reconciliation Christians also look forward to the consummation of all things. The current time is not an empty space to be filled with things and attempts of own device and self-making to keep at bay dread (cf. Webster 2010:298-299).

The related anthropological question asks what kind of person is the Christian who hopes? This question being an ontological question before it is an ethical one can briefly be answered as: the one who knows in faith and within the grace of God's economy, which was enacted by the resurrected Jesus, and the giving of the Spirit that manifested in the lives of the company of saints over the ages (cf. Webster 2010:299). The more expanded answer that it invites can be stated as: the Christian who hopes is not engaged in an 'act of self-formation' such a hopeful makes history only because history has already been made, and it is on that basis only that one can be a hopeful person or agent (cf. Webster 2010:300).

An anthropology not of freedom but of nature which the work of the triune God established and what the gospel announces is not available to us in late modernity. The work of the late Rubem Alves, *A Theology of Human Hope*, as appearing in Webster (2010) leaves a stark reminder of the disruptive effects of its absence. He conflates hope with human self-actualisation and his book purports the agnostic habits of modern conceptions of freedom where the primal form of human consciousness roams free. This consciousness being dominated by a power nota allowing it to create its own history (Alves 1969:137). As Alves (1969) puts it, the person who hopes "is experimentation" and "when man's hope informs his action, man thrust himself upon the world as power" (Alves 1969: 137-138). The problem here being that the muddled theology of grace emerges reflecting that creation is "a joint enterprise", it does not remain entangled in the modalities of modern dualities of freedom versus nature, divine versus human action, it is a case of Alves not being able to conceive a genuine anthropology of hope based on what he dismisses as 'non-historical, dogmatic idea' (Alves 1969:87). "A Christian anthropology needs to move beyond acute historical responsibility and allow the gospel to introduce us into a more spacious and relaxed world" (Webster 2010:300). At this point Alves fails, as he cannot satisfactorily distinguish his 'messianic humanism' from secular political humanism, hence the entire metaphysical-theological apparatus of Christian anthropology must be discarded in order to respect the basic principle for an account of the ethics of hope (cf. Webster 2010:300). Despite the statistics previously presented showing that the majority of South Africans view themselves as Christians, it appears that the Alves

anthropology of hope is popular and prevalent amongst the majority of South African Christians as they turn to political and humanistic powers rather than the hope provided in Christ. Should the majority of the countries so called Christians however find the hope in ; "... [where] one is to be the person one is and will be, a person for whom hope is 'natural' – that is, a disposing of oneself in accordance with the nature and vocation bestowed by God" (Webster 2010:3101). In the presence of such a hope two consequences follow; Firstly, a knowledge so robust that it offers a sufficiently persuasive account of our condition and a free, bold, and generous move towards the future to which we have been appointed. Secondly, "... accordingly the Christian who hopes is free and assured, and can venture what Paul Ramsey calls the 'immoderate life' (Ramsey 1993:226-31), living and acting beyond the demonstrable and actual, with an intemperance grounded in the reality of the one who died, is risen, and will come again" (Webster 2010:302-303).

The preceding moral domain of hope demands that action. What acts and to what are we summoned by the law of our eschatological being? (cf. Webster 210:303). As per Webster (2010), the dangers to be avoided in answering these questions are those of eschatological moralism and eschatological passivity. Action represents action in a field of reality and only makes sense in response to a condition. Webster (2010), clarifies it as, "Hope, courage, and effort require a sense that the world has certain qualities which make such action possible and offer it a reasonable chance of success" (Webster 2010:303). Eschatology as the objective grounds of Christian hope attempts to depict these qualities because without them hope is moralistic and 'profoundly' ungracious (cf. Webster 2010:303).

From Scripture we know that hope refuses a moral calculus based on what, apart from the gospel, is to be taken as our present condition. It goes on to incite action which is obedient to the true law of our being; which is that the creation will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom 8:21) (cf. Webster 2010:304). Thus we have briefly reflected on what Barth (1981) refers to as, '... a concept, which on the one side clearly expresses divine control of its ultimate quality" this quality suggests "... a concept reflecting itself in the inner most circle of ethical reflection – and obviously with the Pauline triad of 1

Corinthians 13:13 in view – is that of *hope*” (Barth 1981:513). Finally, our knowledge then is from the ‘spirit of wisdom and of revelation’ by which ‘the eyes of the *heart* are enlightened’ and we come ‘to know what the hope is to which God has called us’ (Eph.1:18) (cf. Webster 2010:301 emphasis added).

### 6.3 Love

According to Kretzschmar (2018) the Christian Ethic of, loving one’s neighbour, including one’s enemies, is a clear Divine command, though difficult to obey. She further notes that, it extends beyond moral choice to serve and leads to sacrifice because in Christian Ethics, love is the ultimate moral value because God is love (cf. Kretzschmar 2018;123). The *love* considered in this study and as per the Christian values is that of *agapē(n)* and *agapaō(v)* which Goodrick & Kohlenberger III (1999) defines as “to love, ... the *active love* of God for his Son and his people, and the *active love* this people are to have for God, each other and even their enemies” ( Goodrick & Kohlenberger III 1999:1523 emphasis added). The emphasis added to this definition accentuates that love requires action, it makes it further clear that *agapē* the noun as well as *agapaō* the verb is action orientated. By implication this means that a love such as this cannot be indifferent to the situation, whether social, political, socio-political, physical, emotional, psychological, economical and even more so in a time when our neighbour or our enemy is destitute. Werpehowski (2010) reflects on Nygren (1953) in this regard when he states that, *agape* is ‘an outflow of God’s own life’ such a that the ‘stream of love’ infused in the Christian heart flows forth to the neighbour (cf. Werpehowski (2010:437).

Love as religious duty rebels against man’s natural state which is inclined to be in struggle with God (Jn.15:18), this attitude can be and is transformed by the love that God has for man. This new attitude, that is created in man is far from a sentimental utopianism, nor is it a superficial virtue, for it involves a fundamental response from the heart (1 Cor 13). Douglas (1972) puts it as; “It is an acceptance of the work of the Spirit in the depths of a man’s [persons] being” (Douglas 1972:754). The Christian therefore loves his brother, neighbour, and enemy in the *agape*, the noun fashion as well as *agapaō*, the verb action. This happens because they now see them as the objects of God’s love for whom Christ died

(Rom.15:15 & 1Cor.8:11). The words of Barth (1981), that love similar to faith, seeks and finds its objects, and his direct quoted words, “ Love is already in a true sense doing the *good* because it seeks and finds the *good* in God” and “ ... it also finds God as the one who inconceivably as the Creator, as he who alone is *good* in himself, turns to the creature that has fallen from *goodness*, inclines toward him, and shows him his *goodness* as well as him being the *good*” (Barth 1981:453 emphasis added). The emphasis on *good* and *goodness* raises the question “Whether God Always Loves More the Better Things?” raised by Thomas Aquinas in *Prima Pars* 20,4 of the *Summa Theologiae* when he discusses love as an attribute of God (cf. Hall 2010:309). At a first glance this one-dimensional question is answered through reference to scripture, Rom 8:32; Heb 2;16; Luk 15;7 and all seem to provide evidence that God does not love more those who more fully exhibit the excellence of their species. A different dimension is however added to the initial question when Hall (2010) asks, “Why did God deliver unto death the sinless Christ for the sake of sinful man? “and “How can God both love the better things and rejoice more fully over the penitent sinner?” (Hall 2010:309). The different ‘aspects’ of God’s activity towards humans creates consistency in a seemingly paradoxical contrast when the similarity in the relationship between God’s mercy, God’s justice and God’s liberality is understood. Thomas explains in question 21 of *Prima Pars*, that, “... mercy should be seen not as a ‘relaxation of justice’, but as ‘the fulness’ of justice” (Hall 2010: 310). We align with Barth (1981) when he states that, “This existential affirmation of God is now, in relation to the law of grace, love” (Barth 1981:454).

In the *Secunda Secundae* (second Part of the Second Part) in *Summa Theologiae* Thomas sets charity (love) as a virtue within the context of gratuity (cf. Hall 2010:310). Thus, the goodness that God confers through charity is not distributed according to natural capacity but rather according to the will of the Spirit that distributes his gifts. This friendship distribution is through the infusion of the Holy Spirit it is as such not matter of ‘acquisition by the natural power’ (cf. Hall 2010: 310). If then every virtue depends on divine goodness then Thomas in (23,4) states that “ Charity [love] is included in the definition of every virtue” and importantly he continues that charity ‘directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end’ and is the virtue on which ‘ all other virtues draw their sustenance and

nourishment' (cf. Hall 2010: 311). It is God who draws us nearer in friendship thereby enkindling our love of the neighbour which makes us worthy of love, and as we then grow closer to God in charity, we also grow closer to God's friends, our neighbours, as they are moved toward their own and our ultimate *telos* [end goal] (cf. Hall 2010:311). When Thomas explains in (44,7) on the 'Precepts of Charity' that God's work in us allows us to become closer to every human as he or she bears the image of God and we are capacitated for friendship (cf. Hall 2010: 311).

The forgoing reminds of and reflects on what needs to become a reality in South Africa if there is any hope for a moral resurgence in the country. Within the broader relation of grace, we find that relationships of nearness and nuances of goodness apply. Thomas in (26,6 and 26,7) reminds all Christians that it makes sense that we are to love more those who are nearer to God through their greater goodness, but that we are to love those who are nearer to us in kinship more than those who are, due to their goodness, closer to God (cf. Hall 2010:311). In the aftermath of the deluge of immorality and unethical conduct that reigned during the Zuma administration in South Africa and continued struggle to regain some sense of moral balance and regeneration of an ethical society in South African, the world and for that matter South Africa is faced by the COVID 19 pandemic. As a Christian community the Country can lean on and learn from the insights purported by Thomas Aquinas when in his *Secunda Secundae* at (30,2) he notes the subtle difference between the fittingness of charity [love] and the logic of mercy. Mercy as a virtue related to charity [love] is different as it involves relating to another due to his/her need and not due to their goodness, nearness to God or proximity (cf. Hall 2010:312). A lengthy but necessary quotation from the work of Thomas (30,2) is required in this regard:

[S]ince sorrow or grief is about one's own ills, one grieves or sorrows for another's distress, in so far as one looks upon another's distress as one's own. Now this happens in two ways: first, through union of the affections, which is the effect of love. For, since he who loves another looks upon his friend as another self, he counts his friend's hurt as his own, so that he grieves for his friend's hurt as though he were hurt himself ... Secondly it happens through real union, for instance when another's evil comes near to us, so as to pass to us from him. Hence the

philosopher says that men pity such as are akin to them, and the like, because it makes them realise that the same may happen to themselves. This also explains why the old and the wise who consider that they may fall upon evil times, as also feeble and timorous persons, are more inclined toward pity; whereas those who deem themselves happy, and so powerful as to think themselves in no danger of suffering any hurt, are not so inclined to pity.

(Aquinas in Hall 2010:312)

To take pity and show mercy in another's suffering is preferred over the shying away from the danger of such association. Behind this incautious proximity may be friendship or a natural inclination toward pity or finally a kind of merciful wisdom born of age and/or virtue. Mercy born of wisdom is in Thomas' understanding the virtue contrary to unmerciful pride. The vice by which a person misunderstands his or her own freedom from suffering and/or relation to goodness explains that the proud are without pity because they despise others and think that they are wicked, and that it is such wickedness that leads to them to deserved suffering. This Thomas refers to as 'false godliness' (cf. Hall 2010:312). A question worth considering in context of the high percentage of South African's calling themselves Christians and the moral deluge commanding the Country, could be, 'Whether this false godliness is not prevalent in South Africa?' Love [charity] may rightly not be a calculation of relationships but rather a holy risk (cf. Hall 2010: 312). Werpehowski (2010) in his taxation of the work of Nygren (1953), *Anders Nygren's Agape and Eros*, found that Christian love of the neighbour is entirely distinguished from humanistic ideals of altruism and sympathy because of it being rooted in fellowship with God and the experience divine love. It is a spontaneous and unmotivated essence of love for enemies that harbours the possibility of creating fellowship where fellowship seems impossible (cf. Werpehowski 2010:437). We see Nygren's thinking being reflective of that of Aquinas when he states that neighbourly love is free of self-bondage, as it gives of itself, even sacrifices itself as it regards the other 'in his concrete condition and concrete situation' for his own sake, completely free from relative worth or attractiveness (cf. Nygren in Werpehowski 2010:437). The original scope and reason for Werpehowski's (2010) taxation of Nygren's (1953) work is not the aim of this study and hence the circumvention of

the critical historical opinion that proposes the strict governing contrast between the forms of love; *agapē* and *eros*.

Werpehowski (2010) in his closing remarks on the work of Nygren (1953) reflects on Christian love that contains normative content and is bound to the context of fellowship with God in originating from the experience of God's *agapē* freely given and gratefully received, and that *agapē* apprehends the neighbour in his/her concrete condition of need, a need which is answered through God's own *agapē*, pouring down and out through the Christian (cf. Werpehowski 2010:446). This statement is affirmed by the thinking of Werpehowski (2010) when he concludes;

- that *agapē* generally includes self-concerned but non-egocentric desire for loving relationship with another, for its own sake;
- that God's love for the sinner in her real individuality is also for a beloved child who lives in Christ and is called as such to participate in the divine life;
- that this participation may be an object of non-possessive desire fully encompassed by God's gracious mercy and power;
- that the sinner as real covenant partner may respond out of that desire in self-serving love for God that corresponds to her God-given nature and thus to her good.

(Werpehowski 2010:446)

Nürnbergger (2005) in his critical reading of Luther positions faith as trust in a promise. This promise liberates us spiritually from the forces of human instinct and desires, biological fetters, social enslavements and fateful developments. It involves us in creative and redemptive action on behalf of ourselves, our communities, societies and the endangered natural world. If we take this seriously it has the power to generate enormous courage in the face of adversity, in the same way as it did for Luther (cf. Nürnbergger 2005:310). As for hope, it stands as that what God has done in the past, particularly in preparing for the coming of Christ and because of what God is doing now and did through Christ, the Christian dares to expect future blessings at present visible (2 Cor 1:10). The goodness of God is never exhausted for the Christian and the best is still to be. Hope, to be sure, is not a kite at the mercy of changing winds, but 'an anchor of the soul, both



sure and steadfast', penetrating deep into the invisible eternal world (cf. Douglas 1972:535). Barth (1981) concludes the triad with a final view on love. In faith we cleave to God himself and will live even when we die (Jn 11:25) Hope will not be ashamed because it grasps what is to come at the present (Rom.5:5). But love is the greatest of the three. We cannot say that faith and hope is God. We can and must however say that God is love (Jn.4;8,16) (cf. Barth 1981:460).

We conclude that when the Pauline triad of virtues are placed within a theoretical construct and enacted by moral agents it will enable the general populace of South Africa to achieve higher levels of morality when implemented and supported through the consistent action of Christians living and displaying these virtues as a way of life. Further also understanding when reflecting on the words of Geisler (2011) that not all persons will achieve the higher virtues and the greater good possible. Some sufferers get better, and some get bitter. For some of them it will be a stepping stone but for others a stumbling stone. Some will end in heaven and some in hell, because in a free world not all will choose the good; some will choose hell (cf. Geisler 2011;91). The making of decisions is critical if successful change is to be expected. C.S. Lewis in Geisler (2011) is quoted as saying that there is certainty of one thing: "Given that we are free moral creatures, even an all – powerful God will not persuade all to choose the right way. He cannot work coercively but only persuasively. Love never forces itself on another's will. So, in a free universe, we will not end with the best world conceivable but with the best world achievable by God's grace in coordination with our free will" (Geisler 2011:91).

The ethics of faith hope and love requires a postulation within a critical and practical framework. This will enable it to become alive and relevant in the daily lives of its agents. I now turn my attention to this model.

## CHAPTER 7

### A THEORY FOR MAKING ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

#### 7.1 Introduction

Starting with the end in mind we refer to the work of De Villiers (2013), *An Ethics of Responsibility Reading of Eduard Tödt's Theory of the Formation of Moral Judgment*, when he concludes that 'the reading of Tödt's theory as descriptive of the logically presupposed steps in the formation of moral judgments is incorrect'. Because of the insights gained by the ethics of responsibility it would have been better described as 'a responsibility ethics approach to the formation of moral judgments' (cf. De Villiers 2013:8). Our interest is however in the comment wherein we align our thinking to that of De Villiers (2013) when he states that, "It should rather be understood as a normative theory of the most appropriate approach to the formation of moral judgments of our time" (De Villiers 2013:8).

Aristotelian virtue ethics distinguishes itself from that of Kantian and Utilitarianism in that it assesses the broad characters of humans rather than singular acts in isolation. Every human has a *telos*, a true function or end goal and the ability to reason, characteristics that distinguishes man from other creatures and this leads to the human being able to fully achieve the good works when acting in accordance with his/her *telos*. Virtues are dispositions focusing on character rather than actions and renders it to an agent centred normative moral theory (cf. Dimmock & Fisher 2017: 49-52). Virtue ethics understood as a normative theory allows for Tödt's, *Theory of Making Ethical Judgement*, to provide the most appropriate approach to the formation of moral judgments of our time, satisfying the conclusion reached by De Villiers (2013) above.

#### 7.2 Tödt's Theory is normative in Nature

Tödt's initial theory was purely prescriptive with regards to the logical steps to be followed in all formation of moral judgments. It was based in the provided definition of theory and the objective logical order of the formation process. Tödt's view

changed over time and adapted in later publications related to the formation of moral judgments (cf. De Villiers 2013:2-3). In his 1988 book Tödt confirmed that his six-step scheme does not apply to all types of moral judgments. De Villiers (2013) confirms that Tödt admits that it is not applicable to moral judgments in which a moral evaluation of the attitudes and actions of other people are evaluated or of the moral quality of institutions and relations, but rather that it applies to moral judgments that are drawn from serious concrete problems and culminates in decisions that lead to action (cf. De Villiers 2013:3). In a further narrowing down of the theory Tödt excludes everyday intuitive moral judgments that play a part in the everyday life. In doing this, De Villiers comments, that Tödt acknowledges the valid insights of moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas, 'that moral virtues, and not so moral norms, play a pivotal part in providing moral guidance in everyday life' (Ibid.). This research aligns as per De Villiers (2013) when he asks the question whether any theory on the formation of moral judgment could ever be purely descriptive in nature and after considering several theories, those of philosopher Höffe(1977), Ringeling theologian (1984), Lange theologian (1992), concludes that, "Such theories mostly, if not always, seem to be based on normative assumptions and to be normative or prescriptive in nature" ( De Villiers 2013:4).

### **7.3 Approaching the problem of moral norms from the perspective of judgment-making**

Tödt (1978) begins his discussion on judgment-formation by means of issuing the caveat that the schema is to be 'construed as an ideal type of the steps to go through in judgment-formation' in order to arrive at a decision' (cf. Tödt 1978:108). Some of the applications that the schema was subjected to include, concrete examples as per the Apostle Paul in the Corinth debates around eating of meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8 -10), memorials from church bodies related to public issues, studies related to the problem of violence, writings of Luther concerned with commerce and usury and case histories from field counselling ( cf. Tödt 1978: 108-109). This methodical approach was also used to guide students in making ethical decisions regarding concrete ethical problems.

Tödt's ethical theory for the formation of moral judgments rests according to De Villiers (2103 on two important presuppositions to be considered in its interpretation. Firstly, it was to find an appropriate contemporary approach in Protestant ethics - German: *evangelische Ethik*. Secondly Tödt believed that a proper formation of moral judgment had to be based on an ethics of responsibility. Our current social reality is however that of rapid modern technological and social development which leads to new complex moral issues which cannot be singularly dealt with duties, responsibilities have become complex and comprehensive which require moral agents to take on these responsibilities. Tödt (1978) states that the schema has strong and weak points and that it can be both useful and dangerous (cf. Tödt 1978:109).

## **7.4 Six Steps or material elements in the formation of ethical judgments**

### **7.4.1 Definition of the problem as a moral problem**

Tödt (1978) requires that the problem faced be firstly defined in terms of the moral action required to address it. He distinguishes between technical and moral aspects when he says, "... what needs and interests it touches, and to what extent problems that are at stake require more than mere 'technical' solutions in as much as they challenge his or her ethical judgment" (Tödt 1978:109). De Villiers (2013) comments that taking such problems serious entails that they first be perceived from a moral perspective and to consider them as moral problems that engage one personally and *unconditionally* (De Villiers 2013:6 emphasis added). The insistence of Tödt to precisely state the moral nature of the problem goes against the sectorial problems which can and should be solved through functional technical approaches (Ibid.). This research aligns with the view of De Villiers but does however believe that the approach to definition of the problem remains valuable for the identification and address of non-sectorial technical related moral questions. Defining the moral problems in South Africa that can be addressed through a morally regenerated society will be in the realm of non-sectorial and related to the interactions of people with each other. Certain moral breakdowns and unethical issues will however have to be dealt with in a sectorial manner but rely on a moral regenerative support for the transgressor, some of the thinking include actions related to fraud and corruption.

#### **7.4.2 Analysis of the situation**

Tödt's focus involves the investigation of the 'real context' in which the problem arises; this could be the political, social framework within which it occurs or the relationships at individual or group level. It is important in finding a successful solution that the contextualisation of the problem is correct. Tödt continues to emphasise that problems arise within the complex world of individuals; "... 'the situation', comes into being through the delimitation within a complex environment of 'my' situation or 'our' situation, on the part of the individual or several or even many interacting subjects" (Tödt 1978 :109). De Villiers (2013) concurs when he emphasises that taking seriously the pressing problems that face us in communal and personal lives implies that we should take seriously the concrete situation in which these problems are embedded and analyse it thoroughly (cf. De Villiers 2013:6). He further supports the approach followed by Tödt when he quotes from Tödt (1988b:62), "... to get clarity on possible and commendable future actions and only succeed in understanding the situation concretely if it reveals which past events have given shape to the present constellation of the problem" (De Villiers 2013:6). As per our first iteration above, the relevance to the South African situation will require further in-depth attention as the complexity of the moral digression in the Country has reached several proportions of critical status and will require specific and critical analysis of the prevalent moral breakdowns.

#### **7.4.3 Options for actions**

The usual reaction to a problem is 'What is to be done?'. Tödt (1978) moves beyond this question when he indicates that consideration need to be given to what would be the 'good' and 'right' thing to do thereby bringing norms into play (cf. Tödt 1978:109). When De Villiers (2013) highlights that Tödt (1988) emphasises the need to design and evaluate different options for action in order to find the best solution to a moral problem he includes the view held by Tödt that, "The person who designs options for actions in a responsible way cannot ignore effects and side effects, because all moral actions play out in the field of inter-human relationships (Tödt 1988b:64)" (cf. De Villiers 2013:7). The moral agent should always attempt to predict and manage the future by way of prognosis and planning and never act contrary to his or her own conscience as this could lead to

a compromise of their own moral identity (cf. De Villiers 2013:7). This point being of extreme importance in the South African context with its diversity in cultures beliefs and political and cultural orientations.

#### **7.4.4 Testing norms, goods and perspectives**

Tödt (1978) purported that life-world (*Lebenswelt*) is intertwined with a multiplicity of norms many of which assumes a relative life of their own. For Tödt (1978) a norm is whatever links the situation at hand or situational representation to an act or mode of behaviour (cf. Tödt 1978:110). Having said this, morals are those norms which makes a linkage possible in a morally defensible manner, it therefore maintains the integrity of the subject. An ethics of responsibility expressed in the modern era implicates that morals, norms, virtues and values have lost their monopoly in all spheres of life. This is ascribed to the rapid differentiation of the social, economic and political spheres which requires the validation of functional norms, virtues and values and not only that of the moral norms, virtues and values (cf. De Villiers 2013:7). The dominance exerted by the ethics of responsibility in this regard does not provide the required answer. De Villiers (2013) elaborates on the view that Tödt should take into consideration and of which Tödt is aware; moral norms are not the only applicable norms in the process of the formation of moral judgments; social norms that are embedded in institutions as well as social roles, are not necessarily moral in nature, but could be non-moral or even immoral as they express discriminatory societal practices (cf. De Villiers 2013;7). It follows that in societies there are 'goods, or material values that are desirable, in the formation of moral judgments such goods and material values require consideration as to their applicability and be tested for their moral quality (cf. De Villiers 2013;7).

Within the South African context this step will prove especially taxing in execution especially due to the unequal distribution of goods and economic opportunities between social spheres. The words and thinking of Tödt (1978) that warns against giving in to only functional considerations when deciding on actions and policies remains important and should the call to heed to applicable moral norms play a decisive role (De Villiers 2013: 7-8).

#### **7.4.5 Testing the morally communicative and obligatory character of the selected course of action**

This step is a later inclusion in the six step process De Villiers (2013) explains to this end that Tödt agree with Georg Picht that the understanding of 'norm' in as much as it refers to a fixed principle that has validity for all people at all times and would contradict the approach that takes 'responsibility' as its central notion (cf. De Villiers 2013:8). Although an individualist interpretation of the norm concept, especially when it comes to *moral* norms must be avoided, consideration need to be given to the fact that each person is confronted by history with his or her own specific responsibility regarding, moral problems that they must solve (Ibid.). Including the thinking of Tödt (1978) related to *Retrospective Adequacy Control*, provides for a further strengthening of this point as judgmental decision are often made in a tentative and preliminary manner. Ethical decisions are often reconsidered, sometimes at length. This happens when the solution to the perceived problem is re-thought. Secondly when the problem is re-assessed due to new and unknown factors presenting itself (cf. Tödt 1978:110). De Villiers (2013) mentioned that this also allows for the process of communication and interaction in order to find common norms and 'goods' and to allow for stakeholders to acknowledge and confirm their validity (Tödt 1988a:39-41). Within a South African democracy, where the political and individual divides are still very volatile and real, this step will be the one that will most probably provide deep personal and communal conflict that would require to be breached very fast in the individual space if the South African populace or at least Christian populace endeavour to a life driven by the Christian virtues of faith hope and love.

#### **7.4.6 The judgment decision**

Weber (1994) historically noted that responsibility ethics demands a decision to be taken in the face of contemporary moral problems (cf. De Villiers 2013:8). Virtue ethics in contrast is an agent-centred theory. In this approach people and their characters are the focus rather than singular actions in response to events (cf. Dimmock & Fisher 2017:52). Here the question of 'morality' is one of 'how should I be' rather than 'what should I do' (Tödt (1988: a;41-42; 1988:77-78) emphasises that a person may not automatically act according to a moral judgment made by following the five steps before and that the possibility remains that no action is

taken because of either fear or uncertainty. No action will follow unless a deliberate decision is taken that not only includes the cognitive insights but action that will reflect the acceptance of the consequences of one's actions (cf. De Villiers 2013:8). The judgment decision as per Tödt now provides the opportunity for morality within virtue ethics to move from the 'how I should be' to 'what should I do'.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

We started with the end in mind and now conclude with De Villiers (2013) that the theory as descriptive of the logically presupposed steps in the formation of moral judgments is inaccurate in as much as it should rather be understood as a normative theory of the most appropriate way to the formation of moral judgments for our time. This allows for the consideration of the theory to be aligned to the use of judgment within the virtue ethics domain.

Ethics is experienced in the real world there where the lives of people are impacted by experiences and actions that require decisions and actions that may shape their lives daily. People do not live in vacuums and they dependant on structures and support to come to certain of their decisions either as individuals or as a collective. Once an individual or group/community has embarked on change they require support and guidance to sustain their efforts and re-enforce the change. We now turn to the structures and leadership will be influential and supportive of such decisions.



## CHAPTER 8

### AGENTS OF CHANGE

#### 8.1 Introduction

The penultimate chapter identifies the agents responsible for carrying the proposed new ethic into a tarnished and morally broken South Africa. The research considers the changing role that will be required from Christian communities, structures and individuals to facilitate the new Christian ethic.

James Gustafson (1971) in Hauerwas argued that all human communities require virtues in order to be sustained and that people [agents] in communities must learn to trust one another as well as trust the community itself. It is critical that all communities require a sense of hope in the future and continue in love as a necessity for sustaining relationships. This requires that a profound sense remains in which the traditional 'theological virtues' of faith, hope, and love are 'natural'. Although the church is sustained by these 'natural virtues', it is necessary that the kind of faith, hope and love that moulds the community is derived from their tradition (cf. Hauerwas 1983: 378-379). But what about the rest of the communities as agents, that the Christian move, live in and exist in? The scope of this research addresses the behaviour of the individual as an agent in relation to his or her existence within their church, as an agent in relation to their community - family, social environment, which includes neighbour - and work environment. Other than the individual in their relation as agent of the church, work and social context, consideration is also required in relation to themselves.

#### 8.2 The Individual agent

Most South African indicated that they are Christian: "In 2013 a majority (84.2%) of South Africans described their religious affiliation as 'Christian'; this is an increase from the 79.8% that was reported in the 2001 census." (Schoeman 2017:2). In the previously indicated, I found that it is possible for individuals to adapt and eventually change their behaviour to reflect the Christian theological virtues faith, hope and love. When searching for a model agent on which to build a successful individual agency, we find that Bonhoeffer was viewed in history as the most

'rational agent'. MacIntyre (2007) based this claim in reflecting on the poem written by Bonhoeffer during German captivity in the Second World War. According to Hauerwas (1983) the expressions that Bonhoeffer portrayed in the poem, was the way that Bonhoeffer lived. It was a life schooled in the daily reading of the Psalms. Bonhoeffer did not only 'put on' a brave face for those whom he loved, but a face which he portrayed in life, even life in prison camp (cf. Hauerwas 1983: 85-86). Hugh Falconer in Metaxas (2014) provides a glimpse at Bonhoeffer's final moments on earth. We learn from this that Bonhoeffer performed the offices of pastor during a service for a Catholic, atheist, several other captives and their jailers. He read from Isaiah 53:5 and 1 Peter 1:3 and explained these verses to everyone. The service was best described in these words;

[He] spoke to us in a manner which reached the hearts of all, finding just the right words to express the spirit of our imprisonment and thoughts and resolutions which it had brought. ... He had hardly finished his last prayer when the door opened and two evil-looking men in civilian clothes came in and said: 'Prisoner Bonhoeffer. Get ready to come with us' Those words "Come with us" – for all prisoners they had come to mean one thing only – the scaffold. We bade him good- by – he drew me aside – "This is the end," he said. "For me the beginning."

(Metaxas 2014: 207-208)

The camp doctor at Flossenbürg, H. Fischer-Hüllstrung years later commented lengthy on the execution of Bonhoeffer. Suffice to quote him saying, "In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God" (Metaxas 2014:209). Without providing or analysing the well bespoke poem we ask the question; 'What can we learn from Bonhoeffer's life of faith and how do we use and apply an approach of daily Scripture reading and reflection as an anchor to Christians in South Africa to stay the course of faith, hope and love?'

A plausible approach for providing an answer to this question is found in the work of Hill (2016) when he reconsiders the continuation of *lectio divina*, the ancient practice reading and praying, and provides grounds for a move to a practice of *lectio mission*, which he has practised for twenty years. The four steps contained

in *lectio divina*: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer) and *contemplatio* (contemplation) is not enough and is there a need for to be greater focus placed on Jesus Christ, global conversations, other spiritual practices, missional life, transformational action and Christian community (cf. Hill 2016:437-438). *Lectio missio*, is a practice of prayerful reading that especially focus on spiritual writings of Majority World and indigenous Christians, and follows the eight steps of *adspecto*, *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, *imitatio*, *missio*, *communio* and *contemplatio*. These eight movements are not intended to be discrete separate stages. Whilst they are each a movement they are interlocked and overlapping and should be viewed as a dance rather than as a linear movement (cf. Hill 2016:438). In considering such an approach relevant to the South African specific situation, the movement of 'global conversations' will be replaced by the use of 'glocalization', a term coined by Japanese economists and popularised by Roland Robertson, which means 'the local (the local, contextual, homogeneous) and global (the global, universal, heterogenous) interconnect' (cf. Hill 2016:26). Further on the model proposed will be adapted to align with the creation of a society regenerated through the implementation of the virtue ethics construct proposed.

The *globalized lectio missio* consists of eight movements and in the same way a *glocalised lectio missio* will follow the same eight movements. Although the eight movements are referred to as a dance rather than a linear movement, they are a cycle, that starts with a gazing upon Jesus Christ and moves into a next cycle keeping the gaze on Him (cf. Hill 2016;438). These movements are depicted below;

*Movement 1: adspecto (gaze)* – The agent begins by gazing upon Jesus as revealed in the four Gospels whilst reading the passage slowly, prayerfully and attentively. Then committing to serving Him and His mission means committing to imitating His life, ethics, holiness, compassion, justice, prayer and gazing on His person, message, life, practices death, resurrection mission and gospel.

*Movement 2: lectio (read)* – This movement requires that Scripture and books are prayerfully, slowly and attentively read. The agent should aim to include Western Christian Spiritual writers and prayerfully include Majority World writings. If the

readings prove difficult then time should be spent on reflection considering words and phrases that requires attention.

*Movement 3: meditatio (meditate)* – Here the agent meditates and reflects upon the reading. Allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal meaning and transformation in heart [ mind and thinking added]. Is the Spirit touching your thoughts, desires, passions, memories, fears, hopes, and expanding your missional imagination?

*Movement 4: oratio (pray)* – The agent now responds to God in prayer entering a loving conversation with Him. This should be a dialogue and not a monologue with time for listening and waiting. Below follows an adapted circular diagram indicating the flow of the eight movements.

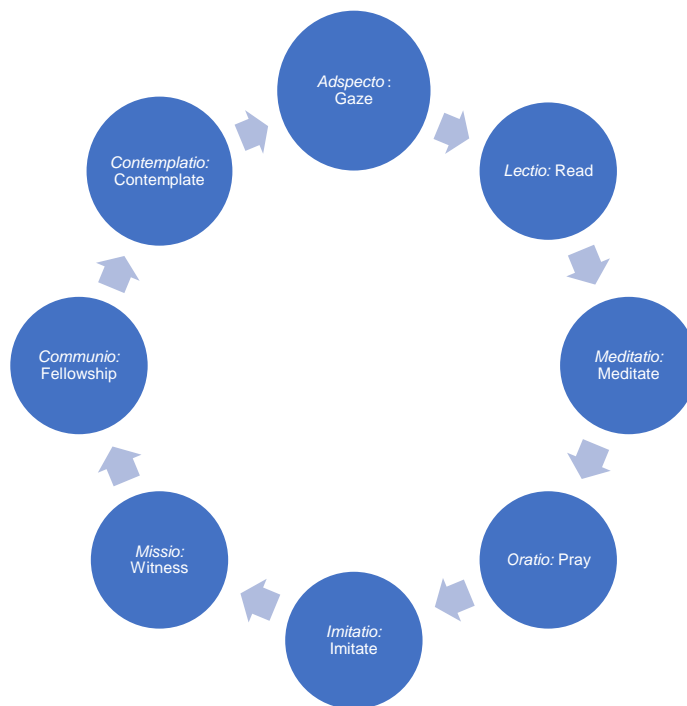


Figure1: *Lectio Missio* in a missional spirituality in context of faith, hope and love.

*Movement 5: imitatio (imitate)* - The agent now moves out into life imitating faith hope and love, grace mercy, justice and other virtues. This movement could have been called *operatio*, but it is more than action it is the *imitation* of Christ (cf. Hill 2016:440).

*Movement 6: missio (witness)* – This movement has at its core the joining with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the *mission Dei*. It requires the agent to go out as individual but more so in community. *Missio* and *communio* are interdependent thus the agent practices mission that is informed by the local experiences keeping global themes and voices in mind being *glocal* in outreach and action.

*Movement 7: communio (fellowship)* – In the light of the theological virtues of faith, hope and love this is the most influential of the movements as related to the neighbour and the agent's enemy. This requires immersion into the community this is communion with God and others in creation. Seek community with other cultures peoples and groups locally and nationally if possible. The suggestion by Hill (2016) to get globally involved would not be beneficial at this time. The *lectio mission* is communal and relational not individualistic.

*Movement 8: contemplation (contemplate)* - The final movement in the model is one that agents in general often neglect or miss completely and that is to rest in the presence of God. This is the movement in which the agent contemplates new actions habits, practices commitments and theology. *Contemplatio* must lead to *adspecto* which is not the end of the process but the beginning of a new cycle; "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1Cor 13 :13 Holy Bible NIV). The Latin being '*Nunc autem manent fides, spes, caritas, tria hæc: major autem horum est caritas*' (Latin of St. Jerome) (<https://www.quora.com/How-is-hope-faith-and-love-translated-in-Latin>) (Hill 2016: 437-441).

The agent's inability to be wholly in their acts is reflective of the desperate need to be incorporated into a community of practices that can provide the formation of their agency through a truthful narrative. The character of the agent is formed through what may appear to be insignificant actions, but which prove to be important in a way of life that only makes sense when the God that Christians worship exists (cf. Hauerwas 2015:88). Individuals who possess the virtues of integrity and constancy will not only possess a determinative set of roles they will also know how to think about goods associated with those roles. They will thus discover a tension between their understanding of themselves as moral agents and their agential roles which will prove to be beneficial for the critical attitude

required to critically examine between socially embodied modes of practice and their presumptions that they are moral agents (cf. Hauerwas 2015:79).

### **8.3 The church as agent**

The role of the Church as agent in the successful establishment, development and continued sustenance of the virtues of faith, hope and love remains critically supreme. A further crucial virtue for Christians seeking to live in this violent world is that of patience. The church must learn that its task is not to *make* the world the kingdom of God, but rather that it should be faithful to the kingdom by showing the world how to be a community of peace. It is especially in the interrelationship of hope and patience that the importance of justice manifest itself (cf. Hauerwas 2001:379). Reflecting on the current social economic status during the COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa one can but only hope that it is, "... a matter of justice that those who are hungry should be fed, that those who are abandoned should be cared for, that those who have been oppressed and maltreated should be freed and respected" (Hauerwas 2001:479). These expected results seem to be only possible if it does not hurt or impede on another. The prevalent situation in South Africa is reflected in the words of Hauerwas (2001) when he tells us that when those trained to the hunger and thirst for righteousness are confronted with the reality of hunger will be sorely tempted to turn to violence. It is then that most of us would rather bargain away some of our possessions than be forced to deal with the threat of violence from those who have so little (cf. Hauerwas 2001:380).

As a result of the hunger brought about by the inability of people to earn a living through the lockdown brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, violence is a real threat on the streets where the less fortunate and destitute in South Africa lives. Melanie Verwoerd, a former ANC MP and South African Ambassador to Ireland said, "If we extend the metaphorical hand of care and love now, we might even find that some healing happens in our country at this time of disease and death. If not, we could face the devastation of social unrest, looting, increased burglaries and increased racial tension. So, even if caring isn't your thing, caring right now could save the country." (News24 22 April 2020).

No longer will the violence be limited to the areas of residence of the destitute but, will it be spilling into the middle and upper-class areas. The work of society has become one of addressing the plight of the poor and hungry. Government, private institutions, media houses, individuals and churches have all started feeding schemes and food distribution efforts. Yet the bureaucracy and entrenched ethic of fraud and corruption is preventing food to be effectively distributed to the hungry, with several local authorities across the country being accused of theft and fraudulently dealing in assistance aimed at relieving hardship. In this regard, *The Mail and Guardian* reported that corruption was suspected in the procurement of blankets and other sanitising products by Kwa Zulu Natal MEC for Social Development, Nonhlanhla Khoza. The provincial government's explanation for Khoza paying inflated prices for goods was rejected by the central government and was an in-depth investigation launched into her actions (cf. Mail & Guardian 16 April 2020).

It is widely reported and challenged by the official opposition party in the country, the Democratic Alliance, and several other minority parties that the ruling ANC Party has been giving preference of food distribution to their constituents, with opposition constituents not receiving any assistance. The green shoots of hope and moral regeneration that has started budding in the Ramaphosa era is entering a downward spiral. One of many cases that reflect continued fraud in government is reflected in the investigation into the Minister of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Lindiwe Sisulu department. Advocate Terry Motau was appointed to lead a team of lawyers to review all fraud, corruption and irregular expenditure reports, which amounts to R16 bn at the department and to ensure all recommendations are fully implemented (cf. IOL 13 May 2020). A sad day indeed when a social crisis and worldwide pandemic is used for political gain in a country ravished by inequality and led by a government of leaders, who in the majority still profess to believe in God but continue to hold onto the practice of fraud and theft at the expense of hungry people.

This brings to bear a greater and increasingly urgency on the Church to move from its formerly identified 'lapdog' position and become not only the bastion of moral virtue but a Church of action lest history repeats itself as was the case in the

Zuma era. It is time for the church to be the spiritual leader by firstly living the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. As an example the Methodist tradition (the researcher being from this tradition) is chosen to briefly refer to the role of the Church. The Vision of the church is to create, “*A Christ healed Africa for the healing of nations*” with the Mission Statement being “*God calls the Methodist people to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation*” and the statement of belief/credo; We believe the church is called to;

A deepening spirituality.

A resolve to be guided by Gods mission.

A rediscovery of every member of ministry, or the priesthood of all believers.

A commitment ‘to be one, so that the world may believe’.

A re-emphasis of servant–leadership and discernment as our model for ministry.

A redefinition and authentication of the vocation of the clergy in our church.

A commitment to environmental justice.

(Methodist Church of South Africa, Vision and Mission)

The vision is per Hill (2016) as being *glocal*, global in the sense that it is part of Africa and wishes to bring healing to Africa and from the local basis of being a South African church established so by law. The mission calls all members, the people who call themselves Methodists, to proclaim the gospel for the healing and transformation. The two phrases form the credo that rings true currently; *A re-emphasis of servant – leadership and discernment as our model for ministry*, and *A commitment to environmental justice* (cf. <https://methodist.org.za/who-we-are/vision-mission/>) which spurs the Methodists on as servants of the communities in which it exists to reach out in faith, hope and love. The environmental justice required ensures that justice is served with regards to the care of the destitute and reminds the ruling government of their responsibility before God. They are all appointees of God and are charged to a higher moral standard, especially considering that previous research showed that most South African Ministers are Christians. The oath taken when they were inducted into office, is an oath that invokes God, - “So help me God”.



(cf. <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv02039/04lv02046/05lv02047/06lv02065/07lv02084/08lv02087.htm>).

The church is called to be church in different ways and different contexts, God is calling us to be the church, a fellowship of disciples today in relation to today's opportunities and challenges. During this conversation we are seeking above all to attend to the Church's Lord, who calls the Church to be a manifestation not only of goodness and grace but as achievement of faithfulness to Him (cf. Forrester 2000:206).

Fourie (2012) says that business have a significant role to play in the development of developing countries, they do not only impact their employees, shareholders and customers, but they have opportunities to apply political leverage in both strengthening or undermining democracy. "Intuitively it seems as if the church ought to be able to engage these important societal actors" (Fourie 2012:47) the statement that lead us to considering the world of business as an agent.

#### **8.4 The world of business as an agent**

The question as to whether and how if possible, Christian ethics can be practised by Christians in the world of business remains valid in a post-colonial developing country with its democratic institutions still in the process of maturing. Although there is a level of plurality evident amongst Christian churches and even bitter divisions amongst traditions, the church understands itself to be the primary practitioner of Christian ethics (cf. Fourie 2012: 46-48). Smit identified six forms of church which will support the endeavours of the agents to deal with this plurality and connect to present-day experiences. The levels identified by Smit (1996) are; worshipping communities, local congregations, denominations, ecumenical bodies, voluntary organisations and individual believers (cf. Fourie 2012:48-49). During recent years there has been an expansion in social ethics practitioners and the implementation of such ethics. Fourie (2012) continues in stating that the effect of this is that social ethics are developed within the different forms of the churches and furthermore it developed contexts for non - church audiences. Reihls (*et al* 2007:11) developed ten theses that characterise Protestant social ethics. These theses reflect that Christian social ethics are not only addressed by the church

alone. The identity of Christian social ethics is a product of God's gracious justification (thesis 1), making Christians God's custodians (thesis 7), who are to advocate for a just society (thesis 4) and in which all people have the same opportunities (thesis 6) (cf. Fourie 2012:50). It may seem that Christian social ethics is exclusively practised by the church, but they are certainly not meant to be exclusively for the church. This argument presupposes in a theoretical sense that Christian social ethics can be used to engage business, but it does not address the concrete question of how this may be done (cf. Fourie 2012: 50).

Fourie (2012) addresses both a reactive (pp. 51-54) and constructive (pp. 54-57) mode for the engagement with business. Understanding that the reactive mode is important in engaging business, this research however considers the constructive mode on the back of Fourie (2012) commenting that it is possible for the church to engage constructively with business in co-creating solutions. The most significant change in South African business thinking over the past decades has been the speak of a 'new constitution of commerce' as found in the Institute of Directors of Southern Africa Report (2009:8) (cf. Fourie 2012:54). The changes in governance structures since the 1950's is closely related to the increase in financial resources and political leverage which provided business with positions of power regarding political institutions and societies. This means that business are no longer solely dependent on decisions made by democratically elected political leaders and their supporting bureaucracies but that business – and especially those who have an international footprint – can make decisions even if these are purely financial, practical or organisational. These decisions leads to a greater impact that not only influence employees, shareholders or customers but also the general public of a certain territory (cf. Fourie 2012:54-55). The *Vision 2050: The new agenda for business* released by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD 2011) accentuates the shift of business brought about by the advances in information technology and biological sciences realigned their focus to include their responsibility towards societies with the accompanying opportunity for churches to engage business (cf. Fourie 2012: 54-55).

In *Vision 2050* the first part provides the characteristics of the world in 2050. The second part embodies these characteristics, and typifies a world in which all

inhabitants will, 'live well, and within the limits of the planet'. The pathway created in the second portion of *Vision 2050* consist of nine elements. The first element is significant for Christian ethics in that the first element to be addressed according to *Vision 2050* is 'people values' with significance added by the fact that this document was solely written and initiated by multinational companies (cf. Fourie 2012:55). In South Africa the third King Report on corporate governance (2009) know as King III, as published by the Institute of Directors of South Africa (IDASA), similarly describes shifting in power relations and open and constructive engagement (IDASA 2011:11). This manifests in the expectation that the legitimate interests of stakeholders other than shareholders will be considered within their societal realities (cf. Fourie 2012:55). IDASA (2011:19) makes it clear that business enterprises do not only have the responsibility to act as responsible corporate citizens, but that business should be conducted 'ethically' by considering 'the short – and – long term impacts of strategy on the economy, society and the natural environment' by taking into account 'the company's impact on internal and external stakeholders' (cf. Fourie 2012:56). This implies and encourages business to establish 'mechanisms' and processes that support constructive engagement with stakeholders. This shift provides opportunity for Christian ethics practitioners to use the different forms of church to explore constructive modes engaging business (cf. Fourie 2012:56).

An extremely important role for the church to adopt and support business in is that of defining the issues that business must consider but of which they have no expertise. These include the complex issues of morality, constructive values and dialogue between different religious and cultural groups (cf. Fourie 2012:56). The foregoing positions the church as a competent dialogue partner and by no means a powerless adversary of business. Business may hold the prerogative with regards to the constructive interactions. The church should however be able to significantly influence the substance of these interactions without condoning or being coerced into destructive business practices (cf. Fourie 2012:57).

The opportunity and possibility for the church to engage business meaningfully in Christian ethics now allows for a further consideration that falls within the ambit of this research. The focus of this research was to establish whether the application

of a virtue model construct will create a platform to assist in the moral regeneration of the South African society. Fourie (2012) has now opened the door for engaging the third agent in this research, the world of business, in becoming more receptive to Christian ethics being a mode of morality. This does not however refer to virtue ethics specifically but rather lean towards social Christian ethics.

As a final consideration the research investigates the possibility of virtue ethics being a worthwhile ethical construct within business. Whetstone (2001) questioned the appropriate role of virtue ethics in the moral development and moral reasoning of managers and stated that an ethic of virtues (and vices) emphasizes the process of personal and moral character development (cf. Whetstone 2001:101). Whilst some philosophers are reluctant to accept the full 'human nature' approach with the reservation that consequentialism and deontology exhausts all possible modes of ethical reasoning, there is a school of thought amongst the virtue ethic proponents that the personal character perspective is more fundamental than act-orientated theories, favouring a 'stronger' view of virtue ethics (cf. Whetstone 2001:101). Robert Louden (1984) argued that virtue ethics must include adequate justification of morality along with deontological approaches which defeats the thinking of the monomic tradition (cf. Whetstone 2001:102). Whetstone (2001) concedes that a 'strong' virtue ethic where action orientated theories are subordinated is an inadequate theory. For virtue ethics to succeed it will require an integrated or complementary approach using a tripartite ethics formulation that will balance character considerations with deontological focus (cf. Whetstone 2001:102-103). Table 2 below provides a summative view of such an approach.

**Table 2: Three ethical perspectives**

	<b>Consequentialist teleology</b>	<b>Deontology</b>	<b>Virtue</b>
<b>Primary Focus</b>	Consequences; Cost vs. Benefits – of act	Duties: Moral obligations – regards to the act	Character development – for the person

<b>A right action</b>	Promotes the best consequence in which happiness is maximised	In accordance with a moral principle required by God, natural law or rationality	Is one that a virtuous agent is disposed to make in the circumstances in order to flourish and live well
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(adapted from Whetstone 2001:103)

In defining a virtuous act Whetstone (2001) relies on the view of Aristotle that requires the agent or virtuous person does the act knowingly and aware of the pertinent facts and practical wisdom needed for the proposed outcome. The act will further be virtuous and not for self-edification or for non-ideal motives. Finally, the act must be as a result of a steady state of character disposition not a once off impulsive act (cf. Whetstone 2001:104).

Whetstone (2001) defines virtue as, “A virtuous act is thus a rational act based on a wise, purposeful assessment of the factual situation, chosen for a pure motive and consistent with a steady disposition of the actor’s character” (Whetstone 2001:104). The ‘how’ of virtue is more understandable and meaningful for ethics research than that ‘what.’ The Aristotelian ethic of virtue:

- is personal;
- focusses the motivations and sources of action of the agent, which brings a dynamic understanding;
- is contextual; and
- complements other disciplines addressing human behaviour

(cf. Whetstone 2001:104).

The relevance of which translates into an agent properly executing his or her role at an intuitive level of practice and exercises and hones virtues such as courage, temperance, humility, trustworthiness, diligence, love, patience, and practical judgment in applying a principled – grounded ethic to the workplace (cf. Whetstone 2001:106). Victor Frankl (1962) observed that man does not behave morally for

the sake of having a good conscience but rather for the sake of a cause to whom which he/she is committed or for the sake of a person they love or for the sake of God (cf. Whetstone 2001:110). Opposingly the Covey philosophy professes principled centred leadership and poses the danger of 'heal thyself' techniques which influences the close circle of relationships rather than addressing systemic business (Nash, 1994:30) (cf. Whetstone 2001:110). This could be the reason why so many corporations teach this philosophy as a person needs to be oriented critically toward a meaningful corporate or social telos otherwise one may withdraw into stoicism, pietism or legalism (cf. Whetstone 2001: 110).

The approach considered above does not provide a distinct and clear answer to the question whether Christian virtue ethics will be accepted by the world of work and business as an ethic. When it is however, considered in conjunction with the work of Fourie (2012) a real possibility exists for the development of such a theoretical model the acceptance of which would pose challenges and outcomes of its own. Practitioners of Christian ethics and especially Christian virtue ethics described in Fourie "... (be) faced with the challenge to use their status as partners – and not simply adversaries - to contribute that is at the same time distinctive and constructive. This is no uncomplicated task, as it requires of the church to strike a balance between its particular sources, their application in a specific situation and the possibility of faithful compromise." (cf. Fourie 2012:57-58).

## CHAPTER 9

### FINDINGS

At the outset of my study I commented that over the past ten years, from 1998 towards the end of 2018, morality in South Africa experienced an incomparable decline. Despite the best efforts of the ruling government, the decline continued to include decay at personal, organisational, private enterprise, governmental and institutional levels. Landman (2012) is quoted in this regard as, “We are increasingly made aware of violence, poor service delivery, incompetence, corruption, dereliction of duty, self-interest and power hunger” (Landman 2012:1). From the highest levels of leadership to the lowest levels of society, degradation manifested in actions of fraud, murder, rape and false Christian doctrine. The moral fibre of a dominant Christian country became brittle and tacky with very few strands still hanging onto some respectable form of morality. The Church as the mainstay for providing moral guidance has experienced increased challenges of her own. Christianity was challenged by issues ranging from acceptance and standing of gay members within the Reformed tradition to gender acceptance and sexual abuse within the Catholic tradition and violence and people abuse based in dogmatic decline in the African Independent tradition.

Thus, the theoretical findings and proposals were built into a theoretical construct and developed as an alternative that provided the opportunity to influence and change the decline of morality in South Africa. The objectives of this research were:

- To identify and expose moral breakdowns in South Africa and its influence on the population
- To engage empirical research and theorems that can serve as a model to build and influence a new ethical reality in South Africa
- To expose and substantiate the virtues of Faith Hope and Love as a Christian ethic vested in Virtue ethics for creating universally accepted morals in South Africa
- To identify future related research opportunities

Albeit that not all evils and ailments can be corrected in a singular attempt, a departure point would be a research topic that will present an alternative approach to the restoration of ethical conduct and moral behaviour in South Africa:

*A Virtue Ethics Construct for the Restoration of an Ethical Society in South Africa*

The journey was exciting and challenging whilst the findings provided greater insights into the theory, problems and possible solutions vested in an approach based on virtues and more specifically Christian virtue ethics as a solution to the problem of declining morality in South Africa. The findings are listed below.

- Moral breakdowns in South Africa and its influence on the population was suitably identified.
- Empirical research and theorems were identified and proposed as a model to build and influence a new ethical reality in South Africa.
- The Christian virtues of Faith Hope and Love when developed into a theory and model for the restoration of morality In South Africa is a possibility.
- Using the Theoretical Model of Tödt provides a framework for making ethical judgments.
- The following opportunities were identified for further research;
  - A more viable model of Christian virtue ethics to be considered within a tripartite model that will balance character considerations with deontological focus on obligations to act and a teleological focus on the consequences of acts.
  - The further development and implementation of the individual agent support model as per the *missio Dei* framework presented by Hill.
  - The incorporation of the Christians virtue ethics of faith hope and love into business ethics as a viable business ethics.

I said that should morality in South Africa be a rag doll, she would fast be heading to the rubbish dump. With her usefulness and previous attractiveness severely tarnished as she now faces ridicule and scorn as if it was her fault that she was abused and degraded to a mere word that no one really understands and lives. I



also asked the question, 'Did the praiseworthy constitution deliver the expected fertile soil that would lead the moral charge through the highly acclaimed Bill of human rights and freedom and protection of the individual's dignity that the country expected when they were set free from oppression? Following on from my opening statement and piercing question, I challenged myself to embark on a journey of discovering and investigation by asking, 'On who's path lies the challenge for the restoration of morality and values?' A challenge and questions I now believe has opened more challenges and questions that need to be answered to ensure that we continue to live in faith hope and love and grow democracy in our beautiful country. The National Anthem of South Africa implores our efforts!

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika  
(God Bless Africa)  
Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo,  
(Raise high Her glory)  
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,  
(Hear our Prayers)  
Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo  
(God bless us, we her children)

Sounds the call to come together,  
And united we shall stand,  
Let us live and strive for freedom,  
In South Africa our land.

<https://www.gov.za/about-sa/national-symbols/national-anthem>

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