FACING THE IMAGE IN THE MIRROR:

"WHITENESS" IN SOUTH AFRICAN MISSIONAL DISCOURSE

by

Johannes Cornelis Mouton

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Supervisor:

Prof. E.M. Conradie

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> Every day, South Africans who used to live apart now live with each other. They live in a changing world in which old myths are, in fact, dying. In which new people and new stories are being born (Fairbanks 2023: xvi).

May these stories continue to inspire us.

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PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I, Johannes Cornelis Mouton, student number 4078098, hereby declare that this thesis with the title FACING THE IMAGE IN THE MIRROR: "WHITENESS" IN SOUTH AFRICAN MISSIONAL DISCOURSE is my original work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution. All consulted sources of information – whether printed, by e-mail or on the internet – were properly acknowledged and referenced according to the plagiarism prevention policy of the University of the Western Cape.

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ABSTRACT

This study is situated within the discipline of missiology and seeks to contribute to missional theology as one important contemporary school of thought within the discipline. Missional theology emerged in the 1990s especially within the Anglophone contexts of the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Most forms of missional theology build on the insights of Lesslie Newbigin, who in several books, reflected from his cross-cultural missionary experience on the challenges of the gospel to churches within his own cultural context in the UK. Such insights were quickly adopted in the North American context and was further explored by the Gospel and Our Cultural Network which emphasised the local-church-in-mission. Local congregations where missional theology flourished rediscovered that the fundamental reasons for the church's existence involves an engagement within local communities.

This theological movement quickly spread to other contexts where churches traditionally saw themselves as engaging in missionary activities, including the African and especially the South African context. In South Africa, missional theology rapidly attracted enthusiasm among leading South African scholars, with the emphasis on the local congregation as missional agent a common thread. While the emphasis on missional intentionality is common, a question that must be addressed is how the self-critical, counter-cultural challenge to "our" culture is addressed within the South African context. Many South African contributors to missional theology address challenges such as missional ecclesiology, congregational structures, local community development, missional leadership, missional practices, missional discipleship, missional worship and environmental concerns. Such contributions invite critical reflection on the missional functioning and visioning processes within congregations.

In this study the question is addressed as to how one crucial problem, namely that of "Whiteness" is addressed in such self-critical reflection. Discourse on "Whiteness" emerged from within the same contexts as missional theology, namely the USA, Western Europe and South Africa, countries with a colonial and a slave trade history. There are striking differences

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between these contexts though, influenced partly by demographic features, i.e., whether Whites are a majority or a minority, (settler) colonialism, and apartheid.

Whiteness in general and South African Whiteness in particular are maintained by concepts such as 1) “White privilege” (the long-term systemic advantages of colonialism and apartheid); 2) “White fragility” (when racial stress triggers defensiveness); 3) “White-talk” (the way White South Africans talk to perpetuate privilege and/or counter vulnerability); 4) “implicit or unconscious bias” (negative attitudes that people unknowingly hold and express); 5) “institutional racism” (institutional policies and practices to create advantages for Whites and disadvantages for other groups); 6) “structural racialisation” (hidden structures that shape biases and create disparate outcomes); 7) “cultural racism” (discrimination based on the cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups) and 8) the “ignorance contract” (an agreement and cooperation to perpetuate ignorance). Such debates on Whiteness are situated mostly in disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, gender and diversity studies, education, philosophy and also Christian theology.

This study contributes to such South African discourse on Whiteness within the specific context of missional theology. On this basis the research problem investigated in this study, is how Whiteness and the above mentioned eight aspects, are addressed in missional theology within the South African context since the transition to a democratic dispensation in 1994. As such, this study seeks to make a constructive contribution to missional discourse in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, to broader debates in missiology and, on this basis, to South African discourse on Whiteness.

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LIST OF KEYWORDS

Missional theology

Missional

Missional ecclesiology

South African missional discourse

Whiteness

Whiteness studies

Aspects of whiteness

White habitus

White privilege

South African Whiteness

Whiteness as a theological problem

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction.

1.1 Orientation.

Race is an issue that's always simmering below the surface in South Africa.

(Naidoo 2021)

Although South Africa is a post-apartheid society, it is certainly not a post-racial society. With South Africans engaging each other in schools, at work and in sports, much has already changed, but racial and ethnic differences remain very much a part of the South African landscape. In 1998 already, this reality was summed up by former president Thabo Mbeki when he said that South Africa remains two different nations, "one white and relatively prosperous, and the other black and poor" (Hesselmans 2016: 58)[1] These divisions are further entrenched by South Africans geared towards specific cultural identities based on language and customs. In many institutions, such as schools and universities for example, there is an uncomfortable integration in classrooms, with segregation on the schoolyard under the guise of culture. This phenomenon is particularly evident in formerly White Afrikaans[2] institutions, which are now officially integrated but still display predominantly White leadership, an affinity for the Afrikaans language and Western literature and culture. The same applies to neighbourhoods, working spaces, public institutions and of course churches, which are notorious for self-segregation. Besides cultural differences, socio-economic inequalities,

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[1] In this study I will use capitalisation when referring to the words "White", "Black", "Whiteness" and "Blackness". This is in accordance with the explanation given by Boswell (2022: 23) and the editors of *The Christian Century* (23 September 2020: https://www.christiancentury.org/article/editors/Black-and-White-Black-and-White). They point out that racial groups are designated by proper nouns and are therefore capitalised. Furthermore, capitalising racial designations is to convey that they describe social constructions of collective identity, embodies a particular set of experiences, and situate them historically. It is not to essentialise either "Whiteness" or "Blackness". Traditionally "Blackness" was downgraded and treated negatively, while "Whiteness" was hidden and disguised, treated as normative and invisible. Capitalising "White" and "Whiteness" thus names it as a dominant construct and brings it out of the shadows into the light, while capitalising "Black" and "Blackness" serves to emphasise particularity, a particular set of experiences and pride in the Black identity. However, where these designations are used in quotes, the original format is retained.

[2] Afrikaans is, in its essence, a dialect of Dutch which over time underwent a process of creolisation. Slaves and Khoikhoi had the biggest influence on the original development of the restructured Dutch. Later influences include Malayo-Potuguese, spoken mostly by slaves. By the end of the eighteenth-century approximately half of the Afrikaans speakers were from European descent (Gilliomee 2003: 53). Later Afrikaans was appropriated by White people as an Afrikaner cultural and racial marker.

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interwoven with race, further adds to the ongoing racialisation of South African society. Whether socio-economically, in education, politics, public debate, churches and everyday life, South Africa remain a divided nation struggling to find a common identity (2016: 65-77). Churches in particular reflect these divisions along cultural and racial lines. It remains the unfinished business for the church (Naidoo 2021). It is in this setting that traditional (White) mainline churches still find it increasingly difficult and challenging. In the words of Villa-Vicencio (2022): “Church theology in South Africa is dangerously susceptible to cultural, racial and spiritual captivity.”

Within this racialised context, or maybe because of it, missional theology found a foothold in South Africa. After the seminal societal changes before and after the first democratic elections in 1994, churches in South Africa looked for a different way to be faithful witnesses in South Africa. None more so than the predominantly White mainline churches with their specific cultural, racial and spiritual makeup (captivity?). In a way missional theology, as a discourse within the broader field of missiology, gave these churches a new focus, a new way of being church in a different and challenging South Africa.

This study is therefore situated within the discipline of missiology and seeks to make a contribution to missional theology as one important contemporary school of thought within the discipline. Missional theology emerged in the 1990s especially within the Anglophone contexts of the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA). Most forms of missional theology build on the insights of Lesslie Newbigin who served in India for many years and returned to the UK in 1974. In several books, e.g. *The Open Secret* (1978, 1995), *The Other Side of 1984* (1983), *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989) he reflected from such cross-cultural experience on the challenges of the gospel to churches within his own cultural context in the UK. Such insights were quickly adopted in the North American context by scholars such as Michael Goheen, Daryl Guder, George Hunsberger and Patrick Keifert. This was further explored by the Gospel and Our Cultural Network (GOCN) which emphasised the local-church-in-mission. The network recognised that churches tend to adapt themselves to the dominant culture in the USA. Thus, the “our culture” refers to the dominant local culture. They also recognised that their own missionary engagements prompted a challenge to such dominant culture. In this way “our culture” also points to the faith community itself, i.e., a community in dialogue with its own local culture. Local congregations where missional

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theology flourished rediscovered that the fundamental reasons for the church's existence involves an engagement within local communities. Mission therefore cannot be reduced to faraway cross-cultural engagements only but is a dimension of every aspect of the congregation's life and ministry.

This theological movement quickly spread to other contexts where churches traditionally saw themselves as engaging in missionary activities, including the African and especially the South African context. In South Africa, missional theology rapidly attracted enthusiasm, not least due to the influence of David Bosch, the doyen of missiology in South Africa and a friend of Newbigin. Although Bosch died in 1992, such interest in missional theology soon flourished and is reflected in the work of leading contemporary South African scholars such as Coenie Burger, Jurgens Hendriks, Malan Nel, Nelus Niemandt, Jerry Pillay, Willem Saayman, Attie van Niekerk, Pieter Verster and Frederick Marais. Although there are diverse interests in such contributions, the emphasis on the local congregation as missional agent is a common thread. While the emphasis on missional intentionality is common, a question that has to be addressed is how the self-critical, counter-cultural challenge to "our" culture is addressed within the South African context. Many South African contributors to missional theology address challenges such as missional ecclesiology, congregational structures, local community development, missional leadership, missional practices, missional discipleship, missional worship and environmental concerns. Such contributions invite critical reflection on the missional functioning and visioning processes within congregations.

In this study the question is addressed as to how one crucial problem, namely that of "Whiteness" is addressed in such self-critical reflection. Discourse on "Whiteness" emerged from within the same contexts as missional theology, namely the USA, Western Europe and South Africa, countries with a colonial and a slave trade history. There are striking differences between these contexts though, influenced partly by demographic features, i.e., whether Whites are a majority or a minority, (settler) colonialism, and apartheid. South African discourse on Whiteness focus on different aspects of Whiteness inherent in the South African context. Although there are similarities with global Whiteness, there are some characteristics unique to South African Whiteness. Whiteness in general and South African Whiteness in particular are maintained by concepts such as: 1) "White privilege" (the long-term systemic advantages of colonialism and apartheid); 2) "White fragility" (when racial stress triggers

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defensiveness); 3) “White-talk” (the way White South Africans talk to perpetuate privilege and/or counter vulnerability); 4) “implicit or unconscious bias” (negative attitudes that people unknowingly hold and express); 5) “institutional racism” (institutional policies and practices to create advantages for Whites and disadvantages for other groups); 6) “structural racialisation” (hidden structures that shape biases and create disparate outcomes); 7) “cultural racism” (discrimination based on the cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups); and 8) the “ignorance contract” (an agreement and cooperation to perpetuate ignorance). Such debates on Whiteness are situated mostly in disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, gender and diversity studies (see the leading contributions by Melissa Steyn and Christi van der Westhuizen), education (see Jonathan Jansen), philosophy and also Christian theology (see the contributions by Klippies Kritzinger and Cobus van Wyngaard).

This study will contribute to such South African discourse on Whiteness within the specific context of missional theology.

1.2 Statement and explanation of the research problem.

Based on the discussion above, the research problem that is investigated in this study, may now be formulated in the following way:

> How is the concept of “Whiteness”, including the eight aspects of “White privilege”, “White fragility”, “White talk”, “implicit bias”, “institutional racism”, “structural racialization”, “cultural racism” and the “ignorance contract” addressed in discourse on missional theology within the South African context since the transition to a democratic dispensation in 1994?

The study offers a review and critical analysis of the main contributions to missional theology in South Africa. Although an awareness of “Whiteness” may not be mentioned explicitly, it would be possible to articulate how such scholars engage with these problems implicitly. The study discusses each of these aspects associated with Whiteness separately in order to identify trends in each case, to classify and describe various approaches and to offer an assessment of the state of the debate. It is possible, for example, to show that in addressing a theme such as a theology of place, missional theology would require a sensitivity to counter-cultural movements. If this is not addressed, the question would be why not.

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1.3 Research procedure.

To investigate the research problem as stated above, this study can be described as a qualitative literature- and document-based research project. It is mostly conducted according to a non-empirical, critical literature review (Mouton 2001:179). Mouton (2001:179-180) describes studies like these as:

> …studies that provide an overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates … (A) review of the literature is essentially an exercise in inductive reasoning, where you work from a "sample" of texts that you read in order to come to a proper understanding of a specific domain of scholarship.

In critical literature studies like this the researcher, therefore, focuses on analysing and integrating the key literature on a specific topic in order to come to a "proper understanding" of the topic. Such a critical literature review forms the basis of this study and will hopefully lead to a better understanding of the interplay between missional theology and Whiteness.

To achieve this outcome, the following logical steps is followed:

As a first step the precursors to the missional movement are explored by giving an overview of the foundational roles played by Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin. As with each step in the research procedure, this overview will be based on selected literature. Although in different ways, their contributions on the initiatory role of the Triune God, culminating in the significant shift toward understanding mission as God's mission or *Missio Dei*, paved the way for the missional conversation as it developed since the 1980's. Consequently, an overview of the development of the *Missio Dei* as the most significant concept underlying missional theology is also undertaken.

In the second step a broad but concise overview of the emergence and subsequent development of missional theology in the UK, Europe and the USA is offered. This is done by clarifying the term "missional", by exploring the roots of the missional movement, with specific reference to the role of the GOCN, by explaining what a missional ecclesiology entails, and by exploring the key arguments for missional churches, the key patterns for missional congregations and some reflections on the way forward for the missional conversation.

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In a third step, a similar overview of the emergence of missional theology in the South African context is offered. This is done through an explanation of the roots of the South African missional discourse and with a reference to the main contributors to such discourse and the main themes that they have focused on since 1994.

As a fourth step, some necessary background on the emergence of Whiteness studies as an inter-disciplinary discourse in the same contexts, namely the UK, Europe, and the USA, but also within the South African context, is offered. The aim is to clarify the socially constructed term "Whiteness" and identify the most significant scholars and the themes addressed in contributions that use the term "Whiteness studies" for self-description. Contextual differences in Whiteness and Whiteness studies, with a specific focus on Whiteness in the South African context, will be profiled. The eight key concepts, formulated in the research problem is also clarified.

With the fifth step, the intersection between Whiteness and theology is explored. This is done by first giving an overview of Whiteness as a theological problem before the specifics of Whiteness in the South African theological discourse will be discussed.

In the sixth step, Whiteness in South African missional discourse as a limited endeavour is expounded. Some contextual and theological blind spots in South African missional theology, serving the interests of Whiteness, is also outlined. Furthermore, the research problem as stated above is addressed against the background of these prior steps. This is done according to the following aspects: a) a description of each of the eight aspects of Whiteness as identified above, b) a survey and detailed analysis of contributions to missional discourse in South Africa in the light of each aspect, c) the identification and classification of trends in such discourse and d) a critical assessment in this regard. Since there are few examples of Whiteness explicitly being addressed in South African missional theological contributions, assumptions on Whiteness that are implicitly present will be dealt with in a twofold manner: firstly, by looking for words and concepts where one would expect Whiteness to be addressed, such as race, culture, reconciliation, inclusivity, diversity, crossing borders etc, and secondly by making assumptions based on the absence of Whiteness. This constitutes the heart of the study.

And lastly, in a seventh step, a constructive contribution to missional discourse in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, to broader debates in missiology and, on this basis, to South

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African discourse on Whiteness, is attempted. The aim is to show how missional theology in terms of its own theological assumptions should address issues related to Whiteness with specific reference to the South African context.

1.4 Chapter outline.

In *chapter one* the background of the study, the research problem, the research procedure, the relevance and limitations of the study are stated.

Providing context, the precursors to missional theology and the *Missio Dei* as the concept fundamental to the missional conversation is discussed in *chapter two*.

In *chapter three* a concise overview of the emergence and subsequent development of missional theology in the UK, Europe and the USA is documented.

A similar overview of the emergence of missional theology in the South African context, is documented in *chapter four*.

In *chapter five*, Whiteness as a social construct is clarified, together with background on the emergence of Whiteness studies as an academic discipline. Whiteness as it functions within the South African context, as well as the eight key concepts maintaining Whiteness is also documented.

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In *chapter six*, the intersection between Whiteness and theology in general and in South Africa in particular is documented.

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Chapter seven constitutes the heart of the study. Whiteness in South African missional discourse is surveyed, analysed and critically assessed in order to identify trends in such discourse.

In *chapter eight* the trends identified in chapter seven is expounded and some constructive contributions is attempted on the basis thereof.

1.5 Relevance of the study.

The aim of this thesis is thus to contribute to the field of missional theology. This implies that scholars and students in the field of missional theology will most likely benefit from the research. Congregations and church leaders, serious about their missional calling and

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missional presence in their respective communities, will also gain valuable insights from the research. Within the particularity of the South African context, where some churches remain racially segregated, this study hopes to bring insight into the dynamics of race in general and Whiteness in particular. Hopefully, in this way, the thesis will bring awareness of the way missional theology and missional praxis in the South African theological setting are influenced by Whiteness.

On this basis, this study will seek to make a constructive contribution to missional discourse in South Africa and elsewhere in the world, to broader debates in missiology and to South African discourse on Whiteness.

1.6 Limitations and the positionality of the researcher.

As with any research project of this nature, this study is also subject to certain limitations:

A first aspect relates to research and publications in missional theology in the South African context. Extensive research was done and published on missional theology, but most of such research and publications originated from mainline denominations in North America and Europe, i.e., locations where Whiteness is most visible and, as such, represents the norm. In such contexts it makes sense that Whiteness is not a specific focus of research. South African discourse on missional theology followed this trend insofar as the majority of the research originated from mainline denominations who are mostly White, e.g., the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). However, in South Africa, Whites are in the minority, yet in terms of the research on missional theology, still represent the norm. Subsequently there are a lack of diversity in all the available resources.

Second, ample research, by a variety of scholars in different fields of study, was done about Whiteness in the post-1994 South African context. However, some work, but not nearly enough, was done about Whiteness as a theological problem in the South African theological landscape, i.e., outside of literature in missional theology. Although this study contributes to this field, it is not the main focus of the study, and it will be important to further expand the research on Whiteness as a broader theological problem.

Third, since there is a lack of research linking missional theology and Whiteness, the main contribution of this thesis is to bring missional theology and Whiteness studies into critical

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interaction. The aim of creating this intersection between missional theology and Whiteness is to make a constructive contribution to missional theology as it is practiced in the South African context. However, the absence of substantial research connecting missional theology and Whiteness, creates an absence of research findings to build upon and engage with. Nonetheless, this absence of research findings does not mean that evidence of the influence of Whiteness on missional theology is, in fact, absent. Sometimes, finding nothing tells you something (Brown and Key 2019). In this case finding an absence of research on this topic reflects that there might be a blind spot in missional theological discourse. Especially in the South African context it is important, necessary, and relevant to face this shortcoming.

The fourth possible limitation deals with the position of the researcher. When I look in the mirror, I am facing a White, privileged, Afrikaans speaking, South African minister of a local congregation in the DRC. I grew up in the DRC, has been involved in its activities and structures my whole life and my theological background is the reformed theology as practiced by the DRC. In addition to this, I was schooled in missional theology by the DRC, and it has influenced my theological outlook and ministry in a profound way. Also, it cannot go unsaid that the DRC is historically seen as the church of apartheid and remains a predominantly White, Afrikaans speaking church. It is within this theological and racialised context that I grew conscious of the necessity to probe how Whiteness informs theology, specifically missional theology. I am, thus, critically aware of how Whiteness and my roots in the DRC, colours my understanding. This means I am doing this research from an insider-outsider position, i.e., from the standpoint of critical solidarity.

Furthermore, besides my stated positionality as a minister in the DRC, it is important to note that the DRC was the first mainline denomination in South Africa to embrace missional theology as integral to its identity. Most of the leading contributors to the South African missional conversation emanates from the DRC. Thus, despite this study not initially being about the DRC as an exponent of missional theology, the unique contribution of the DRC is an explicit factor that cannot be ignored. As such, there is a strong focus on the way missional theology is formulated and practiced in the DRC.

Flowing from the previous point, a fifth limitation is undoubtedly the White positionality of the researcher. Inevitably, "(W)hite racial identity influences white researchers" (Helms 1993). Given the disposition of the researcher, it is important to highlight that this research is

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done from what Brunsdon (2019: 2) calls the "white male's insider perspective". As such, this research is regarded as a qualitative approach, because the researcher closely identifies with the matter under investigation. In fact, because Whiteness represents a worldview, the lived experience of the researcher is the matter under investigation. Furthermore, as for Brunsdon, my Whiteness cannot be separated from my position as a man, therefore the designation, "white male's insider perspective". However, this perspective can also be regarded as a form of self-reflexivity, resulting in the researcher becoming more "intent on the context and free from the 'self'" (2019: 2). I am thus recognising my positionality in the spirit of deconstruction and accountability.

Finally, in terms of the broader South African context, I started this research in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter Movement which also spread to South Africa after the killing of George Floyd by White police officers in the USA. This led to a very public and at times disconcerting conversation about race and the role of Whiteness in South African society. Coupled with this is the stark reminder of the racial inequalities in South Africa, highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown and economic hardship. Racial tension is further exacerbated by the influence of violent crime and the way political role players and civil rights movements are using it to further their respective causes. Even after apartheid and despite the positive contributions of many South Africans, racism and racial divisions continue to play a disruptive role in South African society. Although it is unavoidable that I am influenced by these events, this research was born out of my discomfort with the way missional theology and missional congregational practices are influenced by the concept of Whiteness.

Overall, it is important to point out: With this research I aim to speak *through* Whiteness, not just *about* Whiteness. Speaking *about* Whiteness manifests when White people recognise their positioning as a White person, as well as the advantages accrued from being White, with the intention to merely dispose of it (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen 2022: 18-19). Whereas speaking *through* Whiteness is a messier activity "where people racialised as white speak *through* relationships with others, from the context of those relationships, from within their bodies and intimacies together, through the living of their embodied histories" (2022: 19).

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CHAPTER 2: Precursors to missional theology.

2.1 Introduction.

Christianity and the church of the 20th century continuously wrestled with its relevance and influence in an ever-changing world. At first the 20th century was characterised by remarkable scientific and technological breakthroughs, with the resulting optimism accompanying it (Jonker 1994: 535). Inevitably, in theology, theologians also believed that it was possible to know and speak about God from a scientific point of view. But this positive mood quickly changed with the destruction of World War 1, the devastation caused by multiple wars since then, increasing discord and the negative consequences caused by the same scientific and technological breakthroughs (Dreyer 2017: 3-4). Contributing to these challenges were the paradigm shifts, e.g., colonialism to post-colonialism, Christendom to post-Christendom, modern to postmodern and its consequences, resulting in Christianity and the church questioning its identity, calling and ability to play a significant role in shaping this era. To deal with these challenges, Christianity not only had to do introspection, but it also had to evaluate its relationship with the world. In the words of Jonker (1994: 535):

> …during this century, more than ever before, theology has turned to the world in a bid to address the problems and the needs of the world in the widest sense of the word, and by doing so to demonstrate its relevance for the world also in this modern age.

In a world where its influence dwindled and with its relevance questioned, Christianity needed a new understanding of itself and its relationship with the world. Thus, "theology turning to the world" led to a newfound interest in the missional identity, calling and focus of Christianity, especially during the latter half of the 20th century. To get a better understanding of this development it is necessary to go back to the beginning. Therefore, this chapter will explore the precursors to the missional movement by giving an overview of the foundational roles played by Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin. Their contributions played a significant part in how the missional conversation developed since the 1980's. Although they influenced the conversation in different and unique ways, they both reminded us of the primary and initiatory role the Triune God plays in the world and in the church, culminating in the

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significant shift toward understanding mission as God's mission or *Missio Dei*. This chapter will for that reason also deal with the *Missio Dei* as the concept underlying the missional conversation. As such, the precursors as set out in this chapter will serve as the foundation for the broader discussion on missional theology as it developed in Europe and the USA (chapter 3) and more particularly in South Africa (chapter 4).

2.2 Karl Barth: Send by God towards the world.[3]

In terms of theological developments in the 20th century, Karl Barth is probably regarded as the most prominent Protestant theologian of his time (Jonker 1994: 535). Even in Roman Catholic circles he was revered, with Pope Pius XII calling him the greatest theologian since Thomas Aquinas. As his seminal *Church Dogmatics* attests, his transformative influence extended to the church, mission and reformed doctrines such as predestination and election (Dreyer 2017: 1). He, furthermore, played a decisive role in the "movement of turning to the world by the church" (Jonker 1994: 535). This was already visible during his formative years in ministry at the beginning of the 20th century. His experiences during this time, marked the advent of a movement from God (*Missio Dei*) towards the world that influenced significant theological developments, such as the missional movement. Therefore, to get a better understanding of the foundational role that Karl Barth played in the broader missional conversation, we must go back to his early years where his theology was shaped by a newfound social and political awareness.

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During the First World War, while pastoring the exploited industrial workers of Safenwil (1911-1921), Barth became known as the "red pastor" because of his support for the workers and their struggle against managers and industrialists. This resulted in him getting involved with trade unions and even joining the Social Democratic Party (Kritzinger 2007a: 1664). Coupled with this, was his disillusionment with the way that Pietism succeeded in distancing itself from solidarity with the world, specifically from the distress of the working classes (Newell 2017: 47). This led to his view that the church has a responsibility regarding social and

[3] Reclaiming Karl Barth's theology for the South African context, Boesak (1988: xi), Horn (1988: 105) and Villa -Vicencio (1988: 11) highlight distinct familiarities between the church in Apartheid South Africa and the church in Nazi Germany. This gave Karl Barth a truly contemporary South African feel. With these similarities in mind and with this study situated within the contours of South African missional theology, I will mostly stick to South African secondary literature informing this section on Karl Barth.

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political justice. His discomfort was further exacerbated on the one hand by the closeness of the German church to the German state, resulting in the church entrenching the racism and cultural imperialism of the German society (Bentley 2007: 158-159)[4] and on the other hand by the failure of liberal theology's ability to speak against the political and economic challenges facing Europe at the time (Conradie 2013: 122).[5] This was aggravated by some of Barth's theological mentors openly supporting German nationalism and the accompanying militarisation in preparation for the war (Newell 2017: 46).[6] Thus, Barth was disillusioned by the inadequacy of the theological resources to deal with the sociological and political conditions he encountered during his ministry. Within these circumstances and in the wake of the Enlightenment with its focus on rationality and the autonomous modern person, Karl Barth concluded that God was no longer at the centre of theology and that the church was only concerned with itself (Kritzinger 2007a: 1664-1668). In the words of Rasmussen (2005: 511):

> It was the failure of Protestantism, and Protestant public theology, but also of socialism, in the face of nationalism and war that prompted Karl Barth to develop an alternative theology that came to be the most important alternative to the type of liberal Protestant public theology that dominated at that time and in various forms still dominates.

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[4] Barth's exposition of the dualistic relationship between the church and the state was first set out in the first and second editions of *Der Römerbrief*. In the first edition (1919) he places God and the church over and against the state and thus in opposition to the state. In effect reworking the Two-Kingdom theory. In the second edition (1922) he draws a line between God and that (church and state) which is created by God. This implies that the creation, which includes the state and the church, is not out of salvation's reach (Bentley 2007: 161-162; Dreyer 2017). For further reflection on Barth's views on the Church-state relationship, see Dolamo (1992), Newell (2017) and Rasmussen (2005). For a reflection on Barth's views on the church-state relationship and how it relates to the South African context during the Apartheid era, see Durand (1988: 121-137) and Wanamaker (1988: 91-104).

[5] Barth became increasingly distanced from the liberal theology in which he was trained. According to Dreyer (2017: 6): "Barth challenged the notion that the human psyche (Schleiermacher), history (Troeltsch) or morality (Ritschl) could be the source or starting point of theological reflection. Barth was of the opinion that knowledge of God is only possible because God revealed Himself. We can only speak of and with God because God spoke to us. This was a radical move away from the liberal theology of the 19th century and modernism in general." Also see Rasmussen (2007) for a discussion on Barth's disengagement from liberal theology.

[6] These developments led to Barth's participation in the formation of the Barmen Declaration (1917), which is still used to describe the responsibility of the state from the viewpoint of the church. Later, when the church again supported the Nazi state, his outspokenness against Adolf Hitler and the Nazi's during the 1930's led to him being relieved from his post at the university of Bonn. (Bentley 2007: 158-159).

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2.2.1 Church for the world.[7]

Thus far the discussion focussed on the background and formative influences in the life and theology of Karl Barth. Now the attention will shift to the role Barth played in directing the focus of the church towards the world.

Writing about Karl Barth's contribution to 20th century theology, the late Willie Jonker (1994: 535) entitled his contribution, "Turning to the world: On Karl Barth's interpretation of the modern era". I found this to be a fitting title for the work done by Karl Barth in helping the church to understand the introduction to the modern era, its relationship to it and its interpretation of it. As Jonker (1994: 535) points out:

> (Barth interpreted) "the modern era as a period in which the growing *diastasis* between the church and the secularised world was accompanied by a concomitant movement of turning to the world by the church."

According to Barth (1961: 19), the separation (*diastasis*) between the church and the secularised world resulted in the modern person turning away from the church and the church losing its position of influence in the world, resulting in the church being "thrust aside and pushed into a corner or ghetto." In this hostile situation the church had three options: 1) it can fight for its maintenance, restoration and vanishing influence; 2) it can retreat "to reservations of a self-satisfying religiosity"; or 3) it can accept the increasing secularity and adapt its message into a suitable form of Christianity, "thus exposing all the more obviously and palpably the alienation of the life of modern man (sic) from that of the church and vice versa" (1961: 19-20). Nevertheless, this period speaks to a time in history when the shadow of separation hovered over the church and its relationship with the world (1961: 20).

Ironically, as pointed out by Jonker (1994: 535, 539), the separation between the church and the world was also the catalyst for the church turning to the world. Or in the words of Barth (1961: 20):

> Paradoxically the modern period has also seen an original and spontaneous penetration of the world by the Christian community unparalleled in any of the vaunted or criticised periods which precede it.

[7] I borrowed this title from Prof. Willie Jonker from Stellenbosch University (1994: 540).

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Hence, at the time when the world turned away from the church, the church was free to turn to the secularised world with a new commitment, a new calling to be a witness in and for the world (Jonker 1994: 539). It was only after the connection with the world was broken that the church could look forward to a new encounter with the world (Barth 1962: 539). Barth (1961: 21-35) called this movement a "profitable encounter with the world" and went on to identify six indications of this turning to the world by the church: 1) in some places the church again took on the form of a church reformed by and for the Word of God in the face of secular authorities, i.e., a confessing church; 2) in the face of Christian regression, the modern age has again "become an age of Christian missions"; 3) the turning to the world led to an inner mission in the church wherein its structural and institutional features where examined for what Barth called "internal paganism" that were either bluntly or subtly tolerated or even protected; 4) a new appreciation grew for theology as a science; 5) there developed a new understanding for the role and influence of the secular status, the laity and non-theologians; and 6) a new ecumenical appreciation was fostered during this time. Jonker (1994: 540) summarises this movement as follows:

> For the first time in history the church had come to the realisation of its true nature and character to be a witness to the all-encompassing salvation that God has prepared for the world.

This led to a new understanding of the church as the community of Jesus Christ for the world (Barth 1962: 762). A church with a mission "to proclaim the Lordship of Christ over the whole world" (Jonker 1994: 540). However, to execute this mission the church must be aware of its *excentric* character. It does not exist for itself and its own interests, but for God and the world (Bosch 1991a: 373; Jonker 1994: 541). The church as community for the world is a community "transcending itself'; it is called out of the world to be genuinely called back into it (Barth 1962: 764). It is given the task to know the world as it is, to be in solidarity, not conformity, with the world and to be committed to the world and jointly responsible for the world (Barth 1962: 769-781). Villa-Vicencio (1988: 46) further illustrated this responsibility for the world by explaining that in Barth's work the theme is "God for the world, God for man (sic), heaven for earth", which led to his theology having a "strong political side, explicit and implicit." As such, Barth reminds the church that it belongs to God and is being sent by God to take responsibility for the world.

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At this point it is necessary to clarify some aspects of Barth's understanding of the church and its mission in the world.

Firstly, at a lecture Barth gave at Tambach (1919) he spoke on "The Christian in Society", emphasising that the initiative always lies with God, "vertically from above" and that he therefore "does not expect hope or renewal from "the church" or "Christendom" (Kritzinger 2007a: 1673).[8] This Idea is later confirmed by Barth in his *Church Dogmatics* (1956a: 743): "In so far as God gives the church the commission to speak about Him, and the church discharges this commission, it is God Himself who declares His revelation in His witnesses."

Therefore, the church should always be aware of its provisional character. It exists not for itself, but for the glory of the triune God (Bosch 1991a: 373). It is God who controls the church, not the other way around. The church is always in need of the grace of God (Barth 1956b: 658). Within this vertical movement of God, our role is to take part in God's movement in society. We are after all a missionary people because "God is a missionary God" (Bosch 1991a: 372). Thus, Barth's starting point is God, as revealed in the risen Christ; everything flows from God (Senokoane & Kritzinger 2007: 1698). God is at the centre of Barth's theology. His doctrine of God is profoundly trinitarian which prevented his theology from becoming anthropocentric.[9] It is "God for the world, God for us" (Peterson 1988: 69). This observation can probably be considered the early steps to Barth's view of mission as *Missio Dei*. While reflecting on the church existing for the world, Barth pointed out that the church can only fulfil this calling because of an invested authority or power propelling it forward. In this way Barth "placed the origin and initiative of mission in God and not in the church" (Niemandt 2015: 86). On its own the church cannot exist for the world. Therefore, he concluded that there are two comparable sendings emanating from the same origin and having the same goal, namely the one God who sends Jesus and through Him sends the church to exist for the world (Barth 1962: 768-769).

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8 The Tambach lecture confirmed Barth's critical stand on public theology and a church-centred approach and served as the forerunner to a more "inclusive, holistic understanding of Christian mission in society" (Kritzinger 2007a: 1687).

9 Niemandt (2015: 86) contends: "For Barth, one of the most important tasks of theology was to clarify the reflection on the relationship between God and humanity; the Trinity provided the most appropriate framework within which to formulate this relationship."

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Secondly, according to Senokoane and Kritzinger (2007: 1699-1700), in his Tambach lecture Barth also describes “a new congregational culture.” A church that is a non-judgemental, distinctive Christian community, open on every side and willing to collaborate with all and sundry to showcase “the all-encompassing reign of God.” This starts in local congregations, where the presence of “Christ in us”, as set out in the Tambach lecture, leads to an inclusive ministry and a less church-centred approach.[10] It can be understood as a religious society within the broader society, living side by side with other organisations (Barth 1956b: 655). Bentley (2007: 36-37) sums up this understanding of the church in the following way:

> If the church's primary role is mission (its testimony to the world of its Lord), then it must be true that the church needs to exist in relationship with different groups in order to make mission possible. If the church is not in relationship with anyone or anything, then it cannot be an agent of mission, for it will then only exist for itself and within itself.

Thirdly, according to Bentley (2007: 195), Barth proposes that the “the church is not the Kingdom of God” but is a product of God’s work. The church “exists for God, for the Creator and Lord of the world” (Barth 1962: 762) and is as such not in itself the Kingdom of God but do point towards it (Barth 1962: 844). Bosch (1991a: 377) confirms this sentiment but in line with Barth (1962: 841) adds that the church should be a credible sign and instrument of the Kingdom. From this perspective mission is not about the church and its power, prominence and importance. The responsibility of the faith community is always to point to its Maker (Bentley 2007: 196).[11] It is the task of the church to express, however inadequately, the reality of God, here and now in society (De Gruchy 1988: 147). As phrased by Barth (1956b: 658): “The work magnifies the master. The visible attests the invisible. The glory of the community consists in the fact that it can give God the glory and does not cease to do so.” In the words of Bentley (2007: 197):

[10] In the same vein, Bosch (1991a: 378-379) later described the Church as “people of God in world-occurrence” who are aware of the social, economic and political conditions of this world. It is “the church-with-others” who, “because of its integral relatedness to the world … may never function as a fearful border guard, but always as one who brings good tidings.”

[11] According to Bentley (2007: 196) this also means that the church is not the solitary voice of God. Being the sole voice of God implies a position of power, while the church finds itself in a position of obedience and service, always showing the way to its Creator.

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> Leading from this acknowledgment, the church's identity and message is underscored by its and the world's recognition that the church (Church) is not God. It is neither the full revelation of God, nor is it the sole mouthpiece of God in the world. An existential reality is that the church is not divine itself but is a point of contact between the Divine work and sinful people.

Fourthly, from this quote by Bentley, the distinction between "Church" and "church" becomes apparent. "Church" refers to the Body of Believers brought together by the resurrection of Christ, i.e., the revelation of God that makes the true Church visible (Barth 1958: 619) while "church" refers to the institution. The church does represent the Church, but it consists of "fallen human beings" claiming positions (whether elected or appointed) of power in the structures of the church (Bentley 2007: 166). This confirms Barth's contention that the institutions, traditions and even the reformations of the church are no guarantee that it is the true Church (Barth 1958: 618). Bosch (1991a: 378) asserts that the structures of the church should be organised to enhance the involvement and service of the Church in society, otherwise it becomes heretical. Therefore, "from a missional position, the church is in as much need of salvation as those to whom it witnesses" (Bentley 2007: 197). Or according to Barth (1958: 618), the "true Church" always finds itself within this tension between the Church build up by the power of Jesus Christ, while also dealing with its own sinful tendencies.

Fifthly, Barth also places an emphasis on the role of the church in the life of the individual (Bentley 2007: 166). The individual is "called by the church into the church, we ourselves become the church into which we are called" and we "ourselves have become the church in person, and as such have been made responsible for its future" (Barth 1956a: 711). This, however, does not happen in an individualistic way; Church happens in the life of the individual and finds expression in the community of believers and not necessarily in the church. Consequently, the individual, for example does not have to wait "for the church in order to act in faith" when necessary (Bentley 2007: 167). In the words of Barth (1956a: 711):

> Because of his (sic) freedom which is grounded in this Word, a member of the Church cannot retain a passive, indifferent and merely waiting role in face of this will of the divine Word, as though anyway, in its own time what has to happen will happen.

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Sixth, in Barth's ecclesiology the church is described according to its mission to the world, but it is not the only vehicle through which salvation can be attained.[12] This goes back to Barth's universal understanding of election as a product of the saving grace of Christ (Jonker 1994: 543). Barth (1957: 10) places his understanding of election within the concept of grace.[13] According to Barth's Christological view of election, Christ being the first person to be elected, within His freedom "elects creation, man (sic), the human race, as the sphere in which He will to be gracious" (Barth 1957: 11). His grace "unconditionally precedes the creature" and it knows no "wherefore" (Barth 1957: 27-30). It is the election of the many, from whom none are excluded (Barth 1957: 195). God turns unconditionally and without constraint "freely and mercifully to humanity" (Smit 1988: 21). As Bentley (2007: 131) describes it: "So, the whole creation forms part of a community formed by God in grace." Hence, through the saving grace of Christ, all people are included in God's plan of salvation and they can either accept it or ignore it. Understood in this way, election is more inclusive and universal and not something that is earmarked for the church alone.[14] As such, the distinction between the church and the world becomes relativised, with the church being limited to a preliminary realisation of that which is still to come eschatologically (Jonker 1994: 544). Consequently, the church has a provisional character because it points beyond itself. It fulfils the role of a mediator between the elected Jesus Christ and those elected by Him (Barth 1957: 196). Added to that is the contribution of the Spirit, which is not restricted to the church, but is "produced concretely and historically in this world" (Barth 1956b: 652) and is as such already present and at work in the world. Thus, the mission of the church in the world becomes that of a sign and an instrument of the salvation which "is already present in the world" (Jonker 1994: 543). The purpose of the church, according to Barth (1957: 458) therefore is: "The positive will of God

[12] Bosch (1991: 373) later also confirmed this idea when he wrote that mission is the identity of the church but should also describe the involvement and engagements of the Church beyond its walls. He also recognises "the inescapable connection between the Church and the world as well as a recognition of God's activities in the world outside the church" (1991a: 377).

[13] From this starting point, Barth's definition of election differs from the traditional understanding of predestination. This point is unpacked in further detail by Bentley (2007: 129-140). In his radical view of grace, Barth furthermore unmasked a Protestant bias by starting from a Christological point instead of an anthropological basis. For a thorough discussion of this unconditional and radical view of grace and the ethical implications thereof, see Smit (1988: 17-43).

[14] For a reflection of the possible universalist element in Barth's view of election, see Bentley (2007: 153-156) and Jonker (1994: 542-546).

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is that this loving-kindness (of His election) should be revealed to us in proclamation and faith, that we might live by and with it."

Finally, when we take all the above in consideration, we can conclude that for Barth the church exists for mission (Bentley 2007: 32; Jonker 1994: 543). In the words of Barth (1961: 304), "a Christianity with no mission to all would not be Christianity." As such, it is the task of the church to promote community, build a better society and give testimony pointing to its Lord (Bentley 2007: 36). Barth (1956a: 743) describes this function and duty of the Church as "the proclamation of the Church", i.e., this commission is a gift from God to the Church and the Church discharges and proclaims this commission. This view of the Church and its mission is further examined and explained comprehensively by Barth in *Church Dogmatics* volume 1, part 2 (1956a: 743ff). It would therefore suffice to end this section with Bentley's (2007: 219-220) summary of Barth's views in this regard:[15]

> The Church has come into existence through God's self-revelation to the world in Jesus Christ. In the power of the Spirit, the Church's mission is to:
>
> 1) bear testimony to the salvific work done by God for the whole of creation through Jesus Christ. This testimony of God's work is a continuation of the testimony of those who have lived throughout the ages and as shared with the church and the world through Holy Scripture;
>
> 2) acknowledge that the church is not yet complete as is evident in its denominational divisions. It is the church's mission to search for truth and to work towards an ecumenical point. Unity in the church will enable it to witness to one truth, but until such time it witness to one Lord in diverse ways. It deals with different perspectives in its own fold with dignity, respect and love;
>
> 3) engage with communities of faith outside the Christian religion, celebrating God's revelation to all of creation, while bearing testimony to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ;
>
> 4) celebrate the election of all in Jesus Christ, therefore treating each person, inside and outside the church, with dignity, love and respect. By being present in

[15] For a more comprehensive discussion of Barth's view of the Church and its mission and how it pertains to the modern Church, see Bentley (2007: 186-226).

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> the world, the church is to be accessible and approachable to all, in fellowship enabling a deepening of individual and corporate spirituality;
>
> 5) support and criticise the State, knowing that the State too is a partner alongside the church – an instrument that God uses to bring about God's Kingdom.

Although provisional and incomplete, the church exists for mission, because God wills it so. It proclaims God's all-encompassing grace and commission to the whole of creation with love, dignity and respect and by being locally present and accessible to all.

2.2.2 Christian community in public life.

From the beginning of his ministry and writings, Barth's theology was distinctly shaped towards the world and public life. At that stage it was within a context where "Christianity had adapted itself rather too comfortably to local culture, and hence had become domesticated by other cultural values" (Newell 2017: 46-47). He therefore aimed to free the Christian imagination from the hegemony of the reigning cultural imaginations. This shift towards an alternative Christian imagination was enhanced from the 1920's onwards. It is worthwhile to quote Rasmussen's (2007: 521) summary of this shift at length:

> The basis for this was two essential developments during the 1920s: (1) a developed Trinitarian theology based on his rediscovery of Christology, and (2) a more positive ecclesiology. Together they provide the tools for a theological reading of social and political reality. You act in the world you see. How you construe reality determines what you think are responsible action. Barth's Trinitarian theology, centred in the life, cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, can generate new readings of history and social and political reality that frees the church from being imprisoned in dominating forms of imagination. But this Trinitarian theology is not just a theoretical project; it is based in a concrete church practice. Our thinking is bodily and social. We need the social space and social practices that liberate and rightly discipline our imagination and make our theological readings intelligible both for ourselves and for others. Moreover, the church is above all important for society not as a provider of theories, but as church, as a set of communal social practices. Being church it changes the world

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and being the church, it has a basis for a responsible public theology, a public theology shaped by a Christian imagination.

Later in his life, in the aftermath of World War 2, Barth's theology took on an even more public intention. This was probably influenced by Germany's reconstruction and the East-West dilemma. As in his earlier approach, this concentration on the public domain is still grounded Christologically, because our reality always plays out in Christ's presence. Furthermore, there is a close link between God and theology and the daily lives and interests of people. As such, Christianity and the Christian community should have a tangible and noticeable presence in the world (Laubscher 2007: 1555-1558). Or as Barth (1962: 684) calls it, "the sheer fact of its existence as the people of God in world occurrence." In other words, the church must always be acutely aware of what happens in the public domain. "In short, a survey into the first decade of Barth's post-World War II theology inherits a clear and definite public intention. His theology cannot be but public, because "he sees everything from the viewpoint of how it is in Jesus Christ" (Laubscher 2007: 1556). Barth's public theology falls outside the scope of this study, except to say that missional theology is greatly enhanced by Barth's contention that the church must be acutely aware of that which happens in the public domain, i.e., its local context. The missional congregation does not operate in a cultural vacuum, its ministry is inherently local and contextual.

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2.2.3 Conclusion.

In a changing and disillusioned world where Christianity struggled with its influence and relevance, Karl Barth challenged the church and the reigning theological discourse to find relevance in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and in the Word of God. He also called on the church to turn to the world as proclaimers of the all-encompassing salvation and grace of God. He reminded the church that it comes from the heart of the Triune God, that it exists for the glory of the Triune God and that it is sent into the world by God and the risen Christ (i.e., the *Missio Dei*). Thus, the motivation to be a church in mission stems from the key relationship between the sending God and the church.

Furthermore, Barth emphasised that since Christ is in us and we are related to the world as products, signs and instruments of the Kingdom of God, the Church (and the church) cannot only live for itself, within itself and as the sole voice of God in the world. This inevitably leads

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the church to a more "inclusive, holistic understanding of Christian mission in society" (Kritzinger 2007a: 1687). In essence, Barth turned the gaze of the church towards the world and the public domain; reminding it to be less church-centred, more outward-looking and more involved, present and approachable in the world, but without being domesticated by the world and always from the standpoint that reality is in Christ. Indeed, Bosch (1991a: 373) might just be correct in claiming that Barth's "consistent missionary ecclesiology" positions him as one of the foremost Protestant missiologists of the 20th century.

2.3 Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary, theologian, unifier.

Following Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998) is considered one of the most influential missiologists and theologians of the 20th century. He is also a point of reference in most discussions of early forms of missional theology. Therefore, any study in the field of missional theology must account for the foundational and decisive role played by him. Reflecting on why exactly it is that Lesslie Newbigin had such an influence, Goheen (2018: 36) concludes, with the help of American church historian Geoffrey Wainwright, that there are five reasons for this: 1) Newbigin's ministry was always sustained by Scripture; 2) throughout his ministry he stayed committed to "the early ecumenical creeds"; 3) he always worked "to build up the church as a visible social community"; 4) "he exercised a comprehensive ministry"; and 5) the "sheer stature of Newbigin as a man of God". Furthermore, Goheen (2010a: 8) highlights the extent of Newbigin's ministry as unparalleled by referring to him as a "theologian, biblical scholar, apologist, ecumenical leader, author, and missiologist". As such, Newbigin always combined theological reflection with his vast practical ministry experience, while constantly engaging with "social, political, educational, and economic themes", continuously in service of the church, resulting in his work being relevant to this day (Goheen 2018: 39-40).

Born in England in 1909 to a Presbyterian family, Lesslie Newbigin initially went to Cambridge University to study economics but then changed to theology. After completing his studies, he was ordained in the Church of Scotland and served as a missionary in India from 1936 where he started out as an evangelist in Kanchipuram (Goheen 2010a: 8; Harris 2020: 1). In 1947 he played a leading role in the establishment of the Church of South India, which brought together Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists and Anglicans. Consequently, he became bishop of Madurai in the Church of South India (Goheen 2010a: 8; Keifert 2017: 83).

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Throughout, he was very active in the ecumenical movement, and in 1959 was elected as general secretary of the International Missionary Council. In 1961 he guided it to amalgamation with the World Council of Churches where he served as associate general secretary, responsible for the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (Goheen 2010a: 9; Keifert 2017: 83). He also worked as editor of the International Review of Missions. In 1965 he returned to India as bishop of Madras until 1974 when he retired and returned to the UK. After returning to the UK, he became a teacher at the Selly Oaks Colleges and a pastor to a small inner-city congregation of the United Reformed Church in Birmingham. It was during this time, being confronted with a post-Christian, secular, Western society, that he became a scholar and prolific author on the missional nature of the church (Goheen 2010a: 8-9). This short biography indicates that Newbigin's vast experience as a cross-cultural missionary in India, his contribution in the ecumenical world, being a pastor in an inner-city congregation and a thinker and scholar of theology and philosophy had a huge influence on his missionary ecclesiology and uniquely shaped him to be portrayed "in patristic terms as a 'father of the church'" (Goheen 2010a: 8).

2.3.1 Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology.

In recent years, the conversation about ecclesiology has been rekindled in the church. As the missional movement took shape and began to flourish, missiologists realised that it became necessary to unpack ecclesiology from a missional perspective (Goheen 2002b: 497). According to Burger (2017b: 279-280), this was due to the inclination to keep the conversation on missions and ecclesiology separate from one another. This tendency aggravated missional endeavours in at least two ways. On the one hand, promising missional efforts where compromised when issues of "structure and form" were not dealt with thoughtfully and properly. On the other hand, missional renewal was often hampered by "the rigidity of legalistic and bureaucratic denominational systems" (2017: 280). Another reason for the renewed interest in ecclesiology, is the disintegration of Christendom. For many years, the church functioned in a Western society where it was the norm to be Christian. It found its vocation, identity and practices from the dominant Western culture and society. But as the Western Christendom society became more secularised, the West can no longer be termed as mainly Christian. Thus, it became important for the church to evaluate its role and identity within this new situation. A situation that is now in many ways a missionary situation (Goheen

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2018: 28). Add to this the privatisation of the church during the enlightenment; the separation of church and mission[16]; the fact that the mainline church lost its privileged position in society with resulting decline (Goheen 2002c: 361-363); and Christianity shifting demographically from its traditional base in the North to the South and the East (Guder 2017: 55). It is no wonder the church needed an updated conversation about ecclesiology. It is within this changing context that the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin, with his focus on the church as the primary missionary agent, in both its nature and action, is invaluable.

On his return to the UK, Newbigin was astonished to find a church "utterly compromised to the reigning public doctrine of its day" (Goheen 2018: 24). He found a church content to be relegated to the private sphere and having no noticeable influence in the daily public life. A church totally drawn into the culture of its day and which in the process abdicated its missionary calling and character (Goheen 2002c: 360). Thus, for Newbigin ecclesiology became a critical discipline aimed at getting the church to remove itself from the reigning Western narrative and back onto its God given missionary track (Goheen 2018: 24-25). As Goheen (2018: 25) phrased it:

> Ecclesiology for Newbigin was about much more than simply the internal life of the institutional church. It went much deeper than worship, preaching, sacraments, leadership, church order, ecclesial structures, and the like. It was a matter of recovering our missionary identity.

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Newbigin's goal was to reframe and refocus all the different aspects of church life and practices in accordance with the missionary identity and vocation that God had in mind for the church (Goheen 2018: 27)[17]. Or as Newbigin himself worded it in *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (1978: 2): "churches have come to recognize that a church which is not 'the church in mission' is no church at all". Newbigin's ecclesiology underlying

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[16] Described by David Bosch (1991a: 369) as "less appreciation for the idea of the church as the bearer of mission."

[17] For Newbigin it is important to bring the church's institutional practices and expressions in line with its missional vocation in the world, because "the way the church organizes and lives out its life together will either hamper or enable the church for mission" (Goheen 2018: 185). If the church organises itself with its own concerns, purposes and survival in mind, then it is not fulfilling God's mission. The church "does not exist for itself or for what it can offer to its members" (Newbigin: 1980: 45). For a comprehensive overview of Newbigin's views on how to get the church's institutional expressions and practices such as worship, leadership, organisation, sacraments and ecclesial structures in line with its missionary identity, see Goheen 2018: 148- 235).

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this goal to guide the church to be a "church in mission" in a post-Christendom era can be summarised according to five themes. These themes and the significance thereof will be discussed in the next section (see 2.3.3), but first it is important to take note of a major shift that influenced Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology: the shift from Christendom thinking to missional thinking.

2.3.2 From Christendom thinking to missional thinking.

At the beginning of his book, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989: 1-3), Newbigin reflects on his weekly visits to the monastery of the Ramakrishna Mission, while he was still a young missionary in India. He would sit on the ground in the great hall of the monastery studying the Upanishads and the Gospels with the monks. On the walls of the great hall there were portraits of all the great religious teachers, among them also a portrait of Jesus. Every Christmas, Jesus was worshipped and honoured by the monks as just another one of many expressions of religious deity. This, however, was not done because of a conversion experience; it was an example of Jesus being co-opted or domesticated into the Hindu worldview. Stemming from this experience Newbigin gradually realised that "something of this domestication had taken place in my own Christianity, that I too had been more ready to seek a 'reasonable Christianity', a Christianity that could be defended on the terms of my whole intellectual formation as a twentieth-century Englishman" (1989: 3). He confirmed this by pointing out that his whole education and theological training has shaped his thinking according to what can be called "the modern scientific worldview" (Newbigin 1989: 96). Much like Jesus being domesticated into the Hindu worldview, Newbigin's earlier thoughts and writings reflects the Christendom era wherein Christianity was domesticated into the Western worldview and identity.[18] He initially understood the church as individual believers called together by their shared belief in the Scriptures, gathered to be nurtured and comforted by the life and teachings of Christ. The focus was very much on the Scriptures and an ecclesiocentric view of the church (Goheen 2002c: 355). However, according to Goheen

[18] According to Benade (2019: 68-74), the Christendom era started approximately 312 AD with the conversion of emperor Constantine and lasted to the middle of the 20th century. It was a time when the Christian church had a privileged position and dominant influence in all aspects of life. It was a time when there was no clear distinction between Christianity and the Western cultural and political categories, resulting in the church being robbed of "its unique influence as a movement that serves, and has a heart for those on the margins of society" (2019: 68).

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(2002c: 355), since the 1950's a shift from a Christendom ecclesiocentric understanding of church to a missionary understanding of the Church was evident in Newbigin's thinking. Being a missionary in India not only contributed to this shift in his thinking (Newbigin 1989: 86), it really challenged his Christendom theological education (Goheen 2002c: 355), resulting in the church, as the vehicle carrying the Gospel to the world, becoming more central to his ecclesiology. Newbigin wrote about this shift (1993:138):

> I found that the experience of missionary work compelled me to it. I saw that the kind of Protestantism in which I had been nourished belonged to a "Christendom" context. In a missionary situation the church had to have a different place.

The result of this shift from a Christendom to a missional understanding of the church in Newbigin's ecclesiology was already discernible at the 1952 Willingen conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC), where he played a decisive role. It was at this conference where the church-centred approached to mission was challenged for the first time (Newbigin 1980: 10).[19]

This shift in missionary thinking evident in Newbigin's contribution at the Willingen conference was further exacerbated by what Goheen (2002a: 356) calls "the revolutionary events in world history." This refers to the collapse of colonialism[20], globalisation, continued secularisation and an increasingly post-Christian society that confronted Newbigin on his return to the UK (Harris 2020: 1). Especially from the 1970's onwards, in the context of the post-Christendom West as the missionary field, he constantly introduced the issue of

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[19] According to Bosch (1991a: 370) and Goheen (2010b: 67), the task of this conference was to develop a new model for the missional vocation underlying the church. The conference happened in the wake of the second World War and missionaries being ejected from China after the victory of Mao Tse-Tung. Different proposals were presented by the Dutch, German and American delegations and it was thanks to Newbigin's efforts that a consensus was reached. In the words of Bosch (1991a: 370), "The church changes from being the sender to being the one sent." The final statement of the Willingen conference, written by Newbigin, confirmed this shift from the impeding non-participating Christendom understanding of mission to the church participating actively in mission. The statement was entitled: "The Missionary Calling of the Church" and according to Bosch (1991a: 370) it summarised the threefold consensus reached as: 1) "the church is the mission", which means that it is illegitimate to talk about the one without at the same time talking about the other; 2) "the home base is everywhere", which means that every Christian community is in a missionary situation; and 3) "mission in partnership", which means the end if every form of guardianship of one church over another.

[20] During the time of colonialism, Western theology and theological expressions followed in the footsteps of the coloniser. In this way the mission of the church, assisted by White paternalism, was instrumental in shaping Western theology and culture as normative, supra-cultural and universal, while diminishing the historical and cultural character of the colonised. However, the growth of the so-called Third World church at the end of the 20th century with its accompanying contextualised theologies unmasked and challenged the universality of Western theology (Goheen 2001a: 4).

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"Christian witness in a culture that has rejected Christendom" (Shenk 1998: 3) to the agenda of the church. He challenged the church with the question: "what would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking and living that we call 'modern Western culture'?" (Newbigin 1986: 1).

2.3.3 Highlights in Newbigin's missionary ecclesiology.

The purpose thus far was firstly to give an overview of Lesslie Newbigin's background and formative years and secondly to briefly describe the shift from Christendom thinking to missional thinking that occurred in his ecclesiology. Because of his significance to the broader missional movement, it is at this point necessary to take cognisance of the five main themes (as identified by Goheen 2010a; 2018) in the missionary ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin.

2.3.3.1 The primacy of the gospel.

For Lesslie Newbigin everything starts with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the guiding light that directs everything the church is and does. According to Goheen (2018: 33), "Newbigin believes that all thought must begin with the gospel – that is, the central events of the Biblical story associated with Jesus Christ". The gospel refers to historical events completed by God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Goheen 2001a: 2). The cross is at the centre of the gospel and it is the clue that helps Christians to make sense of the world and our place in it. At the cross salvation of the cosmos was made known and accomplished by God. This is true and valid for all mankind and must be communicated (Goheen 2002a: 361). "It was at the cross where God dealt with the sin and misery of the world; it was through the resurrection that a new world has dawned; and at Pentecost the Spirit was given so that men and women can share in this new world" (Goheen 2010a: 10). Flowing from this, Newbigin endorses the foundational role of the gospel as public truth and the gospel as universal history (Goheen 2010a: 9; Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 1). He confirms that unlike truth in Hinduism and Western humanism that is settled outside of history, "the whole of Christian teaching would fall to the ground if it were the case that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus were not events in real history" (Newbigin 1989: 66). As such, culminating in Jesus, the end and

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meaning of history have been disclosed and achieved (Goheen 2010a: 10; Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 1).[21]

Later in his life, Newbigin realised the importance of God as Trinity, affirming its centrality to the nature of the gospel. Answering the question: “By what authority?” does Christian witness take place, Newbigin expanded the formulaic “In the name of Jesus” to, “in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Newbigin 1978: 16). The gospel centres on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, but can never be dislodged from the Father and the Spirit. For Newbigin mission flows from the Triune God whose being is in communion (Dodds 2010: 1). Newbigin (1978: 72) describes the threefold way of understanding the church’s mission as rooted in the triune being of God: proclaiming that the Father is the ruler of all; by acting out the love of Jesus which took Him to the cross; and by obediently following where the Spirit leads, the church acts out the hope which is given by the presence of the Spirit. Distortion in the understanding of mission will follow if any of these is taken in isolation.

In his thinking about the gospel Newbigin also emphasises the Kingdom of God. In universal history, Jesus fulfilled the Kingdom of God. According to Goheen (2018: 86), Newbigin’s understanding of the good news of the Kingdom can be defined as:

> The good news is a message about the fullest revelation and the final accomplishment of the end of universal history – the comprehensive restoration of all creation and the whole of human life in the Kingdom of God – present and coming in history in Jesus Christ and by the Spirit’s power.

Newbigin generally starts his thinking about the Kingdom with Jesus’ first announcement in Mark 1: 15, “The kingdom of God has come near” (Goheen 2018: 85; Newbigin 1989: 105). This was the gospel announcement of God breaking into history, fulfilling the redemptive promises of the Old Testament through the life, words and deeds of Jesus (Sheridan 2012: 28). It is the arrival of the Kingdom, that is the good news revealed and accomplished through the life and ministry of Jesus; His death on the cross; His resurrection; His ascension and

[21] Of equal significance, Goheen (2010a: 10) points out the way in which Newbigin articulates the gospel. He accentuates the truth of the gospel for all people in the world and in all of history, i.e., public truth. This is set against the relativism of Western culture. On the other hand, against the fundamentalist belief that the gospel is a set of unchanging propositional truths or doctrines, Newbigin declares that the gospel, that reveal meaning and provide the clue for living in the world, is also flexible enough for dialogue with other religions and world views.

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through the work of the Spirit (Goheen 2018: 92-101). Newbigin (1978: 54-55) was emphatic about the kingdom of God culminating and manifesting in the life of Jesus:

> According to the witness of the New Testament, the cross is the place where to eyes of faith the reign of God is manifested in what seems to be its defect; the power of God, in weakness; the wisdom of God, in foolishness. The faith by which the church lives is that in this happening the whole frame of things has been irreversibly changed and that this is the place where the meaning of the original gospel announcement is disclosed: the kingdom of God has drawn near.

2.3.3.2 The logic of mission.

The second theme is what Newbigin (1989: 116) calls the "logic of mission." In this way he tried to emphasise that mission is entrenched in the gospel and the church. Newbigin thus describes the logic of mission as, "the true meaning of the human story has been disclosed. Because it is the truth, it must be shared universally" (1989: 125). According to Goheen (2010a: 11-12), there are four elements to Newbigin's understanding of mission that are of significance to the church. These elements may be summarised and expounded in the following way:

1. If the gospel is universally true, then mission must follow. It is not optional for the church to make known the Kingdom as revealed in Jesus. It is essential that the church is an obedient witness in this time between the coming of Christ and His second coming (Goheen 2010a: 11). Newbigin (1989: 116) was unequivocal about mission not just being a command or a mandate to the church, but a "kind of explosion of joy" about the crucified Jesus being alive. It is "an acted out doxology" with the purpose of glorifying God (Newbigin 1989: 127). As such, the church does not have a choice other than to be missional with the glorifying of God as the ultimate goal of mission (Goheen 2018: 173).[22]

2. Jesus did not leave behind a written record, he left behind a community, "sent out into the world to carry the secret into the life of the world" (Newbigin 1989: 95). Mission is done by a community, i.e., the church, therefore, "mission is ecclesial" (Goheen 2010a:

[22] According to Goheen (2018: 140-166), Newbigin emphasises five forms of witness and service the church should focus on to achieve this goal: the distinctive life of the community; the calling of the laity; deeds of mercy and justice; evangelism; and missions to places where the gospel was not known.

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11). Mission is not just another program; it defines the identity of the church. In this regard, Newbigin emphasises the missionary nature and being of the church, i.e., the *Missio Dei*, defined by Jesus' words in John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (Goheen 2002c: 357).[23] The church is the people of God, elected as God's missionaries for the world. Hence, the doctrine of election has a significant role in Newbigin's ecclesiology. Election, according to Newbigin (1978: 75; 1989: 86), is both universal and particular. It is universal in the sense that the grace of God is there for all, but it is also particular because the grace of God needs to be communicated from one person to another: "the particular is chosen for the sake of the universal" (Newbigin 1978: 75). For this purpose, witnesses are chosen to go out and bear fruit. To be chosen in this way, "means to be incorporated into his mission to the world" (Newbigin 1989: 87). It is not a position of privilege before God, or a means to exclude others, it is conferred with great responsibility and even sacrifice (Newbigin 1978: 19; 1989: 84-85). Thus, for Newbigin, election is relational and it aims to make God's redemptive intention known to all, by "calling a particular people, to be a blessing to all" (Franklin 2015: 171).[24] Consequently, as an elected body, missional in nature, the church is related to God in the context of the universal Biblical story; participating in the *Missio Dei* as an instrument; and in relation to the Kingdom of God as a sign and a foretaste of what is to come. In the same way that Christ is for the world, the church is also related to the world and exists for the world and for the specific place in which it is situated (Goheen 2002c: 359).[25]

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[23] Goheen (2018: 126-129) identifies the following characteristics in Newbigin's understanding of the Missio Dei: he understands it from a Trinitarian perspective, but his starting point is Christocentric; he gives immense space to the work of the Spirit as primary actor in the mission of the church; he places it within the full redemptive historical narrative of Scripture; and the *Missio Dei* is eschatological – moving towards the goal of saving all nations.

[24] Franklin (2015: 169-171) gives three reasons why election is significant in Newbigin's ecclesiology: 1) it confirms that human beings are historically and relationally connected; 2) in accordance with the Trinity it confirms God's nature as relational, but also specifically personal; and 3) opposing a more reductionist view of salvation in the West, election confirms salvation as wholeness, because it includes reconciliation and social justice.

[25] Newbigin (1977) understands the church's relation to the specific place where it is based Christologically: the church is for that place as Christ is for the world. As such the church is to be the sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom for that particular place. He also recognises that place is more than a particular geographical location. It includes the workplace, physical, social, cultural and political aspects, i.e., the different worlds people live in at the same time. He goes on to highlight the danger to its true nature if the church should use one of these aspects to determine its role as sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom.

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3. Traditionally mission was understood as an activity that takes place in other parts of the world, with the missionary being the agent in a mission field, usually outside the West. Newbigin helped the church to define mission in a broader way. According to Goheen (2010a: 12), Newbigin confirmed "mission is as broad as human life (all of life is mission)" and "sending, is not the sending of some people to other parts of the world but the sending of the whole community to make known the good news."

4. Flowing from the previous point "Newbigin made an important distinction between mission and missions" (Goheen 2010a: 12). "Mission" is an inclusive term describing the total calling or task of the church to make known the gospel in the world. "Missions" on the other hand refers to specific activities "designed to create a Christian presence where there is no such presence, or at least no effective presence" (Goheen 2010a: 12). In this way Newbigin reminds us that the whole life of the church, in the places it is located and to the ends of the earth, remains missionary (Goheen 2018: 140).[26]

For the church who understands the logic of mission, "the calling of men and women to be converted, to follow Jesus, and to be part of his community is and must always be at the center of mission" (Newbigin 1978: 136). In other words, the church living according to its missionary nature not only calls *for* true discipleship but also calls men and women *into* true discipleship. This stands against the notion of purely focussing on mission as church growth and the accumulation of numbers (1978: 139). In the words of Newbigin (1978: 140), "In no sense does the triumph of God's reign seem to depend upon the growth of the church." The mission of the church is not only the conversion[27] of men and women, but to lead them "into

[26] Ensuing from this, Newbigin also distinguishes between "missional intention" and "missional dimension." This refers to mission as a "dimension" of the whole life of the church and mission as primary "intention" of certain activities. Both are essential to the mission of the church. "All Christian life has a missionary dimension", but certain intentional activities in word and deed are necessary to point others to faith in Jesus Christ (Goheen 2018: 137-139). Bosch (1991a: 373) builds on this by accentuating that the church is both "missionary" and "missionising". He writes: "The missionary dimension of a local church's life manifests itself, among other ways, when it is truly a worshipping community; it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home; it is a church in which the pastor does not have the monopoly and the members are not merely objects of pastoral care; its members are equipped for their calling in society; it is structurally pliable and innovative; and it does not defend the privileges of a select group. However, the church's missionary dimension evokes *intentional*, that is *direct* involvement in society; it actually moves beyond the walls of the church and engages in missionary "points of concentration" such as evangelism and work for justice and peace".

[27] According to Goheen (2018: 165), Newbigin has a threefold understanding of conversion: "it is a personal relationship to Jesus, entry into a visible community, taking up its mission and commitment to a pattern of behaviour". As such, Newbigin concludes that conversion is a paradigm shift in a person's mindset, achieved

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a deeper relationship with God, teaching them the scriptures, and equipping them to be witnesses of the gospel and bearers of the Spirit in their own spheres of influence - their neighbourhoods, workplaces, and extra-curricular activities in the greater community" (Franklin 2015: 178). Sometimes this means living counter-cultural, according to a different set of values, priorities and convictions to the surrounding community and even confronting the reigning structures, institutions and leaders (Franklin 2015: 178). As Newbigin (1986: 132) points out:

> A preaching of the gospel that calls men and women to accept Jesus as saviour but does not make it clear that discipleship means commitment to a vision of society radically different from that which controls our public life today must be condemned as false.

2.3.3.3 Mission and unity.

Newbigin emphasises unity as essential to the mission of the church. Newbigin's distress about the caste divisions reinforced by missions in South India, led him to accentuate the relationship between the unity and the mission of the church. He sees the divisions as counter to the gospel of reconciliation. Unity and reconciliation are a *means* to mission and a *product* of mission (West 1989: 4). Newbigin highlights the corporate and unifying nature of the gospel. Thus, God's people are sent into the world as "an expression of the good news that God's work of reconciling all things in Christ has begun" (Goheen 2010a: 13). Unity and mission are inseparable and fundamental to the "nature of the church" (Sheridan 2012: 100). Therefore, to be content with divisions in the church is not only destructive to the witness of the church, but also contradictory to the very nature of the church (Goheen 2010a: 13).

2.3.3.4 Gospel and culture.

Newbigin (1986: 1) was concerned about what he called "a genuinely missionary encounter between the gospel and the culture".[28] Shaped by cross-cultural communication of the gospel

by the revealing acts of God through the work of the Spirit, affecting the whole person in both belief and conduct (Franklin 2015: 172-175).

[28] Newbigin (1986: 3) defines culture as, "the sum total of ways of living developed by a group of human beings and handed on from generation to generation. Central to culture is language. The language of a people provides the means by which they express their way of perceiving things and of coping with them. Around that center one would have to group their visual and musical arts, their technologies, their law, and their social and political organization. And one must also include in culture, and as fundamental to any culture, a set of beliefs, experiences, and practices that seek to grasp and express the ultimate nature of things, that

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in India, Newbigin accentuated this complex relationship between the gospel and culture. While ministering on the streets of India, he realised that "he must both use the language and cultural categories of the hearer and challenge the religious commitments that underlie those forms" (Goheen 2010a: 17). As such he realised that the gospel must be *at home* (in solidarity) and *at odds* (in conflict) with culture and communication of the gospel must seek to be both *faithful* to the gospel and *relevant* to the culture (Goheen 2010: 17; 2018: 239, 257).

For Newbigin (1977: 117) this encounter between gospel and culture is rooted in Christology. In the same sense that Christ is for the world, so the church is for the world, but the church is also opposed to the world as Christ, through His death and resurrection, is opposed to the evil and sins of the world. In this way Newbigin confirms the affirmation of culture as an expression of God's good creation, while at the same time stressing the antithetical side of the cultural encounter (Goheen 2002d: 139-140; 2018: 255-256). Thus, for Newbigin (1978: 150), the role of the church is to "communicate in the idiom of that culture both the divine good which sustains it and the divine purpose which judges it and summons it to become what it is not yet." Newbigin (1989: 188-189) refers to this as a "painful tension" or "crossroads" between gospel and culture. This unavoidable tension stems from four factors: 1) the church is part of a society that epitomises a complete cultural story or credo that differs from the gospel; 2) the church finds its identity in another story that demands commitment, i.e., the gospel which is always socially embodied or incarnated in a community; 3) the tension arises when the cultural story and the gospel story clashes in the life of God's people; and 4) the tension plays out in the shared communal life of the church as it occupies both worlds (Goheen 2001b: 133-134; 2002d: 145; 2010: 17-18; 2018: 243-252). If the church fails to balance this tension it will lead to two opposing dangers: it either conforms to the culture and becomes its "guardian and guarantor" and fails to challenge it (thus the gospel is made irrelevant); or it alienates itself from the culture to the point of reflecting "the language and lifestyle of a ghetto" (this is syncretism) (Newbigin 1978: 163-164).

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which gives shape and meaning to life, that which claims final loyalty. I am speaking, obviously, about religion. Religion – including the Christian religion – is thus part of culture." As such, culture encompasses the whole of human life.

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Hence, the question is: How can the tension be resolved? What does faithful and relevant contextualisation(s) of the gospel look like? Newbigin offers three elements to answer this question:

1. "The primacy of the gospel" (Goheen 2010a: 18): faithful contextualisation begins with the ultimate commitment to and the accompanying indwelling in the biblical narrative. This gives rise to an alternative vision and even conversion of the cultural story (2010a: 18; Newbigin 1989: 151).

2. Newbigin avoids the dangers of syncretism and irrelevance with the concept of "challenging relevance" (Goheen 2018: 262). In this way he acknowledges the "familiar and relevant cultural forms", while also "challenging idolatry embedded in them" (Goheen 2018: 262). It is the process through which the church applies God's "yes" and "no", God's grace and judgement, to all the various forms, institutions, customs and theories of its culture. In this way Newbigin can be deemed as counter-cultural while being engaged in and with culture. To explain "challenging relevance", Newbigin refers to the gospel of John, because he challenged and contradicted the idolatrous worldview by using the words and thoughts of classical religion and culture from the Hellenistic world of his readers (2010a: 18; 2018: 262-265; Newbigin 1986: 6, 53; 1989: 152).

3. Finally, faithful contextualisation and challenging relevance requires dialogue across cultural boundaries that will provide "mutual correction and enrichment" (Goheen 2010: 18). Goheen (2018: 268-272) points out that in the work of Newbigin this dialogue plays out in two ways: First, it is a dialogue between the cultural story and the biblical story where the cultural story is examined by the biblical story. This takes place in the heart of every Christian, but also communally between the church and its surrounding culture. Second, the dialogue is an ecumenical dialogue "with the church outside of one's own culture" (Goheen 2018: 270). This, according to Newbigin (1989: 152), requires the church "to be open to the witness of the church in all other places and thus saved from absorption into the culture of that place". Regarding the mutual correction that flows from dialogue, Newbigin (1989: 197) states: "We have to listen to others. This mutual correction is sometimes unwelcome, but it is necessary and it is fruitful".

Thus, at the heart of Newbigin's exposition of the missionary encounter between the gospel and culture lies a three-cornered dialogue between the gospel, a specific culture and the

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church as the sign, instrument and foretaste of the reign of God (Newbigin 1978: 165-173). In this way "the missionary action of the church is the exegesis of the gospel" (Newbigin: 1991: 35).

2.3.3.5 The West as mission field.

With the demise of Christendom, Newbigin highlights the Western, pluralistic society as a mission field and called for the contextualisation of the gospel as public truth encountering Western culture. Returning to the UK, Newbigin was confronted by an increasingly "post-Christian" society. [29] This led to him feeling like "an outsider within his own culture" (Harris 2020). These cross-cultural journeys (first to India and then back to the UK) uniquely shaped him to identify challenges to mission in a secular Western context[30] where a Western plausibility structure[31] acts as a constraint to the good news (Harris 2020; Weston 2015). This led Newbigin (1986: 3) "to ask the question of what would be involved in a genuinely missionary encounter between the gospel and this modern Western culture." As a result, Newbigin calls "for Christians to assume the posture of a missionary *within* their own culture" (Harris 2020) and "the congregation as hermeneutic of the gospel" (Shenk 1998) in their local context.[32] According to Goheen (2018: 278-283), Newbigin presents five reasons for the urgency of this missionary encounter between the gospel and modern Western culture: 1) Through the process of globalisation, Western culture and its associated scientific worldview is the most "powerful" and cogent force in the world; 2) it is the most "pervasive" cultural

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[29] In the words of Benade (2019: 68): "During Christendom, the perception had been that culture was dominated by Christian values and doctrine. The post-Christendom church had to function instead within a pluralistic society, dominated by humanistic values and sceptical individuals."

[30] Although Western society is often deemed secular, Newbigin pointed out "it is not really a neutral society with no gods, but rather a pluralist society with other gods" (Harris 2020). It is basically "a shift from one set of religious commitments to another" (Goheen 2002c: 363).

[31] Newbigin (1989: 8) invokes Peter Berger's ideas to define "plausibility structures" as "patterns of belief and practice accepted within a given society, which determine which beliefs are plausible to its members and which are not. These plausibility structures are of course different at different times and places. Thus when, in any society, a belief is held to be "reasonable", this is a judgement made on the basis of the reigning plausibility structure."

[32] Newbigin (1989: 227-233) explains that for the gospel to be credible in a pluralist society it needs the church to be a "hermeneutic of the gospel", meaning: "a congregation of men and women who believes it and lives by it". He then offers six features of such a congregation: 1) It will be a community of praise and thanksgiving in a world full of scepticism and doubt; 2) it will be a community of truth in a world of relativism; 3) it will be a community that involves itself with the concerns of the specific place where it finds itself; 4) it is a "priesthood of believers" that exercises their priesthood in the daily business of the world; 5) in a world of individualism, it will be a community of mutual responsibility; and 6) it will be a community of hope in a world where hope disappeared.

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influence in the world, even dominating African and Asian beliefs and conduct; 3) Western culture is the most "dangerous" adversary of the church, effectively pushing religion to the margins of society; 4) even though Western culture has deep roots in Christianity, it is now proving "resistant" to the gospel. The modern reality succeeded in relegating the gospel from the public to the private domain; and 5) instead of challenging the idolatries in Western culture, the church was drawn into the modern worldview, forcing it into a state of "syncretism". Thus, Newbigin identified the West as a mission field and called for its reconversion[33] by challenging the church to regain its confidence and faithfulness to the gospel in order to be an authentic witness in modern Western culture (West 1998).[34]

2.3.4 Conclusion.

This section dealt with the foundational role Lesslie Newbigin played in the field of missional theology. It therefore started with an overview of Newbigin's formative years as a cross-cultural missionary in India that uniquely shaped him to become an authoritative voice in contextualising the gospel in a post-Christendom Western society.

In his thoughts on missionary ecclesiology, Newbigin reminds us of the primacy, the complete scope and truth, of the gospel story. As the conveyer of the gospel story, he helped the Western Church to recover its missional identity by reminding it of its missional vocation to be a sign, instrument and a foretaste of the gospel and the reign of God in the specific place

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[33] In terms of Newbigin's approach to the (re)conversion of Western culture, Hunsberger (1991: 396-397) stresses the importance of Newbigin's understanding of conversion as having mental, ethical and communal dimensions. These dimensions are outlined in *Foolishness of the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (1986) as the "Dialogue with Science" (chapter 4) which demonstrates that contrary to the modern scientific view, the Christian faith does not exclude purpose in regard to knowing; the "Dialogue with Politics" (chapter 5) where the church is called to be a witness of the kingship of Christ over all political, economic, personal and domestic life; and the "Call to the Church" (chapter 6), governed by the vision of the coming reign of God, to recover its distinction from and its responsibility for the Western culture it shares. Thus, conversion is "a 'paradigm shift' that leads to a new vision of how things are and, not at once but gradually, to the development of a new plausibility structure in which the most real of all realities is the living God whose character is 'rendered' for us in the pages of Scripture" (Newbigin 1986: 64).

[34] In *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*, Newbigin (1986: 133-150) lists seven essentials to answer the question: how can we be faithful witnesses (missionaries) in this modern Western world when we are ourselves part of this world? It will require: 1) a true understanding of the kingdom as a eschatological concept; 2) embracing the Christian doctrine of freedom, beginning by distinguishing tolerance from indifference; 3) a declericalised, lay theology; 4) a radical theological critique of the theory and practice of denominationalism; 5) dialogue with Christians whose minds were shaped by other cultures; 6) to hold onto and proclaim a belief that cannot be proved to be true in terms of the axioms of our society; and 7) the knowledge that our witness is not the product of human heroism, but the spontaneous overflow of a community of praise.

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the church is located. Besides highlighting the gospel story, Newbigin also takes the cultural story seriously as both God's good creation and idolatrous in nature, while stressing the church as the place where these two stories meet in the daily lives of God's people. By emphasising this dialogue between the gospel, culture and the church, he challenges the church to embrace the gift of the missionary encounter and to be counter-cultural, authentic, faithful witnesses in modern Western culture.

Lesslie Newbigin's work continues to be a significant source of reflection on mission and the church. But his most lasting influence was perhaps on discussions within gospel and culture networks that seeks to rediscover the fundamental reasons for the church's existence, namely an engagement within local communities and how mission functions as a dimension of every aspect and practise of the congregation's life and ministry.

2.4 God's mission: *Missio Dei*.

Thus far the purpose of this chapter was to outline the foundational roles played by Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin in the broader missional conversation. Since both highlighted that mission flows from the Triune God, i.e., *Missio Dei* and since the sending God was rediscovered as the starting point in missional theology, it is now necessary to further expand on mission as *Missio Dei*. This move to a *Missio Dei* theology remains one of the most important developments in 20th century theology. It modified the view that mission was just "one of the many tasks of the church" and emphasised that mission stems from Godself with the aim to transform humanity, the world and creation (Matthey 2010: 21). Although there is wider agreement on *Missio Dei* referring to the purposes and activities of God in the world, a closer look also reveals a diverse assortment of meanings, usages and agendas (Dreyer 2020: 252). It is therefore appropriate to give a brief historical and theological overview of the term.

2.4.1 The Willingen conference.

Traditionally, "mission was understood in a variety of ways", for example, in *soteriological terms* as the saving of individuals from damnation, in *cultural terms* to introduce people to the benefits of the Christian West, in *ecclesiastical terms* as "the expansion of the church", and *salvation-historical terms* as the means through which the world would be converted into

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the Kingdom of God (Bosch 1991a: 389).[35] More often than not, mission was associated with imperial and colonial expansion (Flett 2014: 71); driven by the church (*mission ecclesiae*), affiliated with the state (*missio stati*), resulting in the cultural hegemony (*mission culturae*) of Western civilisation (Bellini 2017: 3). In this way mission became a Western enterprise, often interpreted as the sale of European civilisation (Kirk 1999: 23). Added to this is the narrow view of mission within church-centred missiology; the way it did not consider Jesus' ministry "to the poor, the suffering and the marginalised" as a missionary task; and the failure to adequately consider Jesus' "call to repentance and faith" because the Kingdom is near, thus confirming the "priority of the Kingdom over the church" (Engelsviken 2003: 487).

This changed after World War Two, under the influence of Karl Barth and his friend Karl Hartenstein. According to Bosch (1991a: 392), Hartenstein introduced the term "to protect mission against secularisation and horisontalisation and to reserve it exclusively for God." Although Hartenstein was the first to use the term, *Missio Dei*, Barth's influence was crucial. Already in 1932 in a submission at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference, Barth was one of the first theologians to refer to "mission as an activity" of Godself (Bosch 1991a: 389). Over time, his views led to the focus of mission shifting "from an anthropocentric view to a theocentric view" and from a "church-driven" to a "God-driven mission" (Bellini 2017: 5). But it was at the 1952 Willingen conference of the IMC where this landmark Barthian shift, described by Guder (1998: 4) and Hendriks (2004: 25) as a "theocentric reconceptualization"[36] of mission was cemented. The Willingen conference confirmed that mission is not located in soteriology or ecclesiology but in the Triune God, with the church participating in the sending by God (Bosch 1991a: 390).[37] No longer was mission only defined as the Father sending the Son and the Father and Son sending the Holy Spirit, but as the Triune God sending the church. This implies that mission does not begin in the church; it starts with God and its purpose is to

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[35] Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 32-72) identified four types of theologies that traditionally underpins the church's mission: Mission as saving souls and extending the church; mission as discovery of the truth; mission as commitment to liberation and transformation; and mission as prophetic dialogue.

[36] Hendriks (2004: 25) defines "theocentric reconceptualization" as a "rethink from a point of view that focuses on God. The argument is that instead of looking at mission as something done by the church, it should be seen as something that originates from God, from the way God reveals himself to us. God is missional in his very being and as such his body should be likewise."

[37] Bellini (2017: 11) highlights four core theological emphases emanating from Willingen: 1)" God is the source of mission", not the church; 2) "God sent God's son into the world to save all persons separated by sin from God and each other"; 3) "God also sent the Spirit to continue the work of Christ in and through the church and in the world"; and 4) God sends the church "to participate in the *Missio Dei"* under guidance of the Spirit.

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heal the whole world (Bosch 1991a: 390-391).[38] According to Engelsviken (2003: 482) this trinitarian structure of mission wherein God is both the sender and the one being sent forms the basis of the *Missio Dei*. Mission is the movement from the Triune God to the world (Bosch 1991a: 390). Thus, mission is not an ecclesiocentric activity; it flows from the Triune God and the church is a participating community in God's mission. As Kirk (1999: 27) phrases it:

> When Christian communities speak about God, by definition they speak about Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There simply is no other God. Therefore, to speak about the *Missio Dei* is to indicate, without qualification, the *Missio Trinitatis*.

Furthermore, this new emphasis effectively dealt with the view of mission as an activity of the Christian West to the non-Christian lands. Mission was opened up. It does not belong to a "particular church or region" (Pachuau 2000: 543). It is no longer an activity of the church in another country or culture. The whole world is the object of God's mission (Kirk 1999: 24).

2.4.2 After Willingen.

Following Willingen there was a broad consensus about the trinitarian understanding (*Missio Trinitatis*) of mission but there was disagreement on the scope of God's mission and the role of the Church therein (Arthur 2013).[39] Apparently, Christian missions found *Missio Dei*, as formulated at Willingen "not just new and liberating but also more and more confusing" (Matthey 2003: 465). Gradually two opposing streams in the interpretation of the *Missio Dei* emerged. Bellini (2017: 14) identified these two streams as the *cosmocentric Missio Dei,* personified by theologians of ecumenical leanings and the *Christocentric instrumental Missio Dei*, as personified by theologians of a more evangelical leaning.[40]

The *cosmocentric* or world-driven perspective as represented by missiologist J.C. Hoekendijk, views the world as the playing field for God's activity, with the church playing a peripheral role in mission. Hence, the church is not the custodian of mission but can at best only

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[38] Also pointed out by Dames 2007: 41; Flett 2014: 71-73; Goheen 2002c: 356; Guder et al. 1998: 4; Kirk 1999: 27; Hendriks & Sheridan 2013: 5; Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 6-7.

[39] For a comprehensive discussion of the relationship between mission, the church and the world see Bosch (1991: 368-389) and Kirk (1999: 23-37).

[40] Richebächer (2003: 593) refers to these two positions as the "salvation history ecclesiological approach" and the "historical eschatological approach"; Arthur (2013) uses "church-centric and world-centric"; Kirk (1999: 33) refers to "mission through the church" and "mission through the world" and Goheen (2002c: 356) defines it as "Christocentric-Trinitarian" and "Cosmocentric-Trinitarian."

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participate in God’s already ongoing mission in the world. As such, mission is God-centred, not church-centred. Some versions of this perspective go as far as bypassing the church altogether, by viewing mission exclusively as a trinitarian activity in the world. Consequently, the church becomes redundant in the *Missio Dei*, or at the very least exist alongside it (Bellini 2017: 14-16). Within this framework the goal of mission is to create *shalom* (or humanisation), the target of the *Missio Dei* is the world and the role of the church is to testify of this mission and to work with other movements, Christian or otherwise, that will enhance *shalom* (Engelsviken 2003: 488). Subsequently, the church became just one of many role players used by the Holy Spirit. Thus, “the order is therefore not God-church-world, but God-world-church. Or one might rather say: God-world-shalom” (2003: 489). On the other extreme, some versions allow for a universal mission (*Missio generalis*) where God moves directly to creation and world history, thus highlighting *Missio Dei* over the *Missio Trinitatis* and thereby bypassing Jesus’ salvific history in favour of world history as redemptive history. In other words, God takes care of mission in the world, without needing any assistance. Either way, according to this wider view of the *Missio Dei*, the agenda is set by the world or culture and the church either functions as an addendum to God’s work or does not function at all (Bellini 2017: 19-21). The danger in this view of the *Missio Dei* is threefold: the universal scope thereof can firstly limit or eliminate the role of the church in mission; secondly it can limit the “salvific role of Jesus Christ” and; thirdly, it can fall back to *missio culturae* with mission becoming a social, political and ethical enterprise (2017: 16, 18).[41]

The dominant perspective at Willingen, the *Christocentric instrumental* view of the *Missio Dei,* represented by Karl Hartenstein and Lesslie Newbigin, emphasises that God’s salvation is Christocentric because it happens “uniquely through Christ” (Bellini 2017: 17). It is instrumental because through the guidance of the Spirit, the church participates as an instrument, a witness and a sign of God’s mission in the world. Although Christocentric, it is also truly trinitarian, because salvation is understood within a trinitarian structure, i.e., through Christ, God redeems the world and empowered by the Spirit (2017: 17), the church

[41] Also explaining the two streams are Arthur 2013; Bosch 1991a: 382-383, 392; Kirk 1999: 33-34; Richebächer 2003: 591 and Pachuau 2000: 544.

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becomes the instrument that proclaims the Good News of Christ (Bosch 1991a: 390). Thus, the church plays an important and justified role in the trinitarian mission.[42]

Starting at Willingen and ingrained at subsequent ecumenical conferences a new understanding of the relationship between church and mission was forged (Nikolajsen 2013: 261). This relationship is also confirmed by others, for example: "Both the church and the mission of the church are tools of God, instruments through which God carries out this mission" (Engelsviken 2003: 482); "Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world. The church is viewed as an instrument for that mission" (Bosch 1991a: 390); and "(T)he church stands in the service of God's turning to the world" (Bosch 1991a: 391). Affirming the *Missio Dei*, "a correspondence forms between who God is and the calling of the church in and for the world. As God is missionary, so the community which worships him is missionary" (Flett 2014: 69). In this view, the church "is a community in response to the *Missio Dei*, bearing witness to God's activity in the world" (Kirk 1999: 31).

However, there is an inherent danger in the emphasis on the church being the means through which God fulfils and embodies God's mission in the world. This enterprise implies that the church is "missionary by its very nature" (Bosch 1991a: 372). The danger in such an emphasis is that mission may become ecclesiocentric: "as if the church is an aim in itself" (Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 110). Furthermore, if the scope of God's mission is to redeem the whole of creation, then mission cannot be reduced exclusively to an activity in and through the church (Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 111).[43] In the words of Keifert (2006: 37): "This is God's mission and not just the church's". Mission is first and foremost the work of the Triune God, it does not belong to the church. In this way *Missio Dei* counters the notion of ecclesiocentric missions, or "the church being at the center of missions" (Bellini 2017: 22). The church is nothing more, but also nothing less than a sign of the Kingdom and merely an instrument, but also nothing less than an instrument in doing God's work (Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 111-112). Relapsing into a narrow, ecclesiocentric understanding of mission will always be a temptation the church and missional theology

[42] In this regard, also see Arthur 2013; Kirk 1999: 30-31; Richebächer 2003: 593; Pachuau 2000: 544

[43] If the scope of God's mission is to redeem the whole of creation, it also places the mission of the church in the context of God's economy, i.e., the whole work of the Triune God spanning from the creation at the beginning to the final fulfilment of God's work and everything in between. In this bigger scheme of things, the church is only one aspect of God's economy (Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 112-113).

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should be aware of (Bosch 1991a: 393). As Kirk (1999: 206) succinctly phrased it: "if God's mission is largely tied to the church then God's freedom is seriously compromised."[44]

In summary: Bosch (1991a: 10) states that *Missio Dei* is "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate." Thus, the *Missio Dei* originates in the Triune God, who sent Christ as the redeemer of creation and the inaugurator of God's Kingdom in the world. The Spirit is sent to further empower and guide this mission, while the church serves as a participant and an instrument of mission. To prevent the *Missio Dei* from being distorted, Porter (2019: 154-162) constructs the *Missio Dei* to include "a trinitarian basis", "a redemptive focus", and "an ecclesial locus". In this way the church discovers the *Missio Dei* as a plausibility structure for its missional commitment. As such, the *Missio Dei* confirms that mission does not originate in the church or any other societal structures or cultures. God is the source and mission is therefore not an ecclesiocentric activity, although, while participating in mission, the church does become more missionary.

From these reflections it is perhaps appropriate to conclude that there exists a healthy tension between the *Missio Dei* and the church. Is it an instrumental relationship with God using the church as an instrument of mission? Is it a partnership between God and the church? Or does it function in a causal relationship where God gives the missional authority over to the church, but remains as the source of mission (Kruger 2013: 6)? Nonetheless, perhaps it will suffice to hold on to David Bosch's (1991a) view in this regard. He refers to this as a creative tension with the church at the one end of the spectrum, perceiving itself "to be the sole bearer of a message of salvation on which it has a monopoly and on the other end the church viewing itself at most, as an illustration – in word and deed – of God's involvement with the world" (1991a: 384).[45]

[44] For a discussion on the reasons why scholars of mission are reluctant to give the church a too central role, see Kirk (1999: 205-207) and Flett (2014: 69-70).

[45] This tension is, among others, reflected on by Flett (2014), Kirk (1999), Nikolajsen (2013) and Pachuau (2000).

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2.4.3 Mission: Revitalised and transformed.

Although there are still disagreements, more recent missional developments led to a renewed recognition of God being the author of mission. A new appreciation for the role of the church as a sign and an instrument participating in God's mission in the world coincided with these developments. In a way, it is a reconnection with the consensus declaration at Willingen (Arthur 2013; Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 111; Engelsviken 2003: 490; Kirk 1999: 25; Richebächer 2003: 595). In the words of Bosch (1991a: 389): "During the past half a century or so, there has been a subtle, but nevertheless decisive, shift toward understanding mission as God's mission."

Since the 1980's some trends enriching the understanding of mission as *Missio Dei* and the accompanying role of the church in the world emerged from different scholars from diverse backgrounds. None more so than the GOCN, but I will come back to their contribution in the next chapter. At this stage it will suffice to deal with some of these enriching trends by way of an overview of selected literature. This, however, is not meant to be a comprehensive overview or a critical assessment, but it does give one an idea of how the renewed awareness of the *Missio Dei* inspired and transformed the understanding of mission.

Writing about the vertical and horisontal dimensions of mission in an African context, Sanneh (1983: 165-171) highlighted the incarnation of the *Missio Dei* into local communities through the vernacular and thus having a greater influence on African religion than external agencies did. In the words of Sanneh: "*Missio Dei* sustained traditional religious enterprise by bringing about a convergence with Christianity … so that *Missio Dei* activated by the stimulus of historical contact has fused with local religious enterprise and acquired a concrete reality" (1983: 171).

Examining the *mission politica oecumenica* in South Africa, Saayman (1991: 7-8) enhances the *Missio Dei* by describing mission as participating in God's liberating activity in the world. Hence, God's liberating activity sets the agenda. Considering the Jubilee (Luke 4: 18-21), mission (the *Missio Dei*) therefore also includes the restoration of humanity (incorporating full social, political and economic justice) and all environmental relationships.

Kirk (1999) explores the impact of the *Missio Dei* and the mission of the church in the context of a new millennium (post 2000), referring to the issues of the Gospel amid different cultures,

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justice for the poor, encountering religions of the world, overcoming violence and building peace, care for the environment and sharing in partnerships.

Richebächer (2003) points out that the *Missio Dei* and the function of the church was influenced by "the experience of recession, ecological crisis and increasing concern about the theological, political and cultural independence of the churches in the South" (2003: 594). Flowing from these influences are "the concepts of liberation theology, with its option for the poor, other contextually, politically and culturally inspired theologies, and the whole concept of the inculturation of gospel and church" (2003: 594).

Writing from a uniquely South African perspective, Nico Smith (2002) tells that he originally understood the term *Missio Dei* as a concept explaining God's personal involvement in mission in the world. God's purpose is to gather all people into the church, without concerning Godself with cultural and political matters. The church in this understanding of the *Missio Dei*, is the sign of God's presence in the world and therefore the only vehicle through which God saves human beings. His understanding was furthermore influenced by a view of soteriology and Christian anthropology which stated that human beings are only important as individual persons to be reconciled with God. After being confronted with the oppression and suffering of Black people in South African townships, Smith realised that churches were continuing with a form of mission that goes against God's attention for the people of South Africa. Churches was failing the *Missio Dei* by not taking the struggle for the liberation of Black people seriously. Following this experience, Smith expanded his understanding of the *Missio Dei* with *missio hominum*, that is, life in abundance for all people in the world. This means, in the footsteps of Jesus, God calls all Christians to become incarnated, especially among the downtrodden people of a society. The *Missio Dei* is thus not just a mysterious soteriological endeavour, but it is God calling God's church to be involved in the lives of people in their contexts, showing them God's concern and love.

Onwunta and Hendriks (2009) explore wholeness and the renewal of humanity and God's entire creation as the essence of *Missio Dei*. In an ethnically diverse Nigerian society this goal is enhanced by focussing on theocentricism instead of ethnically construed ecclesiocentrism, reconciliation and inclusive ecclesial communities.

Matthey (2010: 22-23) argues for a more holistic understanding of the *Missio Dei*. He incorporates the *vertical* element of the relationship with God, the *horizontal* element of the

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relationship with(in) humanity and adds what he calls a *circular dynamic*, which refers to the relationship with God's creation.

Arthur (2013) highlights the usefulness of the *Missio Dei* concept in a post-modern pluralistic world. He points out that the unity in diversity of the Trinity "will be a key for a theology of religious and cultural pluralism", while the Trinity also provides a foundation for mission as prophetic dialogue. He further mentions the value of the *Missio Dei* in a context where Christians are increasingly reluctant to "impose" their views on others". Thus, "*Missio Dei* elevates mission from the level of human activities, rightly showing mission as being participation in something which God is already doing."

In the document *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, the World Council of Churches (2013) confirms that mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, from where it overflows to all humanity and creation. The *Missio Dei*, thus has a holistic dimension penetrating into every aspect of our life, society and creation in order to affirm life. The church is invited and called by God's love to become good news for all. To fulfil this missionary calling is the aim of the church. Mission is not a project of the church, but of the church embodying and sharing the Triune God's overflowing love.

Fitch and Holsclaw (2013) explore the Trinity and the *Missio Dei* in the face of empire. They evaluate the *Spirit-centred view of mission* and the *Jesus-centered view of mission* and then proposes the *Incarnation-centred view of mission* as sufficient for mission in the face of empire.

Reflecting on the significance of the *Missio Dei* in the context of secular Britain, Turner (2014) concludes that mission as an activity of restoration, reconciliation and revelation flowing from the Triune God, is of great worth to contemporary Britain. It also frees churches from believing that the salvation of communities is their sole responsibility. She declares that "God's mission in contemporary Britain is witnessed through believers responding to the ebb and flow of God's heart for his creation; a changed and changing people across denominations, exercising the denial of self, showing compassion, living lives that speak out truth, glorifying a saving God simply because they are caught up in the *Missio Dei*" (2014: 25).

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Franklin and Niemandt (2016) reviews polycentrism, i.e., the deliberate movement away from established centres of power and authority within missional leadership and structures that are part of the *Missio Dei*, as a helpful methodology to counteract the tensions brought about by globalisation and glocalisation.

Writing with the demographically changing United States in mind and amid debates about human sexuality and other cultural issues in the United Methodist Church, Bellini (2017: 28) pleads for a *Missio Dei* response, because it is imperative for "the revelation of God to set the agenda for mission, while remaining sensitive and discerning to diverse semiotic and semantic systems through which the revelation is conveyed."

Exploring a commitment to place as an important factor in a congregation's missional endeavours, Porter (2017: 134-243) grounds the church's witness in a specific place within the *Missio Dei* by embracing a trinitarian conception of place as sacred creation, sacred journey, and sacred construction.

Examining the impact of the missional renaissance on churches, ecumenical organisations and local congregations in South Africa, Pillay (2017) emphasises ecumenical missional thinking, i.e., "the directive of engaging God's mission in the world with others" (2017: 40), as well as the importance of spirituality to remind us that we are in God's transforming mission, not our own. He writes: "even though our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal and communal, it should also direct us outward in missionary endeavour" (2017: 43) into different situations, moments, meeting points, spaces and locations of struggle.

Finally, from a South African evangelical perspective, Harold (2019) points out that mission is mostly understood as a soteriological endeavour that reduces salvation to a person's spiritual condition. He then argues for an understanding of the *Missio Dei* that also includes social justice and compassion to transform people and the world we live in.

In sum: Although not above critique[46], this brief overview confirms that mission was indeed revitalised and transformed by the *Missio Dei* as the main plausibility structure of the church. It gave mission (and the church) a more holistic focus and a renewed awareness of its calling

[46] See for example, Flett (2014), Poitras (1999), Richebächer (2003) and Turner 2014 in this regard.

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towards local communities, different cultures, the restoration of humanity and environmental relationships.

2.5 Conclusion.

In chapter 2 I have argued that the significant shift from mission as an ecclesiocentric activity to mission emanating from the Triune God led to a new understanding of mission. As Bosch (1991a: 390) so eloquently phrases it: "To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love." This modification was a ground-breaking contribution to 20th century theology and forms the basis of missional theology as we know it today.

Since Karl Barth was the first theologian to emphasise that mission stems from God, the chapter started with an overview of his background and the main influences on his theology. It was especially pertinent during his earlier years when he reacted against the church-centred, pietistic theology of the time to remind the church that it derives its mission from God. He also reminded the church to turn to the world as proclaimers of the all-encompassing radical grace of the sending God. In this way Barth initiated the significant shift in 20th century theology towards mission as God's mission.

Building on Barth's revolutionary ideas about God being the sender, Lesslie Newbigin further helped the church to understand its role as a sign, instrument and a foretaste of the gospel and the Kingdom of God in a specific culture. In a challenging time for the Western church, Newbigin helped it to embrace the relationship between the gospel, the church and local culture. Thus, Newbigin highlighted the theological connection between the church and mission and consequently aided the church to rediscover the reasons for its existence. As a representative of the triune God, it exists for the glory of God. It is missionary by nature and called to missionally engage with local communities.

As such, both Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin emphasised that mission originates from the Triune God. They affirmed that mission is always God's mission: the *Missio Dei*. Chapter 2 therefore ends with a description of the historical and theological developments of the *Missio Dei* concept. Since the Willingen conference of the IMC, the *Missio Dei* functioned as the guiding principle of mission. Although there are different schools of thought about the scope

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of God’s redemptive mission and the role of the church in such mission, there are however consensus about mission being God’s mission and not a mere activity of the church.

From the late 1980’s onwards, particularly with the guidance of the Gospel and our Culture Network in North America, a renewed appreciation developed for the *Missio Dei* and the role of the church as representatives of the *Missio Dei*. Hence, chapter two aimed to provide context: firstly, for the discussion of the broader developments in missional theology in the USA and beyond (Chapter 3); and secondly, for the South African discourse on missional theology (Chapter 4).

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CHAPTER 3: Broader developments in missional theology.

3.1 Introduction.

In the footsteps of Lesslie Newbigin, the church in the West began to realise that it found itself in a new missional reality and is therefore in need of a new missional and ecclesiological identity and practice. In the words of Mouw (1999: 3): "The North America Christian community today is in a missionary location." It is in such challenging times that Bosch (1991a: 3) reminds us of the opportunities and possibilities available to the church to truly be the church. It is a time for the church to ponder, "who we are and what we are for" (Guder 1998: 3). Kiefert (2006: 36) calls this reality the "New Missional Era", i.e., "God's invitation to join in this new adventure in the life of God and world, gospel, church and culture". This chapter will explore how the church in North America and beyond (re)discovered its missional nature and vocation as a missional church in a new missional reality or "new missional era". These developments underlie the theological and ecclesiological foundations of the South African missional discourse that will be discussed in chapter four.

3.2 Defining "missional."

In a very short time, the term "missional" became a much-used term in a variety of Christian movements and denominations. Yet, or maybe precisely because it is so widely used, it is regularly misunderstood by a variety of people, "be they clergy or laity" (Roxburgh 2011: xiii). The widespread use even led to the term losing its definitional value (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 1). Therefore, at the start of this chapter it is necessary to clarify the term "missional" as it is used by different proponents of missional theology.

Up until 1998 the term "missionary" was used to refer to an activity of the church. Mostly the role of the church was limited to sending and supporting missionaries called to mission service (Minatrea 2004: 10). The more contemporary use of the term "missional" was first introduced by George Hunsberger to indicate that the church is defined by its divine mission, its sending by God. It confirms that mission is not merely another program or activity of the church but defines "both its essence and its action" (Guder et al. 1998: 11-12; 2017: 56). According to

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Minatrea (2004: 10) and Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 44-45), understanding "missional" in this way can be traced back to Francis Dubose who in 1983 connected the term to God as "the sending God". Dubose was influenced by Karl Barth who emphasised the meaning of mission as sending by the Truine God. The idea of mission as part of the essence of the church was also developed by missiologist Charles van Engen whose use of the term to address the role of the local church in the world, confirmed the missionary nature of the church.

Nel (2014), Kritzinger (2007b) and Kritzinger and Saayman (2011), however, makes the point that the concept "missional" itself is not so new. In 1968, when David Bosch was still a lecturer at a church-based seminary in the Eastern Cape, he started a journal for the Southern African Missiological Society (SAMS) called *Missionaria*. In 1973, after he was appointed at the University of South Africa, Bosch changed the name to *Missionalia* and turned it into a fully-fledged academic journal. Laubscher (2020: 38) additionally points out that the term "missional" was already recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1907. Saayman (2010) furthermore concludes that there is no clear etymological difference between the terms "missionary" and "missional," as both are derived from the root word *missio*. The change from "missionary" to "missional" also does not pertain to the newfound focus on the *Missio Dei*, because "missionary" also refers to the *Missio Dei*. In Saayman's view the change derived from the awareness of the negative dimensions of Christian mission history, such as a "crisis of conscience at the end of the Second World War", "racism and (the) exploitation of subjugated peoples" (2007: 7). It seems like a less well-known term to describe "a very well-known project in a new context" (2007: 10). The new context refers to North America where the term originated from, as will become apparent later in this chapter. So, both terms are derived from the same root and are engrained in the *Missio Dei*, which means the distinguishing factor is its "contextual rootedness" (2007: 16). Thus, in Saayman's view, the term "Missional" developed in the process of contextualising theology in the Global North, which begs the question of its usefulness for the theological discourse in the so-called Third World in general and Africa in particular.

Moreover, Saayman (2010) and Kritzinger (2022c) points out that the catalyst for this process originated in the work of Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch. As shown in the previous chapter, Newbigin's contribution was formed while working for many years in India, while Bosch studied in Europe, but spent his professional life in South Africa. So, in a sense the catalyst for

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being "missional" originated in the so-called Third World with the sending countries in the Global North importing it for their own contextualisation process. Using the term in South Africa, for example, will therefore call for a re-indigenisation or re-contextualisation of the concept. In this sense, Laubscher (2020: 38) points to the irony at work here, "namely that it is new in its actual rediscovery and re-emergence?" Nevertheless, I agree with Nel (2014: 274) that despite its "ambiguous origins and usage", this argument does not totally prohibit the usage of the term. To its credit, it does connect new developments in missionary ecclesiology and it influences the theory and practice of local congregations. Over the years the contemporary use of the term was further developed in a variety of ways by a variety of scholars from different backgrounds. I will now deal with some examples chronologically. This will give us a sense of how such development progressed over the years.

Guder et al. (1998: 3-4) emphasised mission from a trinitarian perspective by using the definition from David Bosch (1991a: 390):

> Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It [is] thus part of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classic doctrine of the missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.

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Barret, et al. (2004: x), while highlighting the patterns or practices of a missional church, describes missional as the character of the church, i.e., being missional is embodied in every practice and action of the congregation.

> A missional church is a church that is shaped by participating in God's mission … A Missional congregation lets God's mission permeate everything that the congregation does – from worship to witness to training members for discipleship. It bridges the gap between outreach and congregational life, since in its life together, the church is to embody God's mission.

Writing from an African and practical theological perspective, Hendriks (2004: 25) points out that mission is not an ecclesiocentric activity and it "should not be equated with the missionary enterprise associated with Western imperialism and the colonisation of non-Western countries." Mission stems from the Trinity and refers to a faith community,

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participating in God's ongoing mission, God's ongoing praxis, God's ongoing involvement with this world, with the poor and the sick, with the rich and the powerful and with earth and sky.

Roxburgh (2005: 12) in his book on missional leadership, stresses that "missional" refers to God's mission, as opposed to people's needs shaping the church in the context of North America and Europe now being "mission fields" themselves:

> Missional also expresses that God's mission (or *Missio Dei*) is that which shapes and defines all that the church is and does, as opposed to expecting church to be the ultimate self-help group for meeting our own needs and finding fulfilment in our individual lives.

Focussing more on the missional journey and processes of discernment and renewal in local congregations within the new missional era, Kiefert (2006: 186) defines "missional" in the context of the local church:

> A missional church focuses on being mission, not just doing mission … move beyond being a spiritual gas station only providing spiritual services for individuals without forming them into Christian community … move beyond forming a tight knit Christian community that cannot be porous and open to life among those who are not part of their community … engage with others in mission rather than sending persons or money elsewhere, avoiding this engagement.

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Defining congregations as cultural systems in need of cultural and missional transformation, Dames (2007: 36) concludes that "(T)he term 'missional' refers to the shift from a cultural church to a church that reflects and engages actively with its immediate community."

Hirsch & Ford (2011: 21-22), accentuates that mission not only comes from God, but encompasses everything done by the church and God's people:

> … for followers of Jesus, 'missional' shapes our discipleship, defines our ministry, describe our mission, and points to the very purpose of his church. It's a term that comes from the inside of God and from deep within the nature of the church that Jesus built. Missionality involves every believer who seeks to follow Jesus authentically right here, right now.

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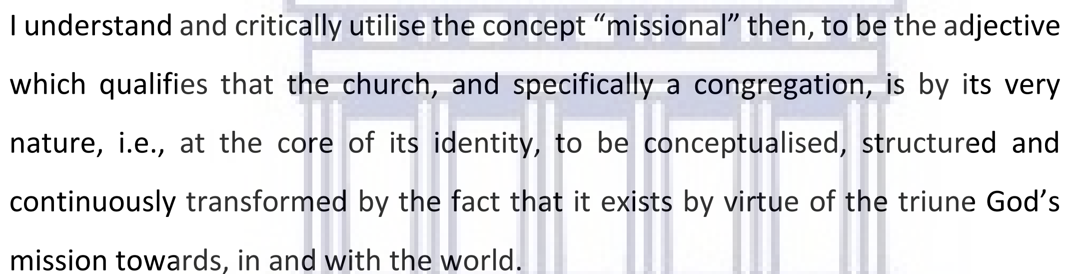
Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 1-4), after examining different uses of the term “missional” in North American literature, argue for a more elastic use, while still recognising the following overarching themes: 1) God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world; 2) God’s mission in the world is related to the Reign (Kingdom) of God; 3) the missional church is an incarnational (versus an attractional) ministry sent to engage a postmodern, post-Christendom, globalised context; and 4) the internal life of the missional church focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission.

Nel’s (2014) usage of the term missional not only includes its trinitarian rootedness and the notion of the *Missio Dei* but also the theory and practice of local congregations. As such, it denotes a particular qualifying identity and intention in all its different expressions. Nel (2014: 275) writes:



> I understand and critically utilise the concept “missional” then, to be the adjective which qualifies that the church, and specifically a congregation, is by its very nature, i.e., at the core of its identity, to be conceptualised, structured and continuously transformed by the fact that it exists by virtue of the triune God’s mission towards, in and with the world.

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Looking at the different definitions of “missional”, it is notable that most of them point to the identity of the church as the one being sent by the Triune God into a particular context. As such, the mission of the church can easily be restricted to an ecclesial mission done by the local congregation. It is noteworthy, however, that in the mentioned definitions, Bosch and Hendriks are the only scholars who highlights in their definitions that the sending of the church is not an ecclesiocentric movement. Bosch (1991a: 390) places it within the doctrine of the Trinity and “not of ecclesiology”, while Hendriks (2004: 25) accentuates that mission “is not an ecclesiocentric activity.” Thus, in definitions of “missional” the focus can either point to the local church and its practices being missional, in which case the definition may become too narrowly ecclesial, or alternatively the focus can be on the sending God, which deliberately broadens the scope of what it means to be missional. Bosch (1991a: 166) confirms this broader scope when he reflects on the Pauline understanding of *ekklesia*, when he writes: “although *ekklesia* in Paul usually refers to the local church, the wider fellowship is always presupposed.” Hence, the question: is it only the church that can be described as

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missional or can we also speak of a missional Christianity? In other words, are we dealing with a missional ecclesiology or an ecclesial mission?

Nevertheless, emanating from these definitions one can conclude that the term "missional" includes the following concepts referring to the nature, the intention and the praxis of a missional church: 1) It is the Triune God sending the church (*Missio Dei)*; 2) it is related to the Kingdom of God; 3) it refers to the nature and essence of the church sent by the Triune God into a particular culture and context; 4) it is therefore incarnational, as well as open and inclusive; 5) it shapes the entire ministry, practices and actions of the local church; 6) it includes every believer as a disciple engaging in mission and 7) it is a theocentric activity, not an ecclesiocentric activity seeking to further the interests of the church. The church is a participant in God's mission.

3.3 The roots of the missional movement.

The catalyst to the broader missional conversation was when Lesslie Newbigin challenged missiologists from the 1970's onwards with the question (Guder 2017: 52; Kiefert 2017: 83): "What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call 'modern Western culture?'" (Newbigin 1986: 1). Newbigin's challenge and his missional insights motivated the gospel and our culture conversation in the UK, North America, Europe and countries like New Zealand and Australia (Gibbs & Coffey 2001: 13). Building on Lesslie Newbigin's work in the UK, in North America his influence inspired regular gatherings of interested individuals from a broad ecumenical range which eventually led to the establishment of the Gospel and our Culture Network (GOCN) in the mid 1990's (Guder 2017: 55-56). To construct a truly missional understanding of the church being sent by God into a new cultural setting, this movement moved away from both the historical dichotomy between church and mission(s) and mission purely as another strategy within the church (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 6-7). As such, they focussed their work on the relationship between culture, gospel and church (Hunsberger & Van Gelder 1996: xvii; Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 47) They did this by primarily building on the following themes in Lesslie Newbigin's work:[47]

[47] And to a lesser extent, the work of David Bosch (1991a).

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> The church is the locus of mission; the church should embody the gospel and form personal relationships with unbelievers; the church's role is to announce the kingdom, reign, and sovereignty of God; the church must engage in a missionary encounter with our culture, existing as the hermeneutic of the gospel in the North American setting (Franklin 2004: 46); the *Missio Dei*; a holistic view of the Trinity and holistic salvation; a focus on the Kingdom of God and a missional hermeneutic (Benade 2019: 193).

According to Goheen (2002b: 480), the GOCN and their work must be understood within the context of two "historical stories". The first is the work of the International Missionary Council (IMC), later the World Council of Churches (WCC), and the second is their efforts to formulate a missional ecclesiology in the throes of collapsing Christendom.

3.3.1 GOCN: Beyond the World Council of Churches.

Although the monograph *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Guder et al. 1998) is sometimes credited as the beginning of the missional theological movement, it is not so easy to date the start of the movement (Goheen 2010b: 63). We know, for example, that as early as the 1920's through to the 1960's the IMC defined mission as "the true nature of the church". This centrality of mission was further entrenched when the IMC merged with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961 (Guder 2017: 53).

Previously, in the early part of the 20th century, mission was considered to be exclusively about the "geographical expansion of the Christian faith from the Christian West to the non-Christian non-West" (Goheen 2010b: 64). According to Hunsberger (1991: 391-392) mission in North American churches was understood as White missionaries being sent "to plant churches among non-white peoples elsewhere in the world" with "over there, helping the poor, recruiting members" as the reigning operational missiology of the church. This reductionist view of mission led to what Goheen (2002b: 480) refers to as "a number of foundational assumptions", namely: 1) The separation between missional bodies and the local church who support it; 2) introverted churches who are not missionary in nature, with mission organisations working outside the church structures; 3) a world divided between the Christian West as home base and the non-Christian non-West as mission field; 4) a Christendom mindset, where there are no need for mission in the West apart from the

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evangelisation of individuals; and 5) a division between the older, more mature churches of the West and the younger churches of the non-West.[48] In this way mission was reduced to one of many programmes or activities of the church, focused on "somewhere else" and ecclesiology and missiology being compartmentalised.

Between 1938 and 1952 these assumptions were challenged by the IMC, first at the meeting at Tambaran (1938) and even more comprehensively at the Willingen conference (1952). At Tambaran, missiologist Hendrik Kreamer posed the question: "What is the essential nature of the church, and what is its obligation to the world?" (Goheen 2010b: 65). This led to a discussion about the relationship between the church and missionary societies, as well as between "older" and "younger" churches, and the abandonment (in principle) of the distinction between Christian and non-Christian countries. Although accused of overemphasising the role of the church, Tambaran did steer the church back to its missionary nature (Benade 2019: 77-78; Bosch 1991a: 369-370; Goheen 2010b: 65-70; 2002b: 480-482).

The Willingen conference, where Lesslie Newbigin played a definitive role, expanded on Tambaran by bringing the *Missio Dei* to the fore. Where Tambaran emphasised the local church in missionary endeavours, Willingen accentuated that both the church and mission be taken up into the *Missio Dei* (Benade 2019: 77-78; Bosch 1991a: 369-370; Goheen 2002b: 65-70; 2010b: 480-482). As such, the church changed from being the sender to the one being sent, i.e., "The *Missio Dei* institutes the *missiones ecclesiae*" (Bosch 1991a: 370). This shift happened under the influence of Karl Barth who was one of the first theologians to focus on mission being an activity of the Triune God. Thus, mission was expanded as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit "sending the church into the world" (1991a: 390). After Willingen, "the *Missio Dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate" (1991a: 391).

In the aftermath of Willingen, where a theological framework was provided, the focus moved to the reshaping of the structures, patterns and forms of the church that still displayed the Christendom, church-centred and colonial paradigm. This led to a study project on "the

[48] Bosch (1991a: 294-295) highlighted that these advocates of mission were uncritical about their own culture and did not appreciate foreign cultures; they were blind to their own ethnocentrism and paternalism; and Western Theology and institutional structures and expressions were transmitted unchanged to the younger churches. Although there were also positive contributions by Western missionaries "a dismal picture of (admittedly well-intended) imposition and manipulation remained."

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Missionary Structure of the Congregation" (Bosch 1991a: 382) commissioned by the New Delhi assembly of the newly integrated WCC in 1961, with the report eventually issued in 1967 (Bosch 1991a: 382; Goheen 2002b: 70; 2010b: 481). Unfortunately, the report, "in the end, had precious little to say about the 'missionary structure of the congregation'" (Bosch 1991a: 381). This was mainly due to the influence of Johannes Hoekendijk with his focus on "the secular calling and role of Christianity" (1991a: 382). According to Goheen (2002b: 71-72), Hoekendijk contended that the understanding of mission flowing from Tambaran and Willingen, was both too Christocentric and needed to be more trinitarian and too ecclesial and needed to be more world centred.[49] In other words, the Triune God oversees mission, with the church only pointing the way to what God is doing in the world (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 291). Understood in this way, the church, reduced to playing an instrumental role, "takes its cue for mission from "the signs of the times" and from what God is doing in the world rather than from what God has done in Jesus Christ" (Goheen 2002b: 72). In the words of Bosch (1991a: 383): "The distinction between church and world has, for all intents and purposes, been dropped completely." Hence, the church became just another agent of mission. In the wake of secularisation during the 1960's this became the predominant view of mission (and maybe in some ways are still so today?).

Flowing from these developments, the missional church movement culminating in the GOCN marked a return to the Willingen discussions and aimed to revive the *Missio Dei*, the central role of the local church in God's mission as well as the "structures, patterns, and forms of ministry" (Goheen 2002b: 482) necessary to be God's faithful witnesses in a changing world (Goheen 2010b: 63).

3.3.2 GOCN: Beyond Christendom.[50]

The first collection of essays by GOCN, *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, was published in 1996 with George Hunsberger and Craig van

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[49] This missionary paradigm was also in reaction to church structures being too introverted, inflexible and rigid, not giving enough attention to the work of the Spirit beyond its borders and not empowering the mission of the laity according to their various callings. Newbigin affirmed these aspects, but also critiqued the movement for reducing the Trinity and the work of Jesus in favour of the work of the Spirit and for downgrading the role of the church to a mere agent of God's work and not its locus (Goheen 2002b: 72-73).

[50] Guder et al. (1998: 48) describes the "functional reality" known as Christendom, as follows: "Christendom is often associated with the type of relationship that has developed between the church and the broader culture in North America. It also describes the 'functional reality' (where) various churches contributed to

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Gelder as editors. It focussed on an analysis of the issues facing the church in North America with biblical, theological, historical and contemporary reflections informing the discussion. In 1998 this was followed by Darrel Guder's seminal work, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* which had a more biblical and theological focus on the nature of the church as it lives its life in the contemporary North American context (Guder 2017: 65; Van Gelder 1999: xv).[51] Both works emerged as a result of a crisis in the church in North America (USA and Canada).[52] Hunsberger and Van Gelder (1996: xiii) point to the "deep uncertainty, malaise and despair in churches 'disestablished' from places of previous cultural importance". Guder et al. (1998: 1) argue that although the United States is still a very religious society, Christianity "has moved (or been moved) away from its position of dominance as it has experienced the loss not only of numbers but of power and influence within society."[53] Taking their cue from Newbigin, Hunsberger and Van Gelder (1996: xvi) also pointed to the problem of the church still reflecting much of Christendom values: "if there is too little identification with the culture, the church becomes a subcultural ghetto. If it assumes too much of the culture's perspectives and values, it domesticates and tames the gospel. The latter has become the major problem for the churches of North America." Thus, both early works alluded to the crisis in the church in North America as that of a cultural shift

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the formation of a dominant culture that bore the deep imprint of Christian values, language, and expectations regarding moral behaviours. Other terms like "Christian culture" or "churched culture" might be used to describe this Christian influence on the shape of the broader culture." Barret et al. (2004: x) explains Christendom as a situation "where church and nation/culture/society were hand-in-glove, and it was assumed that almost everybody was Christian somehow."

[51] There was also a third and fourth volume in the series building on the first two volumes, *Bearing witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality* by George R. Hunsgerger which explored the work of Lesslie Newbigin in relation to gospel, church and culture and *Confident Witness - Changing World: Rediscovering the Gospel in North America*, edited by Graig van Gelder which provides practical examples of how the church can live out the themes in the first two volumes (Van Gelder 1999: xv).

[52] This crisis was also confirmed by Barret, et al. (2004: x): "In Christendom … the church's mission only related to cultures other that the dominant culture. This was especially the case in Europe and North America. But Christendom is dying. Our context in North America is more like the New Testament context of the church, where the church is on the margins, not at the center of society. The mission field is right around us as well as around the world. We can no longer assume that everyone around us is Christian."

[53] In a later publication Guder (2017: 54-55) refers to the process of secularisation that led to "Christianity's loss of hegemony in the North Atlantic societies". This was aggravated by a serious of events during the 20th century exacerbated by people calling themselves Christian and thus resulting in Christian mission losing its credibility. These events include, two world wars, the Great depression, the Holocaust, the atheistic Russian empire, the Cold War and the military threats of mass annihilation. This coincided with the expansion of Christianity in the Southern hemisphere, while Christianity became marginal in the Northern hemisphere once defined as Christendom. Complicating matters even further for the church of the West was the rise of post-Christendom forms of church, such as a diversity of Pentecostal expressions of Christian faith.

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from a Christendom to a post-Christendom society.[54] In this post-Christendom setting two things became clear about the church: 1) The church lost its influential Christendom position and its role as chaplain of society with religion and churches increasingly being relegated to the private sphere, and 2) the church became so domesticated by the North American way of life that they can no longer claim to be particular communities. In essence: “Discipleship has been absorbed into citizenship” (Guder et al. 1998: 78). Therefore, within this post-Christendom situation, the need arose to cultivate a dialogue between the gospel and culture to find a faithful response to this challenge and to redraft the life of Christian communities from being a church with mission to being a missional church (Hunsberger & Van Gelder 1996: xvi; Guder et al. 1998: 5-6). This leads us back to Lesslie Newbigin’s (1989: 152) thought provoking concept of “challenging relevance”, with the church in the difficult position of being both faithful to its biblical calling without becoming irrelevant in its environment and relevant without neglecting its biblical calling in a particular time and place (Guder et al 1998: 79). Hence, according to Goheen (2002b: 483-484; 2010b: 76), in the context of failing Christendom, the authors of *Missional Church* identified three problems, with accompanying solutions to the challenges facing the missional calling of the church in North America. These problems and solutions can be summarised as follows:

First, they identified the reduction of the ecclesial nature of mission in favour of an individualistic emphasis on mission as cultivated by Christendom thinking. As a solution they focussed on the communal nature of the witness of the church as a community that embodies kingdom life together.

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[54] Kiefert (2006: 32-34) describes this shift as the “disestablishment” of the church happening in three phases: 1) The focus on reason and objective facts rather than religious dogma, led to the separation of church and state, i.e., the disestablishment of state religion; 2) the movement into the political and economic establishment led to the disestablishment of the cultural influence of the church; and 3) following the second World War and especially since 1965 continuing diversity in religions and religious life and practices led to the disestablishment of local churches as “folks churches” or community churches. Gibbs & Coffey (2001: 17-32) summed up the changes threatening the church as follows: The collapse in church influence, membership and attendance; the decline of mainline denominations; the growth of ‘new-paradigm’ churches that engages post-modernity and focus on a transformational message and lifestyle; and a cultural shift of seismic proportions from modernity to post-modernity. McLaren (2004: 230) believes that modernity is being replaced by a new postmodern ethos, where “Christians will have neither the dominating position they had through the Middle Ages nor the privileged position they had during much of modernity.” Other contributions to this analysis include among others Bosch (1991a), Bevans & Schroeder (2004), Hunsberger & Van Gelder (1996), Kirk (1997), Roxburgh (2005), Van Gelder (1999, 2007), Van Gelder & Zcheile (2011).

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Second, they followed Newbigin's assessment of the North American Church as a church in the throes of syncretism. A church beholden to the powers of Western culture who forgot its calling to be a critical voice against such culture. As a solution to this problem, they emphasised the role of the church as a critic of the reigning culture.

Third, they highlighted that although the Christendom era was at an end, the influence of the Christendom era was still prevalent in the church. As a solution to this problem, they stressed the church functioning as an alternative community that lives differently from their surrounding culture. They formulated this focus as a way for the church: "to define a missionary people whose witness will prophetically challenge precisely those dominant [idolatrous] patterns [of culture] as the church accepts its vocation to be an alternative community" (Guder et al. 1998:10).

3.4 A missional ecclesiology.

The notion of a missional ecclesiology, as opposed to an ecclesiocentric missiology is important in this research. It is therefore necessary to start with a synopsis of what the concept entails. The term "ecclesiology" is defined as "the study of the church" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 22). This includes the critical theological reflection on local congregations, broader expressions of church and ecumenical relationships (R.W. Nel 2013: 37). In essence, it refers to "how the church reflects the image of God" (Benade 2019: 17) in everything it does. Thus, "missional ecclesiology" implies that the church reflects a missional image of God. Or in the words of Niemandt (2012: 1):

> Ecclesiology is a theological discipline that seeks to understand and define the church, and missional ecclesiology does this from a missional point of view where the church is understood as a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ's work.

This is in line with Karl Barth's understanding of mission as sending by the Triune God – the Father sending the Son and the Father and Son sending the Spirit (Guder 1998: 4-5; Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 26). This movement is then expanded by Bosch (1991a: 390) to include the sending of the church by the Father, Son and Spirit. Consequently, the church is the one being sent and mission involves the whole church, i.e., it is "the church at work". This

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corresponds with the views of Newbigin and Bosch about the missionary nature of the church. Hence, ecclesiology is "derived from missiology" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 32-33). In the words of Bosch (1991a: 372): "Ecclesiology therefore does not precede missiology."

Consequently, what a missional congregation embodies is determined by what they believe (Benade 2019: 158). Too often, as a means to come to terms with the changing context, the conversation centred around clarifying the purpose and the strategies of the church, instead of rather beginning with the nature of the church. Addressing the changing context, the purpose and the strategies flow from the foundational nature of the church, not the other way around (Van Gelder 2007: 15-16). As stated by Niemandt (2014c: 5), "developing missional churches is much more an issue of *being* than *doing*." It is therefore important to consider the ecclesiological concepts underlining the missional movement.[55] According to Van Gelder and Zcheile (2011: 5), "what we really believe, that to which we are truly committed, is what becomes embodied in those choices that we actually make and the practices in which we engage". Put differently, in missional ecclesiology the purpose and the praxis of the missional church is determined by what the church believes. This relationship is explained by Burger (1999: 52-122; 2017b: 293) and can be summarised as follows:[56]

"Identity: Who/whose are we as church?" (2017b: 293). Identity is the core concern or foundation of the church. It is determinative for the mission of the church and how it does the work necessary to faithfully fulfil its mission and ministry.

"Mission (or calling): What are we doing here?" (2017b: 293). The church is a community with a particular calling (mission or task) within a particular context. Ideally there should be a connection between the identity of the church and its mission.

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55 Burger (2017b: 288) points out "that the mission of the church was crippled over the years in major ways by an inadequate ecclesiology." This has mainly to do with how the institutionalisation of the church were handled and how the vitality, agility and adaptability of the church as the people of the Triune God was underestimated. In the same vein Dietterich (1996: 347-362) identified the following interrelated blockages to a faithful and rich ecclesiology: Religious anti-institutionalism; the individualisation and privatisation of religion; the romanticisation of the congregation; and the distinction between the social and the religious.

56 Van Gelder (2007: 17-18) unpacked this relationship in the following way: *The church is*: The church's nature provides the framework and foundation for understanding the essential character of the church. *The church does what it is*: The nature of the church establish the foundation for understanding the purpose of the church and its ministry and determines their direction and scope. *The church organises what it does* – The ministry of the church introduces strategies and processes that require the exercise of leadership and the development of organisation within the church. Niemandt (2019: 11ff) expands on this by describing it as a circular relationship including the leadership of the church: Who is the church? What the church does? How the church organizes itself? The role of missional leadership in the church?

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"Ministry: How shall we do this work?" (2017b: 293) Ministry refers to all the activities whereby the church does what it is called to do. It refers to the methods, the strategies and the plans of action necessary to implement their mission.

Thus, what the church is doing (mission) and how it is doing it (ministry) depends on Who/Whose it is (identity), i.e., the church embodies what it believes.[57] The reciprocity between these distinctions is illustrated by the significant contribution of the GOCN in how they went further than the usual "methodological and pragmatic", church-centred focus on mission, by emphasising "a God-centred understanding of mission (m*issio Dei*)" (Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 3). Emanating from this missional understanding of ecclesiology and emphasising that mission lies at the heart of the church, Guder et al. (1998: 11-12) identified five characteristics of a missional ecclesiology for the church:

> 1) Missional ecclesiology is Biblical: it finds its authority in Scripture.
>
> 2) Missional ecclesiology is historical: it learns from the history of other ecclesiologies, as well as from the Christian church in different cultural expressions.
>
> 3) Missional ecclesiology is contextual: it incarnates itself in a specific context. It is faithful to the gospel and to its witness in a particular cultural setting. This also asks of the church to study its context very carefully to both make sure it translates the gospel truthfully for the neighbourhood in which it operates and to be aware that it does not compromise the gospel by the way it lives it out in said neighbourhood (1998: 18).
>
> 4) Missional ecclesiology is eschatological and is thus dynamic and constantly challenged by new biblical insights, new historical challenges and new cultural contexts while on the way.

[57] Burger (1999) makes certain cautionary remarks about the distinctions within this relationship. A Christian identity is threatened when coloured by other themes, e.g., race or nationality, class or position, economic divisions, a strong cultural awareness and identity and an unhealthy ecclesial and institutional focus (1999: 63-71). The calling or mission of the church is threatened by an inward focus, institutionalising, not treating the vertical and horisontal dimensions of the gospel as equally important and not taking the context and situation of the congregation into account (1999: 91-95). Ministry is usually divided as *leitourgia, kerugma, diakonia* and *koinonia* and is therefore jeopardised by focussing too much attention on only one or two of these aspects, or when the broader historical and social dynamics of the time is not effectively reckoned with (1999: 115-118).

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5) Missional ecclesiology must be converted into practice. A Missional church will equip and shape God's people for its calling.

Building on these characteristics, GOCN formulated certain "biblical and theological concepts" that informs a missional ecclesiological "imagination" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 6). In other words, it tells us what the missional church is and help us to know what the church does and how it organises what it does (Van Gelder 2007: 17). Guder et al. (1998: 3) refer to these concepts as "missiological consensus" informed by the work of Lesslie Newbigin. They serve as the "foundation for the development of the concept of missional church."[58] These five concepts, originally identified by the GOCN (Guder et al. 1998: 3-4) can be summarised and further expounded as follows.

3.4.1 The *Missio Dei*.

As explained in chapter 2 of this study, in the latter half of the 20th century the *Missio Dei* became the decisive influence underlying the theology of mission. Mission emanating from the Triune God, sending the church into the world, therefore also became the driving force in the theological work of the GOCN. This implies that mission flows from the Triune God and the church is a participating community in God's mission. Thus, the church finds its calling and nature in its sending by God into the world, while also striving to take part in God's mission (Nikolajsen 2013: 259). The object of God's mission remains "the whole of creation" (2013: 259). It is primarily for "the sake of the world" (Bosch 1991a: 392). Nonetheless, contrary to the Hoekendijk school of thought, the church continues to play an integral part in this mission. Nowhere in the work of the GOCN do we find that God's mission happens independently of the church (Nikolajsen 2013: 259). This is in line with Newbigin's view of the connection between Christ and the church in the mission of God (Guder et al. 1998: 4).

This begs the question: What then is the role of the church? What are the implications for the *missio ecclesiae* if the church finds its primary existence within the *Missio Dei,* without regressing into an ecclesiocentric view of mission? Meiring (2022: 113) explains it as follows:

- The focus of the church is not on its own survival, but always on the Triune God.

[58] See Bosch (1991: 368-389), for a comprehensive overview of an emerging missional ecclesiological consensus, moving away from the separation between church and mission to church being "seen as essentially missionary".

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- The church may never back down from its calling as an expecting community, sharing a message of hope.
- The church must live its own message of love. It must be a sign of God's Kingdom.
- The church must incarnate the gospel in the context of the community into which it is called.
- The church has a solemn duty towards creation. Mission has an ecological dimension.

Notwithstanding, when it comes to the relationship between the *Missio Dei* and the church, Bosch's (1991a: 393) cautionary words should always be observed: "It is inconceivable that we could again revert to a narrow, ecclesiocentric view of mission."

3.4.2 The centrality of the Trinity.

According to Benade (2019: 166) a trinitarian view of God is fundamental to a missional ecclesiology; something we must take seriously because it "is the Christian way of speaking about God." Starting with the Trinity in a missional ecclesiology focus the attention primarily on the sending God, the missionary God (Guder et al. 1998: 5; Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 6). Bosch (1991a: 493-494) confirms that the mission of the church is trinitarian in nature:

> It is mediating the love of God the Father who is the Parent of all people, whoever and wherever they may be. It is epiphany, the making present in the world of God the Son. It is mediating the presence of God the Spirit, who blows where He wishes, without us knowing whence He comes and whither He goes.

Emanating from discussions about the Trinity, Burger (2017b: 288-289) highlights four useful themes and what it means for ecclesiology:

"Firstly, Trinitarian theology emphasises the belief that the Christian God is a real, living God, active not only in nature but also in history" (Burger 2017b: 288). God not only initiated the universe but is still involved and active in every aspect of its life and history, as shown in the incarnation and involvement of the Son and the invitation to a new life by the Spirit.[59] This prevents us from reducing the church to an ordinary and human organisation (2017b: 289). Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 136) further highlight the importance of the Trinity engaging

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[59] According to Benade (2019: 168) this also has implications for the leadership of the church. The incarnation (*kenosis*) of Jesus reminds us of the self-sacrificial, servanthood character of the Triune God.

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in creation and culture. God created the world, calls a people to take God's vision for humanity into the world, and enters human culture through the incarnation to redeem, renew, inspire, rebuke, reconcile and "bring creation to its fulfilment" (2011: 136).[60] Put another way, the Triune God's mission encompasses "creation, care, redemption and consummation" (Hendriks 2004: 25).

"Secondly, Trinitarian Theology confesses God as a personal God who loves us, reaches out to us and invites us to a meaningful relationship with God-self" (Burger 2017b: 289). This personal relationship with the Triune God anchors us when we live our lives as disciples in God's service (2017b: 289). There is, however, the danger of this personal relationship with God-self becoming too individualistic as *Imago Dei*, instead of the more relational view of the Trinity as *Imago Trinitarias*, which leads us to a more communal and inclusive participation in mission (Van Gelder & Zcheile 2011: 108).

"Thirdly, Trinitarian theology emphasises the importance of communion or community" (Burger 2017b: 289). This is accentuated by the rediscovery of *perichoresis* (2017b: 289), "or interpenetration, among the persons of the Trinity (which) reveals the nature of God is communion" (Guder et al. 1998: 82). If this community (*koinonia*) is part of the nature of God, then it must also be part of our lives together in local congregations and our ecumenical relationships. The Trinity not only leads us to think differently about God, but also about ourselves (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 298). In the words of Benade (2019: 167): "In a context where people are objectified, isolated and lonely, the local church becomes a loving community that embodies the love of God in their internal and external relations". Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 105) further expands *perichoresis* and communion (*koinonia*) with love reaching out (*ekstasis*) from the Trinity. This relational, interdependent community and love of the Trinity is always outgoing. Consequently, "in this trinitarian perspective, to be a person is to participate in others' lives, to have an identity shaped by other persons, rather to be an isolated individual" (2011: 105). In this way, the church, rooted in the Trinity, "also sees itself as a communion-in-mission" (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 298).

"Fourthly, Trinitarian theology has led us to a rediscovery of the *Missio Dei*" (Burger 2017b: 288). It reminds us that mission is not an activity of the church, but it stems from the self-

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[60] According to Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 288), the *kenosis* of the incarnation is invoked "when the church is challenged to identify closely with the peoples and cultures among whom it works."

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giving love of the Triune God. The Triune God is a relational God with the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending the Spirit and the Son sending the church (2017b: 288). In this regard, Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 106) cautions against a too narrow view of the *Missio Dei* where the church is reduced to an instrument of sending and the world a mere object of mission. In this way Newbigin's fuller vision of the church as a sign, foretaste, and instrument of the reign of God is relegated and instead of mission flowing from God, the church becomes responsible for doing mission. Consequently, the "representational dimension" (2011: 106) of mission, based in the Trinity, is neglected.

Thus, in conclusion, the centrality of the Trinity reminds the church to find its identity in its relationship with the Triune God; it is called to participate in the work of Jesus Christ; and it does its work of ministry in connection with and under the guidance of the Spirit (Burger 2017b: 293). It reminds the church that mission is not an ecclesiocentric event, it always remains the Triune God's mission (Conradie, Kaoma and Van Schalkwyk 2016: 110).

3.4.3 The Kingdom of God.[61]

The Kingdom of God is at the centre of Jesus' whole ministry (Bosch 1991a: 31). It is also vital to the "deepest identity" of the church (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 321). Therefore, according to Guder et al. (1998: 10), "any responsible missional ecclesiology must be centred on the hope, the message, and the demonstration of the inbreaking reign of God in Jesus Christ." Although it is difficult to define Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God, Bosch (1991a: 32-34) highlights at least three aspects of the Kingdom from his teachings and ministry.

- Jesus made the distinction between that aspects of the Kingdom that is already present (the *already*) and that aspects of the Kingdom that is yet to come (the *not yet*) (1991a: 32). This distinction is evident from Jesus announcing in Mark 1: 15 and Matthew 4: 17 that in Him the Kingdom has arrived, while also teaching his disciples in the Lord's Prayer to pray for the coming of the Kingdom. To resolve this tension, Christians has either pushed the *not yet* to the margins of church life, consequently reducing the Kingdom to "the ideal moral order" (1991a: 32), or at the other extreme, proclaimed "only a future

[61] "Kingdom of God" and "Reign of God" are two terms referring to the same concept. For the sake of uniformity, "Kingdom of God" will be used in this thesis. Ayre and Conradie (2016) prefer to use the term "God's Household" to refer to the Kingdom of God, because it is more inclusive and extends beyond the boundaries of the institutional church to also include the whole of creation.

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coming of the Kingdom" (1991a: 32). Rather than perpetuating this tension, Bosch (1991a: 32) concludes, "it is precisely in this creative tension that the reality of God's reign has significance for our contemporary mission."

- The Kingdom arrives every time when Jesus overcomes all powers of evil, such as "pain, sickness, death, demon-possession, personal sin and immortality, the loveless self-righteousness of those who proclaim to know God, the maintaining of special class privileges, the brokenness of human relationships" (Bosch 1991a: 32-33). As such, mission done from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, is about transformation and liberation (Bevan & Schroeder 2004: 317).
- Jesus confirms that the Kingdom is intended for the outcasts and the victims of society by always reaching out to those on the margins of society. As such, Jesus validated that the Kingdom of God has a spiritual and a social dimension (Bosch 1991a: 34).

Flowing from this, it is important to examine the relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God.[62] Guder et al. (1998: 93-96) points out how this relationship was obfuscated by describing the church's role in unbiblical terms such as "building", "establishing", "extending" or "growing" the Kingdom of God. Not only do these words entrench a Christendom heritage of power and privilege, but it also reduces the Kingdom to a project that must be created or achieved. When speaking about the Kingdom, New Testament references to the Kingdom as being "received", "entered into" or "inherited" would rather suffice. Thus, in New Testament terms the Kingdom is a gift received in the present and inherited in the future. In line with this view of the Kingdom, Bosch (1991a: 32), Guder et al. (1998: 98) and Keifert (2006: 37) warns against the church either being understood as synonymous with the Kingdom of God or as the body whose task it is to merely extend the Kingdom of God. The church is not the guardian of the Kingdom, nor is the Kingdom something that can be achieved or enlarged by the church. The church is always in a position of dependence on the Kingdom and in service of the Kingdom. At the same time, the Kingdom of God must never be separated from the church. The church, although not exclusively, is the

[62] The relationship between the church and the Kingdom of God is indeed a complex one. It is influenced by denominational differences, various theological schools of thought and of course by the relationship between the church and society, culture, state, civil society and various other sectors of society. For an overview of the complexities, the different schools of thought and an African perspective on this topic, see Fischer (2013).

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place where the values and the features of the Kingdom are expressed (Guder et al. 1998: 99). Hence, there is a tension between the Kingdom and the church, but also a deep connection. They must not be confused or to closely identified and most certainly not separated (Newbigin 1980: 19). As Kiefert (2006: 37) phrased it:

> The reign of God is far more than the church, though of course the church continuously experiences the breaking in of the reign of God. Imagine the reign of God as the space and time, will and movement of God that is at hand (but not in hand), that is present and creating the church but always more than, and even at times over against, the church and culture.

Bosch (1991a: 374) explains the relationship between the church and the Kingdom as follows: "Even if there is an unbridgeable difference between the church and its destination – the reign of God – it is called to flesh out, already in the here and now, something of the conditions which are to prevail in God's reign." According to Guder et al. (1998: 100-101), the way the church fleshes out the conditions of God's Kingdom in the here and now, is by being *representatives* of the Kingdom of God. Viewed in this way, the whole life of the church becomes missional but without being an end in itself. The Kingdom extends to the ends of the earth with the church as the instrument of God's mission in the world (Conradie, Kaoma and Van Schalkwyk 2016: 99, 109). The church represents the Kingdom of God as its sign, foretaste, agent and instrument of that which is yet to come. As such, the church is not the Kingdom of God, it does not hold itself up as the example to follow, it always points away from itself, beyond itself to the *already* and the *not yet* and it proclaims, do not follow us, but rather "let us follow Him" (Bosch 1991a: 376). It is not in itself the Kingdom of God but is does point towards it (Barth 1962: 844). "It displays to humanity a glimmer of God's reign – a kingdom of reconciliation, peace and new life" (Bosch 1991a: 377).

In the same vein, as representatives of the Kingdom the church ought to work against injustice, poverty, and every type of brokenness that has invaded our world (Sheridan 2012: 12). At the centre of the church's ministry is "Jesus' kingdom ministry of healing, forgiveness and inclusion" (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 319). It does this through its life together as an alternative community displaying Kingdom values, as a servant through its deeds of compassion and solidarity in the world and as a messenger of the Kingdom proclaiming the

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presence of God and the coming reign of God (Guder et al. 1998: 102-109; Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 5).

In sum: We are called to be “kingdom people”, not “church people” (Bosch 1991a: 378). Such calling to be “Kingdom people” and not “church people” implies that being representatives or instruments of the Kingdom is not restricted to the church. A representative or instrument (Christian witness) of the Kingdom is focused on God’s work, not on the church (1991a: 378). Kingdom people “see themselves as God’s instruments to establish God’s reign everywhere in society” (Conradie, Kaoma & Van Schalkwyk 2016: 102).

3.4.4 The church as hermeneutic of the gospel.

Newbigin (1989: 227) writes, “the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it.” In the same manner, Guder et al. (1998: 142) state that “missional communities are called to represent the compassion, justice and peace of the reign of God.” The missional congregation is not a passive partner in God’s mission (*Missio Dei*) to the world. Being a hermeneutic of the gospel is at the heart of the missional congregation (Benade 2019: 188). Hunsberger (1996: 296) describes this task of the missional congregation as two interlinking dialogues. Firstly, since we are all products of our culture, the gospel meets the culture inside of us, in an inner dialogue. Then, secondly, we become the hermeneutic of the gospel in dialogue with others in our culture. We display the Kingdom of God, we make an alternative view of life visible, we demonstrate the gospel through our “lived, daily-life experience” (1996: 296). This is confirmed by Brownson (1996) when he advocates for “speaking the truth in love” (1996: 228) as an element of a missional hermeneutic. Brownson explains, “*how* we speak is as important to our missional vocation as *what* we speak” (1996: 258). This is evident through our lives and “through the convergence of word and deed” (1996: 259).[63]

These interlinking dialogues implies a *process of discernment*. Before the faith community, through their daily lives, can participate in God’s mission they first need to discern God’s will for their reality. They do this by engaging in a communal discernment and decision-making

[63] This relates to what Bevans and Schroeder (2004: 348-359) termed as “prophetic dialogue”. The church, as communion-in-mission in accordance with the Triune God, proceed in *dialogue* and humble service to the world. It is also committed to *prophetic* dialogue, speaking out always and everywhere. It must have a willingness to “let go” before it “speaks out” in witness and proclamation.

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process in order to both understand their mission and how they are called to embody this mission in their context (Van Gelder 2007: 107). Hendriks (2004: 30-33) calls this the "…hermeneutical, correlational way of doing theology…" (2004: 33), i.e., a hermeneutical process of discernment between the Triune God, Scripture, the faith community and their context in order for the community to be a faithful hermeneutic of the gospel.[64]

At this point it is important to emphasise the *representational* character of the community. As a partner in God's mission, the church actively represents and participates in God's life and in the life of the world. The church should never be reduced to a mere instrumental or goal-oriented entity (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 107). It serves as the hermeneutical "key to God's wider purposes for humanity" (2011: 107). The community, in their life together is called to embody the Kingdom of God (Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 5). In its communal life is serves as a foretaste that demonstrates what "life renewed by the gospel looks like" (Sheridan 2010: 12).[65] Thus, the church as a community of believers, especially in the post-Christendom context, is called to be a hermeneutic, an interpreter and a representative of the gospel in its local context, i.e., it is the local-church-in-mission, "everywhere in the world" (Bosch 1991a: 378). [66]

The congregation as a hermeneutic of the gospel should also take note of the concept of *reciprocity* (Van Gelder 2007: 62, 64, 102). Reciprocity occurs when a group brings the gospel into a specific context and is over time changed by those who received the gospel. Because of the "inherent translatability" (2007: 62) of the gospel into different cultures, the language, thought patterns and worldviews of the recipient culture give rise to new understandings of the truths of the gospel. In the same way as the gospel, the church is also inherently

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[64] The "hermeneutical or correlational way" should be expressed in at least five levels of action: at a personal level, an ecclesiastical level, the level of secular society, at a scientific level and at the ecological level (Hendriks 2004: 33).

[65] Hendriks (2004: 27) describes this as a "dynamic relationship between the missional God and a responsive community; a relationship that implies action." Minatrea (2004: 20-25) defines this implied action as eight passions the missional church strives to accomplish every day, namely: worship, obey, serve, share, embrace, invite, equip and empower.

[66] Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 143) invokes five themes, originally identified by George Hunsberger, to guide the church as a public hermeneutic of the gospel: 1) A spirit of companionship while walking with others in the world; 2) the church must be aware of its limitations and be humble in its truth telling; 3) Christians must accept and affirm particularity in discourse by owning the personal character of Christian knowledge; 4) Christians must have courage in public action and embody the change they are advocating for; and 5) they must keep an eye on the horison of God's promised future.

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translatable in every place and setting and thus, susceptible to a new understanding of itself. Subsequently, these new understandings reshape and broaden the Christianity in the original culture. Hence, the congregation as a hermeneutic of the gospel, should be aware and open to being changed and enriched by their interaction with their surrounding culture.

To summarise, building on the work of New Testament scholar NT Wright, Marius Nel (2017: 301-303) identifies five important stages for the church as a hermeneutic of the gospel, participating in the *Missio Dei*: 1) The church must remember "it is an active participant in God's story", while also being "culturally relevant and contextually appropriate" (2017: 301); 2) while participating, the church needs to remember that the crisis "is not creation itself", but sin and death which affected creation. Therefore, salvation is "multidimensional" and not just about saving individuals (2017: 302); 3) participation in the *Missio Dei* should always be "with others", i.e., marginal voices and different perspectives (2017: 302); 4) do not get stuck in our own version of Christianity but allow for different ways of living faithfully that will challenge and enrich our participation; and 5) "a clear focus on faith communities" where communion with God and others (multicultural and socio-economic) are experienced (2017: 303).

3.4.5 The church as alternative community.

The missional church is often described as an alternative or contrast community with beliefs and practices setting it apart from the particular culture in which it is found. According to Goheen (2002b: 483) this counter-cultural description of the church was in reaction to the influence of Christendom, which led to the church losing "its sense of being a distinct community embodying an alternative story." Gibbs and Coffey (2001: 33) confirms this danger:

> … we are often unaware of the extent to which our culture influences our thinking, attitudes and actions. No theological tradition is immune to the influence of culture. Every person, to a greater or lesser extent, is shaped by his or her own cultural context.

Guder et al. (1998: 10) adopted the metaphor of the church as alternative community to challenge these dominant cultural influences in North America. They emphasised that a

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church beholden to the dominant culture easily lose its ability to critique the powers of such culture:

> Whenever the church has a vested interest in the status quo - politically, economically, socially - it can easily be captivated by the powers, the institutions, the spirits and the authorities of the world. And whenever the church becomes captivated by the powers, it loses the ability to identify and name evil. (1998: 113).

Hence, Barrett (2004: 74-83) defines the missional church as a contrast community, "different from the world because they are modelling themselves on Jesus Christ, rather than on the world's heroes" (2004: 75). It is a community that raises questions and wrestles with "cultural captivity" and the "ethical and structural implications of its missional vocation" (2004: 74) within the world. It does this by being present with the poor in a materialistic world, with generosity in a greedy world, by committing to community in an individualistic world, by ministering to those on the margins, by being a public witness of the gospel and sharing in the suffering of Christ. Guder et al. (1998: 120) highlights the missional church expressing itself by having an alternative vocabulary, an alternative economics and an alternative view of power. Dames (2007: 36) points out that if the missional church aims to be an alternative community it must adopt a critical approach towards the surrounding context, while Conradie, Kaoma and Van Schalkwyk (2016) stress the importance of inclusive fellowship for the witness of the church. Where the church is beset by divisions, it is a powerful witness when the church as alternative community embodies a "fellowship across the divides of race, class and sexual orientation" (2016: 98).

Thus far the antithetical and critical dimension of the alternative community against cultural domestication and assimilation was emphasised. However, according to Goheen (2002b: 486) the alternative community also has a formative influence on culture that needs to be stressed. In line with Newbigin's (1978: 150) view of the church highlighting both "the divine good" in culture and "the divine purpose which judges it", Goheen (2002b: 486) points towards the dual task of the church as alternative community, namely that of "solidarity and separation; affirmative involvement and critical challenge; cultural development and antithesis."[67] Hall

[67] This view is expanded by Newbigin (1986: 20) as he states that the church "cannot without guilt absolve itself from the responsibility, where it sees the possibility, of seeking to shape the public life of nations and the global ordering of industry and commerce in the light of the Christian faith."

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(1996: 198-213), goes further by arguing for the intentional disentanglement of the church from the claims of the dominant culture. It is essential for the church to first distinguish itself from the assumptions, values and pursuits of the culture, to eventually engage with that same culture in a meaningful way. It is only within this dynamic of separation and solidarity that the church will be able to bring the good news to its cultural scene. However, considering that the redemption of our world is always the main aim, disentanglement should not be confused with the abandonment of said culture. There is only one reason to extricate ourselves from culture and that is to serve that same culture more faithfully.[68] As Hall (1999: 79) phrased it:

> … we must distance ourselves from our dominant society sufficiently to achieve a new and meaningful proximity to it. This must be a proximity of true friends and not mere flatterers, comforters, or in-house priests.

This image of an alternative community with a dual purpose is compelling, however it is necessary to make some cautionary remarks. To avoid being "captivated by the powers" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 142), the church can easily move away from its dual calling and isolate itself from its surrounding culture, i.e., "isolating itself from the competing values of the secular world" (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 142). In the same vein, it is possible for the church, especially in a dominant cultural situation to view itself as culturally neutral or outside of culture. Guder et al. (1998: 113-114) points out that culture is often related to national identity or ethnicity. In a context of many cultures or ethnicities, those in minority cultures function *biculturally*, i.e., they function in their primary culture and in the dominant culture. Usually, those people functioning in the dominant culture, e.g., White people in the USA, believe in the neutrality of culture. The dominant culture creates the illusion of neutrality. However, there is no such thing as cultural neutrality or a cultureless gospel. The message of the Kingdom of God is always communicated within the cultural confines of a specific time and place. In this sense the church as an alternative community is bicultural. It operates within a distinctive culture, while living and communicating according to the values, practices and ethics of the gospel.

[68] This dual identity of the church as alternative community is also confirmed by Bosch (1991: 373-374) as the church's "ex-centric" position. It is an integral part of the constitution of the church to be "called out" of the world and sent back into the world.

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On the other hand, in a situation where the church represents a minority amid a dominant cultural setting, e.g., predominantly White churches in South Africa, being an alternative community can easily be misconstrued to protect the interests of the minority. The alternative community then becomes an enclave or ghetto where the Christian identity is coloured by other considerations, such as tradition, ethnicity, nationality or extreme cultural awareness. As such, its missional vocation is threatened by an inward focus (Burger 1999: 63, 91).[69] As Hall (1999: 75) puts it: "The church that prides itself on its great distinctiveness has mistaken election for a tawdry version of elitism." This is what Newbigin (1978: 163) termed the dangers of "irrelevance" and "syncretism." In the words of Goheen (2002b: 486):

> The urgent question for the mission of the church in the public life of culture is how it can be an alternative community that is critical of the idolatrous status quo without becoming a ghetto or parallel community that attempts to withdraw from culture.

Therefore, it will be wise to take Bevan's (1999: 151) words seriously. He points out that it is the task of the church to unmask the idolatries in the culture and confront it with the truths of the gospel. Then he cautions that such unmasking should not only be limited to the culture outside of the church but must also include the culture inside the church. Only then will the truths of the gospel bear fruit.

A discussion on the church as alternative community will not be complete without the contribution of David Bosch (1975; 1982). He helps us to understand the significance of the church as alternative community towards society, precisely because it is "a uniquely separate community" (1982: 8). According to Bosch the church is called to challenge the world and its values. However, sometimes the opposite happens when the church copies society. This can take on many forms, for example in South Africa where the White Afrikaans Reformed churches conformed to racial and cultural distinctiveness (1982: 9). Unpacking this concept of the church as alternative, separate community, Bosch (1975, 1982) identifies four Jewish groups from the time of Jesus' ministry The first group is the *Sadducees* and *Herodians* who followed a theology of the status quo towards the Roman empire, resulting in them maintaining the status quo. The second group is the *Pharisees*, which Bosch describes as the

[69] For an analysis of this happening in Post-apartheid South Africa among the minority White Afrikaner population, see Van der Westhuizen (2016).

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pietists of their day. They had a religious focus and steered away from the politics of their day. The third group was the *Essenes* who withdrew into a secluded community, waiting for the final judgement of God. They practiced a theology of the ghetto. The fourth group was the *Zealots*. They practiced a theology of revolution and stood up against the Roman forces. Although these four groups, manifesting as conformity to the status quo, pietism, ascetism and revolution are still the available options to the church, Bosch points out that the Zealots are probably the group Jesus was the closest to. However, it needs to be clarified that Bosch argues for the position of the Zealots within the confines of the nonviolent Jesus-way. This implies that the church cannot, for example withdraw from society or collaborate with an unjust system. Hence, according to Van Wyngaard (2013) Bosch defined the church as alternative community as the body who should do that which no other institution or group does, while embodying that which makes it distinguishable. The church needs to reflect the alternative community it envisions in its life and structures, otherwise it will have no effect in society. As such, "there can be no formative influence on society without a church which already lives from the values to which it calls society, thus a church as an alternative community which engages society" (2013: 7).

The question arises however: how does a congregation reflect the alternative community it envisions within a segregated society like South Africa? Meaning, how does a church that envisions a reconciled and diverse community, reflect such a community when segregation perpetuates the differences between people? Put differently, if a congregation is situated in a White, privileged area, how does it embody a distinguishable alternative, diverse community that will be a formative influence on the community surrounding it?

Nonetheless, the church shares in the culture(s) of its surrounding communities (Guder et al. 1998: 113-114). Within this space the church as an alternative community should play a developmental role (Goheen 2002b: 486), as well as look beyond culture and share the "creative, redemptive and reconciling" values of the Triune God (Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 142). Thus, in the church as alternative community there always exists a "creative tension" (Bosch 1991a: 381) or "painful tension" (Newbigin 1989: 188) between the church living in a specific culture and engaging with the culture but without being controlled or assimilated by the culture, while also challenging the culture and pointing the culture towards the Kingdom of God (Guder 1998: 114).

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3.5 Key arguments for missional churches.

In the wake of the discussion on the roots of the missional movement and the ecclesiology underlying the missional agenda, a few concluding remarks about the key arguments for missional churches will suffice. According to Guder (2017: 56), the inherited legacy of Christendom led to GOCN focussing their work on the following questions: “What is the gospel? What is the task of the church? How shall that task be carried out in the rapidly changing context of Western Christendom?” Discussions and consultations based on these questions culminated in six movements (recognised by Van Gelder & Zscheile 2011: 49-52) that can be identified as the key arguments for missional churches. Kiefert’s (2017: 84-87) way of capturing these movements is worth quoting at length:

> Movement 1: The church in North America is functioning in a dramatically changed context. During the 20th century, Christendom gradually crumbled and the church became less important in people lives. This cultural change requires analysis and adaptive change.
>
> Movement 2: The good news of the gospel announced by Jesus Christ as the reign of God needs to shape the identity of the missional church. The *Missio Dei*, where the Triune God invites the church into God’s mission in the world, shapes the identity of the church.
>
> Movement 3: The missional church with its identity rooted in the reign of God must live as an alternative community in the world. The church, as the holy priesthood representing the reign of God, live according to a different system of power and economics than the world.
>
> Movement 4: The missional church needs to understand that the Holy Spirit cultivates communities that represent the reign of God. The Spirit enables and empowers the church to participate in God’s mission.
>
> Movement 5: The missional church is to be led by missional leadership that focuses on equipping all of God’s people for mission. It is a movement away from increasing institutionalised and professionalised leadership to an awareness that all people share in God’s call.

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Movement 6: The missional church needs to develop missional structures for shaping its life and ministry, as well as practice missional connectedness within the larger church. The movement is not anti-institutional, but as congregations change to become more missional in their local contexts, so does the various structures enabling it to be more apostolic, catholic, holy and one.

3.6 Key patterns of missional congregations.

Flowing from the discussions and resulting publications by GOCN, questions arose about the application of said movements and theological emphasis in the life and practices of the congregation. After further research in churches with a missional ethos GOCN developed key practices for missional congregations, or "patterns of missional faithfulness" that underlies missional congregations and aim to encourage missional change in congregations (Guder 2017: 58). Since the work done by GOCN, a diverse set of practices pursuing what it means to be a missional congregation emerged within the missional movement.[70] However, most of them agree with the practices identified by GOCN (Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 4). Emanating from the work done by GOCN and subsequent research done in congregations, Barret, et al. (2004) originally identified twelve key indicators of a missional church. Hobbs' (2004: 160-161) summary of these indicators and what it looks like is worth quoting at length:

1) The missional church proclaims the gospel: The story of God's salvation is faithfully repeated in a multitude of different ways.

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[70] For example: Hendrick (1996: 298-307) identifies six characteristics of missional congregations: 1) They will understand that they exist in a cross-cultural situation; 2) they will enter into dialogue with their context and culture; 3) they will provide opportunities for their members to reflect on culture form a biblical view; 4) they will pray for and seek for their own transformation; 5) they will accept the marginal position in which they find themselves; and 6) they will bear witness in their social and cultural situation. Guder et al. (1998: 142-268) focused on cultivating communities of the Holy Spirit, the role of missional leadership, congregational structures and the ecumenical relationships of the church. Van Gelder and Zscheile (2011: 147-166) describes a missional congregation according to its congregational practices, leadership, structures, the starting of new congregations and the renewal of existing congregations. Minatrea (2004: 27-139) relate nine practices of missional churches: They have a threshold for membership; they aim to be real, not real religious; they teach to obey rather than to know; they rewrite worship every week; they live apostolically; they expect to change the world; they order actions according to purpose; they measure growth by capacity to release, not retain; and they place Kingdom concerns first. Burns (2017: 354-371) uses the term "holy habits" to refer to missional practices. These include, dwelling in the Word, dwelling in the world, announcing the Kingdom, hospitality and community spiritual discernment.

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2) The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus: The disciples' identity is held by all; growth in discipleship is expected of all.

3) The Bible is normative in this church's life: The church is reading the Bible together to learn what it can learn nowhere else - God's good and gracious intent for all creation, the salvation mystery and the identity and purpose of life together.

4) The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of its Lord: In its corporate life and public witness, the church is consciously seeking to conform to its Lord instead of the multitude of cultures in which it finds itself.

5) The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all of its members: The church has made "mission" its priority, and in overt and communal ways is seeking to be and do "what God is calling us to know, be, and do".

6) A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave towards one another: Acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of one another, both in the church and in the locale, characterise the generosity of the community.

7) It is a community that practices reconciliation: The church community is moving beyond homogeneity towards a more heterogeneous community in its racial, ethnic, age, gender and socioeconomic makeup.

8) People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love: Substantial time is spent with one another for the purpose of watching over one another in love.

9) The church practices hospitality: Welcoming the stranger into the midst of the community plays a central role.

10) Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future: There is significant

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and meaningful engagement in communal worship of God, reflecting appropriately and addressing the culture of those who worship together.

11) This community has a vital public witness: The church makes an observable impact that contributes to the transformation of life, society, and human relationships.

12) There is a recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God: There is a widely held perception that this church is going somewhere - and that somewhere is a more faithfully lived life in the reign of God.

These indicators played an important role in the development of missional congregations. However, they are not meant to feature as a model for the perfect missional congregation but rather as a guideline, an encouragement and a motivation for congregations seeking to become missional. As pointed out by Hobbs (2004: 156): "The indicators were expressly not intended to serve as tests or gauges or measures of the missional character of any given church." As such, they aim to answer the question, how would you identify a missional congregation if you saw one?

After studying different congregations using the original twelve indicators, it was revised and condensed into eight patterns which serves as guidelines nurturing a missional imagination (Barret, et al. 2004: xi). Although these patterns were identified in North American churches participating in the *Missio Dei*, they became an important interlocutor in the South African missional conversation (Smith 2021: 64). These eight patterns are: Missional vocation; Biblical formation and discipleship; taking risks as a contrast community; practices that demonstrate God's intent for the world; worship as public witness; dependence on the Holy Spirit; pointing towards the reign of God; and missional authority (Barrett et al., 2004: xii-xiv). To this day these eight patterns are used with a Likert-scale to evaluate a congregation's progress towards missional faithfulness in the South African missional process (Cordier, G., ed. 2020: 45-48). I will come back to it later in this study, but at this stage it will suffice to point out that indicator seven, highlighting reconciliation as a missional pattern, does not feature as a key pattern in the South African missional discourse.

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3.7 Reflections on the way forward.

Building on the work of the GOCN the missional movement further expanded within different, geographical, denominational, ecclesiastical and theological traditions to include different ways to be a faithful missional church today (Goheen 2010b: 78).[71] Consequently, the missional conversation was enhanced by a diverse set of contributions that table themes that warrants further consideration. It will suffice to simply mention some of these contributions. I will do this chronologically to give one a feeling of how these contributions developed over time.

Falling back on Newbigin's insights, Goheen (2010b: 80-83) highlights four issues that needs attention: 1) The nature of the *Missio Dei* with special focus on the role of the church in God's mission; 2) the Christology underlying ecclesiological discussion, i.e., going further than Jesus' earthly ministry to also include the church's connection with Jesus' death and resurrection, the historical Jesus and eschatology; 3) the church in both its gathered (for certain activities) and scattered (during the week, in the world) form; and 4) a more robust understanding of contextualisation.

Sheridan (2012: 109-120), emphasises six issues that needs to be addressed: 1) Clarification on the *Missio Dei* in the wake of Hoekendijk's continuing influence; 2) the distinction between the gathered and scattered church as a helpful way for the church to move beyond four false dichotomies, namely the church as an incarnational versus attractional community, an institutional versus a missional community, the dichotomy between the sacred and secular spheres when gathered for corporate worship and between centrifugal and centripetal mission; 3) a renewed focus on contextualisation in the relationship between gospel and culture; 4) the broader understanding of the gospel makes worldview studies and an understanding of global issues important; 5) to prevent misunderstanding, the distinction between what the church does, its activities, and how it organises what it does needs to be clarified; and 6) certain biblical – theological issues needs to be refined, for example, the relationship between the Kingdom of God and the church, the incarnation as the starting point of missional expression and the nature of the gospel.

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[71] Other branches of the missional movement that built on the theological and ecclesiological foundations of GOCN includes the Fresh Expressions initiative in the UK and the Emerging Church Movement in the USA.

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Based on a review of missional literature, Sheridan (2012: 103-109) and Sheridan and Hendriks (2013: 6-12) concluded that there are six diverse contributions which are further shaping the missional conversation and need some additional exploration. These are summarised as follows:

1. "Incarnational ministry" (2012: 104; 2013: 6): This refers to a position where the incarnation of Christ is taken as the theological starting point for considerations on the mission and ecclesiology of the church.

2. "Contextualisation" (2012: 104; 2013: 7): Most of the reflections on the relationship between the gospel and culture was centred around issues of ecclesiology. Therefore, the challenge to understand the "cultural story" of our environment and the contextualising of the gospel in local communities, while avoiding syncretism, needs some further thought. After all, the urgency of mission is linked to context (Bevans & Schroeder 2004: 31). Hendriks (2004: 27-28) highlights the interconnectedness of today's world. Therefore, contextualisation should include both the local and the global realities that influence the hearts and minds of believers.

3. "Biblical-theological orientation" (2012: 105; 2013: 7): While the biblical – theological scene was mostly set by GOCN and the *Missional Church* book, a continuing cogitation is now needed about the missional nature and various ecclesiologies in the different confessional and theological traditions within Christianity.

4. "Organisational change models and communal discernment" (2012: 107; 2013: 10): This refers to the methods of communal discernment, processes and organisational models of change necessary for the transition and renewal of congregations to embody missional practices in their local contexts.

5. "Missional leadership" (2012: 108; 2013: 10): The missional movement needs to further reflect on the attributes and uniqueness of missional leadership required to lead a missional congregation and equip its members for discipleship.

6. "Missional practices and empirical indicators" (2012: 108; 2013: 11): What sort of practices, patterns or indicators should be visible in a church that made the transition into a missional community?

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Writing from the Australian context, Cronshaw and Dewerse (2015) focus the attention on hospitality as an important element of mission, especially towards the voices on the margins of Western society. They emphasise missional engagement within a diverse, multicultural, post-Christendom and postmodern Australian society.

Mapping the way forward, Burger, Marais and Mouton eds. (2017: 263-421) deal with ten themes that needs further expansion: 1) Missional theology as trinitarian theology; 2) missional ecclesiology; 3) performing the *Missio Dei*: Participation in the story of God as a missional hermeneutic for congregations; 4) missional anthropology; 5) theology of creation; 6) missional leadership and theological education; 7) missional practices; 8) missional formation and discipleship; 9) missional worship; and 10) discernment.

Whereas Marais (2021: 402- 141) considers a way forward for missional ecclesiology at a time when missional ecclesial transformation is needed, especially in denominations with a more restrictive ecclesiology. Marais points out that the different levels of the ecclesial system need to be more flexible in order to be aligned with the missional vision; the adaptive and innovative nature of the missional ecclesial challenge needs to be acknowledged and embraced; and the ecclesial history and tradition is not the enemy but enhances the missional conversation. With these points in mind further reflection on the following ecclesial challenges are proposed: a theological conversation on the ecclesial imagination shaped by life in the Trinity; a thorough discussion on the re-imagining of the identity and role of the office; theological education that will properly train missional leaders; an honest engagement on the need for a missional church policy that guides churches on the missional journey; and the development of a future oriented missional discernment and decision-making process.

3.8 Conclusion.

The aim of this chapter was to give an overview of the broader missional conversation as a precursor to the discussion of the South African missional discourse in chapter 4. Therefore, the chapter started by explaining the term “missional” as integral to the nature, the intention and the practices of the church. Thus, the interconnectedness between mission and the church became apparent.

The roots of the missional church and the influential role of the Gospel and Our Culture Network was set out. GOCN can firstly be understood as a movement returning to the agenda

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of the International Missionary Council and the work of Lesslie Newbigin. Secondly, GOCN can also be understood as a movement attempting to articulate a missional ecclesiology for the post-Christendom context. Flowing from the work of GOCN and others, the tenets of a missional ecclesiology and the resulting practices for the missional church was explained. The chapter ended with a brief synopsis of contributions to the missional conversation that need further exploration. Although this synopsis is not conclusive, it is, however, remarkable that the influence of race, and Whiteness in particular, does not feature in these reflections.

Since the ground-breaking work of the GOCN in the North American context, the missional movement experienced rapid growth and quickly branched out to other parts of the world. In countries like England, Germany, Denmark, The Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand the missional conversation led to a variety of missional communities and creative ways of being church in a secular and post-Christendom context. South Africa, with its unique history and context was one of the early adopters of the missional church concept. With the broader developments in the background, the next chapter will therefore look at how the missional discourse developed in South Africa.

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CHAPTER 4: Facing missional theology in South Africa.

4.1 Introduction.

By the end of the 1980's and during the 1990's South Africa went through major cultural and political changes. Although dramatic and radical, the political transition from apartheid South Africa to democratic South Africa was relatively peaceful but, it did have a big impact.[72] In a relatively short period of time, South Africa went from a closed society with a minority government benefiting only a few to an open, democratic, human rights-based society susceptible to the influences of the wider world (Schoeman 2012: 1). Niemandt (2007: 10) describes these changes as the perfect storm that needed a new dream for a new reality. Of course, the church in general, being involved in society in different ways, could not escape these changes. In the past, churches had different views guiding their involvement in society and in some ways these views are still directing the reaction of churches in the new South African society. According to Schoeman (2012: 1-2), churches could be categorised based on their "resistance". There were those churches who were against the apartheid system and advocated for the transformation of society. On the other hand, there were the predominantly White churches who resisted the transformation in favour of maintaining the status quo. Nonetheless, with the advent of the new South Africa and the resulting changes, it was inevitable that all churches needed to look for a way forward, a new direction, a new way of being church (Pillay 2017: 38). Some chose to resist the transformation, withdrawing into a ghetto-like existence, while others embraced the transformation in search of new and relevant ways to be faithful witnesses (Niemandt 2007: 37).

Using Walter Breuggemann's insights about the Psalms as a framework, Hendriks (2009: 110-111) describes the transition in terms of *orientation, disorientation and reorientation*. For the mostly White mainline churches it was a movement from being securely orientated in the status quo to a place of utter disorientation that "has taken the form of both confession as well as shock" (2009: 110). This unsettling time of liminality, led to the question, "where do

[72] The post-1994 South Africa is not a post-apartheid society in the sense that we have dealt with apartheid and moved on to an inclusive, non-racial and equal society. The apartheid system might be over, but we are still living with the consequences of apartheid. We are still living in/with the shadows of apartheid, or in an "aftermath-apartheid".

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we turn to now?" For those churches who were open to it, a turn to God and a "missional renaissance" (Pillay 2017a: 38), led the way to a surprising reorientation. Arguing from a practical theological perspective, Dames (2013: 17) confirms the important role of missional theology in this reorientation by highlighting that missional theology "may be instrumental in fostering a holistic practical theology approach to attend to socioeconomic, cultural and environmental and political challenges – by realising the Christian witness concretely through Christian vocation."

This chapter will therefore delve into how the missional conversation unfolded in this uniquely South African landscape. The historical roots of Christian mission in South Africa, how it evolved into the current missional conversation, as well as the influence of the socio-political changes on such developments will be discussed. Thereafter, the formative role of the South African Partnership for Missional Churches (SAPMC) will be unpacked, while the third portion of the chapter will focus on the main themes addressed in the South African missional discourse. Naming these themes will give one a good indication of the main priorities and interests highlighted in South African missional theology.

4.2 The roots of the South African missional discourse.

The theological and ecclesiological roots of South African missional discourse is mostly based on the work of Lesslie Newbigin, Darrell Guder and the GOCN. The leading figure of missional theology in South Africa is probably David Bosch who published the influential *Transforming Mission* in 1991. Looking back however, it is important to frame these influences within the broader history of mission in Southern Africa.

4.2.1 A Possible fifth wave of mission.

Saayman (2007: 15-124) identified four waves to describe the history of mission in the Dutch Reformed Church.[73] The *first wave* was from 1799 to 1834 and relates to the early Dutch Reformed missionary endeavours. Mission during this time was a mixture of colonialism, a

[73] Although Saayman describes these waves as the history of mission in the DRC, it also relates to the broader historical development of mission in South Africa. It is also relevant because the DRC played such a pivotal role in the establishment and development of missional theology in South Africa. However, one must consider that different denominations have different stories in the historical development of mission in South Africa.

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conviction of being divinely called to a new land, pietism and racial tension. The *second wave* occurred between 1867 and 1939 and was the start of organised missionary work, both inside and outside South Africa. These missionary enterprises, also providing education and health, crossed borders into Central Africa as far afield as Nigeria. The *third wave*, between 1954 and 1976, transpired within the framework of Afrikaner nationalism, separate development, homogenous churches, the institutionalisation of apartheid and the end of colonial rule in many African countries. Consequently, missionary enterprise in Central Africa began to weaken in favour of a more inward focus. White South Africans crossed boundaries in their own country by entering the Black areas, providing services such as education and health as part of its missionary work. The *fourth wave* started in 1990 and focussed on mission to the ends of the earth. With the end of apartheid, the world opened for South Africa. Subsequently, many congregations, while suffering from post-apartheid disillusionment, rather focussed on mission in faraway places where they did not have to deal with African people. It is important to note that throughout these four waves of mission, missionary endeavours were mostly evangelistic in nature, while performed by White people to Black people (2007: 7). This inevitably led to the church becoming a church *for* others, but unfortunately also *without* others (2007: 131).[74]

Flowing from these four waves Benade (2019: 145-157), Benade and Niemandt (2019), Niemandt (2010), Van Niekerk (2014) and Van der Watt (2010) argue for a possible *fifth wave* in the history of mission in South Africa, i.e., the emergence of the missional movement. Benade and Niemandt (2019: 9) mention the following arguments for the emergence of the fifth wave: 1) "Contextual changes between 1994 and 2000" and the loss of power, influence and money; and 2) in terms of ecclesiology there was an identity shift from a church that engages in missionary work to a church that is missional in nature; from a Christocentric to a trinitarian theology; and a movement towards "a more holistic view of mission" that includes ecology, justice, equality and the reduction of poverty and discrimination; coupled with a movement towards involvement in local communities; plus the influence of "Mission Shaped Ministry training" and networks. Van Niekerk (2014: 4) thus describes the fifth wave as follows:

[74] Saayman's analysis fails to acknowledge the contribution of Black evangelists from such churches as the Apostolic Faith Mission, Zion Christian Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. White missionaries were not the only or necessarily the most effective missionaries.

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> The missional approach forms part of this renewed emphasis on the church's calling in the local context which can be seen, in the broader sense, as Southern Africa. In this respect too, it is different from Saayman's Fourth Wave and must be seen as an aspect of an emerging Fifth Wave, where congregations are not primarily sending missionaries to some or other mission field, but where the congregation itself is sent to its local context, where its members live and work from day to day. That is a continuation of the focus on the African context of the first three waves, but it is also a paradigm shift to a new understanding of the content and character of mission.

Although this fifth wave really came to the fore in the early 2000's, the way was already being prepared as far back as the mid 1980's and the early 1990's when scholars such as Jurgens Hendriks, Coenie Burger and Malan Nel wrote about the identity, calling and ministry of local congregations. In this regard, Benade & Niemandt (2019: 7-8) identify three movements that helped congregations discover their calling: First, it was the *"Gemeentebou (congregational development) movement"* that followed in the footsteps of the Church Growth Movement in the USA. This movement primarily focussed on personal salvation and the strengthening of koinonia in local congregations; second, was the "*congregational studies"* movement that helped congregations to be more efficient, to navigate change effectively and aimed to distance itself from the inward focus of the Church Growth Movement by focussing on evangelism and incorporating a Kingdom focus; and third was the "*missional church movement"* with its emphasis on the Trinity, the *Missio Dei* and the missionary nature of the church. The first two movements set the scene for the missional church movement that impacted the church from the early 2000's onwards. In the meantime, Nel (2019: 150-151) added a fourth movement that coincides with the missional church movement, namely, "*congregational studies in an African context"*. This movement analysed congregations in terms of their context, identity, processes and resources and aimed to integrate some of Africa's challenges, such as poverty, corruption, HIV/AIDS and economic injustice. The first three movements originated in the mainly White DRC, while the fourth movement had a wider African, ecumenical audience.

Furthermore, it is important to note the impact of a global, ecumenical shift in the understanding of mission in South African churches. Niemandt (2010: 94-95, 2014b, 2014c,

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2015a) highlights that the missional developments in South Africa are imbedded in a global missional renaissance emanating from ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches. [75] This was especially evident in two policy documents deriving from its conference in Busan, South Korea: *Together towards life – mission and evangelism in changing landscapes* and *The church: towards a common vision*. Both documents confirm that God is a sending God, the one that sent his Son to call all God's people and equip them through the work of the Holy Spirit to take part in God's mission. These developments verify the shift to a sending God with the church being invited to participate in God's sending. The *Missio Dei* became the paradigm for most Christian churches with the church becoming a servant in God's transforming mission in the world. This led to a shift from a church-centred mission to a God-centred mission that inevitably impacted South African churches.

The first time this shift towards the *Missio Dei* became apparent in the South African church landscape was probably at a workshop on mission held at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 1986. The conference was attended by representatives from several churches in the Dutch Reformed family of churches (Benade & Niemandt 2019: 6; Van der Watt 2010: 166).[76] One of the keynote speakers was David Bosch who gave a definition of mission that included a Kingdom perspective, with which "he meant God's involvement with the whole of creation, working towards comprehensive peace (*shalom*)" (Van der Watt, 2010: 166). According to Van der Watt (2010: 167) the conference eventually agreed that the churches' holistic witness (*marturia*) include the following:

> The church's mission (*mission ecclesiae*) flows from the realization that mission is first and foremost God's mission (*Missio Dei*) and that the churches' calling to a holistic witness (*marturia*) should include the following dimensions: proclaiming the Word (*kerugma*), acts/services of love (*diakonia*), the forming of a new

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[75] Pillay (2017a: 36) refers to the missional renaissance as a paradigm shift "that is changing the way the people of God think about God and the world, about what God is up to in the world and what part the people of God play in it."

[76] After debate and reflection in the wake of the 1986 conference, the Dutch Reformed Church in 1990 published the Church and Society declaration, confessing its role in providing the Biblical basis for apartheid and participating in the implementing and perpetuating of the ideology of apartheid. They also committed to actively work towards the reunification of the different churches in the Dutch Reformed Family (Van der Watt, 2010: 167). Alas, by the time of writing this thesis, reunification was still a dream deferred.

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community of love and unity (*koinonia*), the zeal for a just society (*dikaioma*) and worship (*leitourgia*).

Henceforth, the concept of the *Missio Dei* slowly but surely became the driving force in the missionary calling of the church. Regrettably, this did not immediately translate to congregations becoming missional in their local contexts. Especially during the 1990's, most congregations still saw their mission fields as somewhere in a faraway country (Van Niekerk 2014: 6). It was only in the aftermath of the democratisation of the South African society and the associated socio-political changes, that churches began to focus on their missional calling in their local communities.[77]

4.2.2 Socio-political changes.

Although the missional movement only really took off in South African churches after the publication of *Missional Church* (Guder 1998), it was the changes in the political, societal and church landscape after the first democratic election in 1994 that necessitated the conversation. According to Mouton (2017: 160-162), there are three main reasons for this development: First, much like "the rest of the western world", the mainline churches in South Africa lost its privileged position and found themselves in decline.[78] Second, "an extended era of white domination" ended in 1994 when the White community lost its political power. This especially had a profound effect on the predominantly White denominations who had to find a new way forward. Before 1994 there was a strong focus on White people being called by God to bring the gospel and civilisation to Southern Africa. [79] Whereas, the new, democratic South Africa, not only led to White people recognising their minority status within an African context, but also to White South Africans and their churches inevitably reflecting on their identity and role in South Africa (Benade & Niemandt 2019: 5-6). Third, during the apartheid era the South African society was isolated from developments in the Western world. Thus,

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[77] For a detailed description of the mission history, missional ecclesiology and the *Missio Dei* as it played out in the Afrikaans reformed churches since 1990, see Dreyer (2020).

[78] This decline in Western mainline churches is juxtaposed with the growth in non-Western churches. Especially in African Initiated Churches, Independent and Pentecostal-charismatic churches. Christianity's center has shifted to the South (Dames 2007: 39; Hendriks 2009: 109, Van der Watt 2010: 170). In the same vein, Sanneh (2003: 36) observes that "Africa has become, or is becoming, a Christian continent in cultural as well as numerical terms, while on the same scale the West has become, or is rapidly becoming a post-Christian society."

[79] For a thorough exposition of this entanglement between mission and colonialism in South Africa, see Saayman (1991: 22-35).

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post-1994, almost overnight, churches had to deal with modernity and the effects of the enlightenment, or as Mouton (2017: 161) succinctly puts it: "Christendom died overnight."[80] Niemandt (2007: 10-35) and Van der Merwe (2014: 40-57) corroborate these shifts in the South African society after apartheid era isolation but add the sudden influence of postmodernism, post-Christendom and globalisation that already occurred in other parts of the world.[81] Moreover, Niemandt (2007: 25-26, 50) highlight the unique situation in South Africa where we must deal with the paradoxes created by being in premodern, modern and postmodern paradigms simultaneously, while keeping in mind that the first two are dying out.[82] This asks for a deconstruction of Christendom and a reconstruction of Christian life in a new world.

The challenges for the predominantly White churches after 1994 were cross-culturally further exacerbated by the increasing influence of a multiracial society, the increase in dialogue that exposes ethnocentric thought patterns and leads to more openness and acceptance towards other cultures, as well as the impact of secularism (Benade and Niemandt 2019: 7). Additionally, Benade (2019: 92ff) highlights the transformation to an equal society plus the transition to a liberal democracy as two changes that especially impacted White mainline churches. The transformation to an equal society within the framework of economic policy

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80 Nieder-Heitmann (2002: 467) describes this crisis as "the demise of apartheid and the concomitant crisis for the new-Christendom - which was a syncretism of neo-Calvinist theology and the worldview and modernist social engineering - a crisis in which other forces of modernity are also making themselves felt."

81 The *pre-modern* society has a very simple worldview based on the group, tradition and absolute authority (Van der Merwe: 2014: 40). Gibbs and Coffey (2001: 26-27) describe *modernism* as "the apex of the Enlightenment … humankind in its most self-confident pose … feeling in control of its own destiny … an understanding of the world through autonomous human rationality … the confidence in self-evident, universal truths … the separation of life into public and private spheres." *Postmodernism* is a reaction against the certainty and optimism of modernism. According to Gibbs and Coffey (2001: 28—39) the term emerged after the devastation of the world wars, the Vietnam war, "the demise of empire and the rise of post-colonial shame" and the realisation that technological progress came with a "reckless disregard for the human and environmental consequences." It has been "labelled as pessimistic wishful thinking and as nihilism with a smile." It is characterised by skepticism and cynicism about objective truth and certainty, diversity and relativity, continuing creativity, the creation of meaning, it's "a world of image rather than of substance" and "the global village". Niemandt (2007: 10) describes *globalisation* as the whole world becoming one community, resulting in apparently unrelated events influencing communities. According to Benade (2019: 52) "the globalisation process was set in motion by advances in telecommunications, transport and trade and have political. technological, cultural and economic dimensions." Among others, also see Bosch (1991a), Benade (2019), Guder et al. (1998), McLaren (2007), Mouton (1999) and Niemandt (2007, 2013) for an explanation of the different eras. For an exposition of these concepts in the South African context, see Durand (2002), Nieder-Heitmann (2002), Smit (2015) and Van der Merwe (2014).

82 Gibbs and Coffey (2001: 30) confirm that "the traditional, modern and postmodern phases are not sequential but exists side by side."

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and social systems (which is still an ongoing process), led to some classified as White under apartheid feeling threatened and either emigrating inwards, into new *laagers*[83] or to other countries. After the isolation during the apartheid years, the transition to a liberal democracy with its focus on the democratisation of society and individual freedom, found fertile ground in the new South Africa. Within a short space of time, South Africans were exposed to a variety of secular, religious and philosophical traditions.[84] Added to this is significant contextual changes in post-apartheid South Africa, such as generational differences, materialistic and consumerist values, economic realities, demographical shifts and different worldviews. Within the mainline churches this led to leadership challenges, ecclesiological and spiritual differences and a decline in membership.[85]

According to Dames (2008), these changes and the accompanying apartheid legacy are also affecting Black people and the so-called Black churches, who traditionally were prophetic and transformative voices challenging the apartheid state and the colonial era of Christendom. Despite the changes, in the new South Africa, Black people "are still viewing themselves as oppressed in the workplace" and "are still faced with poverty issues" (2008: 6). Furthermore,

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[83] Term emanating from the great inland trek during the 1830's when the *Afrikaners* parked their wagons in a circle formation (laager) to protect them from dangers from the outside.

The designation *Afrikaner*, referring to a particular grouping within the South African population, needs some clarification. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the term referred to "indigenous people or the offspring of 'natives' and slaves or free blacks" until Hendrik Biebouw, in 1707, became the first person from European descent to refer to himself as an "Afrikaner", i.e., someone born in the Cape colony (Gilliomee 2003: 22). As the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries progressed however, the Dutch colonists grappled with their identity, especially after the arrival of the British settlers from the 1820's onwards. Thus, they referred to themselves as "Afrikaners", which led to the term implicitly excluding British and indigenous people. Nonetheless, from the early twentieth century, a more exclusive nationalist "Afrikaner" identity, forged around the Afrikaans language, (White) race, culture and the reformed churches was entrenched (2003: 196, 356). Since the late 1980's however, it became more difficult to frame the Afrikaners as a homogenous group. In post-apartheid South Africa, the nationalist underpinnings, the social positioning and roles of the White Afrikaans-speaking population have changed, resulting in different groupings of Afrikaans-speaking Whites (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 22).

[84] Also see Van der Merwe (2014: 58- 63) for a discussion on the influence of secularism on the South African society.

[85] In the wake of all these changes some in the minority Afrikaner community started to work publicly for the protection of Afrikaner rights and the Afrikaans language. There also emerged some resistance to change in the predominantly White Dutch Reformed Church and its predominantly White sister churches. These churches are sometimes seen as "the last social structure where the Afrikaner community was still dominant" (Benade 2019: 93). This is a throwback to Afrikaner civil religion which provided social cohesion and created a communal purpose, i.e., the calling of the Afrikaner to Africa and the associated "need for self-preservation against alien and hostile forces" (Durand 1988: 132). To be fair, some Afrikaner individuals and groupings also embraced the changes and became more involved in public life where they participate in building a more inclusive and equal society.

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the post-1994 democratic and secular society with its individualised and private worldview led to the fragmentation of African community life. This inevitably had an influence on the communal life of the church, as well as its identification with the vulnerable, the destitute, the oppressed and the poor. In the words of Dames (2008: 7): "Holistic traditional African values and practices are being lost at the expense of Western economic, technology and media dominance."

Nevertheless, the disintegration and dismantling of the apartheid era happened so fast that the ability of most churches to engage with the new socio-economic and cultural themes was unmasked and weakened (Nell 2011: 151). Consequently, according to Van der Watt (2010: 170), "these developments put many congregations … under pressure: it became a struggle just to survive or to maintain what was left of the ministry. It became clear that a new vision of identity and calling – especially of local congregations - was of utmost importance."[86]

4.2.3 South African Partnership for Missional Churches.

The growth of the missional conversation and congregational practices in post-apartheid South Africa are closely linked to the work of the SAPMC.[87] Guided by Church Innovations from St Paul, Minnesota under the leadership of Patrick Keifert, the SAPMC was started in 2004 as a partnership between ten DRC congregations, the Bureau for Continued Theological Education and Research (today Ekklesia and Communitas) at Stellenbosch University and the Partnership for Missional Churches (PMC) in the USA. As such, the development of the missional theology and ecclesiology of the SAPMC must be understood with the Western, North American context in the background (Niemandt 2010b: 399; Saayman 2010: 11).

All of Benade & Niemandt (2019: 8), Cordier (2014: 72-81), Dames (2007: 38), Marais (2017a: 65-68), Mouton (2017: 158, 166), Smith (2021: 55-56) and Van der Watt 2010: 171 emphasises that the SAPMC positioned itself as a network of congregations building missional capacities through a process of discovery, engagement, visioning, practice and growth, with

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[86] See Kruger and Van der Merwe (2017) for an inquiry into how the changing contextual and religious situation since 1994 impacted the DRC as it transitions towards the 21st century.

[87] "The term "missional" refers to the shift from a cultural church to a church that reflects and engages actively with its immediate community. "Partnership" refers to a systems approach in which networks of congregations are formed to work together (cluster) in their missional vocation" (Dames 2007:30).

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continuous sharing and mentoring throughout the process.[88] This journey played out in four phases, namely discovery, experimenting and exploring, visioning for embodiment, and learning and growing. The focus was thus less on behavioural change, worship style, leadership or organisational structure and more on deeper cultural change that takes the Triune God, the *Missio Dei* and spiritual discernment seriously. The aim was to help congregations to discover where to join God in God's mission, i.e., to have a Kingdom focus and to move from having a mission to being missional; or from a maintenance paradigm to being called by the Triune God and sent into the world.[89] At the end of the SAPMC process, as part of phase four (Learning and growing), twelve core missional capacities were identified as a way for the participating congregations to reflect, by using a Likert-scale, on their journey through the four phases (Suider-Afrikaanse Vennootskap vir Gestuurde Gemeentes 2008: 5-11). Put differently, congregations were given the opportunity to evaluate their missional embodiment in view of these core capacities. These twelve core capacities can be summarised as follows:

- Spiritual discernment. We practice spiritual discernment through Dwelling in the Word, prayer and meditation whenever we gather to make decisions.
- From maintenance to mission. We discover that we don't exist to keep Christendom intact, but that we are called and sent to a post-Christian world.
- A culture of listening. We listen intentionally to insiders and outsiders to discern what God is busy with in the community.
- See through the Christendom system. We discover that we have been formed in a Christendom paradigm that focuses on the maintenance and enforcement of the status quo rather than being sent to the world.
- Christian imagination. We purposefully use the 8 patterns (identified by Barrett et al. 2004) to build Christian imagination.

[88] "Some of the objectives and practices of SAPMC are to participate in God's mission of reconciling, restoring, and redeeming a world in need of God's grace; to engage in spiritual discernment to discover specifically how God is sending local congregations; to be congregations as mission centres for the Christian church today; and to be missional in homes, across the street and all over the world" (Dames 2008: 13).

[89] For a detailed outline of the SAPMC process, journey and methodology, see Dames (2007); Hendriks (2009); Marais (2017a); Mouton (2017: 166-170) and Smith (2021).

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- Receive and embrace the gifts God gave us. As churches, we discover and use the three main gifts (or focus areas) the community received from the Spirit.
- Confess who we are in Christ. Through the asking of God questions, we discover our new identity in Christ and confess it continually.
- Visualise new faith communities. God gives us a vision of how we can embody God's specific calling in a new faith community.
- Enter new cultures and communities. We continually risk becoming involved with-, listen to-, and learn from the people God sends us to.
- Manage our attention. Through a process of discernment, we align our time, personnel and resources with our congregational confession and vision for embodiment.
- Live as a sent community. Through a process of discernment, we develop a five-year ministry strategy around the three gifts the Spirit gave our congregation.
- Develop SMART plans. We continuously translate our next tasks and decisions into plans and keep each other accountable in a system of grace.
- Develop capacities. We cultivate a culture of learning and develop missional capacities among the staff and church members in order to embody the congregation's confession in a new faith community.

Since these earlier endeavours, a lot of research went into refining this missional journey, resulting in *In Pas met die Lewende God: Ritmes en gewoontes vir roepingsgetroue gemeentes* (In step with the Living God: rhythms and habits for congregations faithful to their calling) edited by Cordier, G. (2020), the latest practical workbook guiding congregations through the process. I will come back to this workbook in chapter seven.

The influence of the SAPMC quickly grew, especially in the DRC. Based on the work of the SAPMC, the DRC's General Synod (2013) almost unanimously accepted a policy document: *Raamwerk Dokument oor die Missionale Aard en Roeping van die NG Kerk* (Framework Document on the Missional Nature and Calling of the DRC) that sets out the structure, the polity and the character of the DRC as a missional community.[90] The document gives new

[90] For an exploration of the history, ecclesiology and impact of this document, see Benade (2019: 234-275), Burger (2017a) and Cordier (2014).

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missional insights on the identity of the church, its understanding of God, the church itself, the Kingdom of God, incarnation, missional congregations, being servants to the community, faith formation within the church, the offices of the church, church planting, liturgy, youth ministry and catechism, public witness, theological training and the church order. The missional values underlying the document can be summarised as follows: The church focuses on the Triune God; has a primary focus on the world; incarnates the gospel in the context of the local congregation; the congregation transforms the context and vice versa; the making of missional disciples; cherish relationships and unity through generosity, hospitality and love; practice a kenotic existence; and the church has a solemn duty towards creation (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, 2013). The framework document was also later converted into a more accessible book called, *Gestuur: Kerk-wees tussen Gister en Môre* (Sent: Being Church between Yesterday and Tomorrow) by Niemandt & Meiring (2014). The framework document will be further discussed in chapter seven of this study.

Reflecting on the value of the SAPMC process, Mouton (2017: 169) emphasises the importance of missional formation for all its participants: "(B)ecoming missional touches and shapes the deepest core of our being. More and more emphasis will have to be placed on appropriate missional formation." Therefore, the practical implications of the framework document were further unpacked through missional leadership formation and in numerous conferences, formational and transformational processes, journeys, retreats and working documents (as elucidated by Smith 2021).[91]

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The outcomes and importance of the SAPMC process is also reflected in the DRC changing Article 2 of the Church Order of the DRC (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 2019: 278) which states:

> Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk is deur God Drie-enig geroep om deel te neem aan die missie van God in die wêreld. Die kerk word deur die Heilige Gees opgebou om God se eer te dien en verkondig die bediening van die versoening en die heil van Christus.[92]

[91] See Smith (2021) for an examination of the pedagogy and formation of the missional church in the SAPMC.

[92] Translated as: The Dutch Reformed Church is called by the Triune God to participate in God's mission in the world. The Church is equipped by the Holy Spirit to glorify God and to proclaim the ministry of reconciliation and salvation of Christ.

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Article 2 was thus reworked to reflect and endorse the DRC's commitment to be a missional church. It confirms that the DRC is called and equipped by the Triune God to participate in the *Missio Dei*. By embracing missional theology and practice in this all-encompassing way, the DRC confirmed its aim of being a missional church who engages with its local context, culture, and society (as explained by Niemandt & Meiring 2014; Benade & Niemandt 2019: 8; Marais 2017a: 65 and Mouton 2017: 171).[93]

Although some other denominations (e.g., the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Anglican Church) also became part of the SAPMC, it was mostly active in DRC congregations. By the end of 2008, 139 congregations spread through South Africa and Namibia were involved in the transformational process of the SAPMC (Hendriks 2009: 111-112). In 2014 a few other South African mainline denominations (the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa) did however hold conferences on missional theology, ecclesiology and leadership. As a result of these developments missional theology also started to have an impact on theological education at the different seminaries (Marais 2017a: 68).[94]

Finally, Coenie Burger (2017a: 25-32) identifies various reasons why the missional conversation initiated by the SAPMC, impacts, not just the DRC but also the broader church in Southern Africa. It is valuable to quote this at length:

> 1) The missional movement has challenged us to direct the focus of our church life and congregational life on service to life outside the congregation.
>
> 2) The missional movement can help us to broaden our understanding of mission and ministry to be much more inclusive than in the past.

[93] Van Wyngaard (2020: 152) describes this as a break with Saayman's fourth wave that overlaps with the shift from apartheid South-Africa to post-apartheid South Africa. He writes: "It does not take the form of mission to the ends of the earth but has a very strong emphasis on local communities." Van der Watt (2010: 167) explains it as a shift "from institutionalisation (work done by synods or institutions for diaconal service) to the witness and the diaconate of local congregations. Congregations were again recognised to be the primary agent for service and witness."

[94] Further examples are NetAct, a network of sub-Saharan theological schools aimed at training leaders for missional congregations and post-graduate programmes in missional theology and practice (Marais 2017a: 68, Van der Watt 2010: 171).

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> 3) The rootedness of the missional movement in the Missio Dei has helped us to rediscover the reality of a living, active God in our midst.
>
> 4) This focus on the Missio Dei has forced us to pay more attention to our confession of God as the triune God of Jesus Christ.
>
> 5) The missional movement has convinced us that we will have to rethink our ecclesiology (understanding of the church) in the light of our faith in the Trinitarian God and his mission in the world.
>
> 6) The missional movement can bring new energy into the ecumenical movement.
>
> 7) We have become convinced that the missional direction of the church's life should function as a framework within which other questions should be approached and discussed.

Be that as it may, together with the positive outcomes and the new focus created by a missional imagination, it is also important to note some cautionary observations. Gordon Dames (2007: 48), who was employed as the director of SAPMC, shares that during the work of the partnership he became aware of the importance of contextualising the content and processes of the SAPMC in the South African context. However, Dames detected that the more affluent congregations struggled to cope with the contextual challenges facing South Africa. He therefore concludes:

> It became apparent that some churches, mostly in economically viable and socially affluent communities, could not make the transformational shift from maintenance (Christendom) to becoming missional communities. My personal observation is that some of these congregations may have made cosmetic changes in order to remain Christendom communities with some missional characteristics (2007: 48).

Could it be that these congregations maintain the White, middleclass, Christendom status quo by opting to engage with their surroundings on their own terms? In other words, when the congregation remains the deciding agent, deciding which boundaries to cross, how to cross it, when to cross it and how often to cross it, the status quo is perpetuated under the guise of being missional.

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Similarly, in a critical reflection on the pedagogical material produced by the SAPMC, Smith (2021: 68) found that race and reconciliation was totally ignored. One would have thought that reconciliation would've been an important missional indicator in the racialised South African context. The same shortcoming applies to the missional values underlying the framework document guiding the DRC. A missional spirituality that guides the church to racial reconciliation is therefore necessary.

In a more general sense, Burger (2017a: 32) highlights the dangers of 1) neglecting "thoughtful theological reflection"; 2) prioritising the outward ministries over the more inward ministries such as worship, biblical reflection and *koinonia*; and 3) the temptation to view missional theology as the latest silver bullet to save ailing congregations.[95]

Lastly, it is important to note that as time went by, it became clear that the transition to a missional ethos turned out to be more challenging and complicated than first expected. This seems to be a common experience in older, more established denominations, like the DRC. There are probably various reasons for this, but at least part of the problem has to do with a formulaic and restrictive ecclesiology. Specifically, an ecclesiology that is not open and flexible enough to accommodate the imaginative changes envisioned by pastors and congregations (Burger 2021a: 8). Continual thoughtful theological reflection and renewal is indeed necessary as congregations embark on the missional journey.[96]

Nonetheless, within the unique and challenging context of post-apartheid South Africa the missional movement as set out by the SAPMC and the missional framework document of the DRC helped the participating churches to assess and discern not only Whose it is, but also what it should be considering and what its priorities should be. Furthermore, it gave congregations a theological framework to look outward and focus more on their calling in their local communities.

4.3 Themes addressed in South African missional discourse.

As the missional discourse and practice in South Africa evolve, it is inevitable that additional themes become part of the conversation. These themes and the contributions thereto, reflect

[95] For the influence and impact of a missional orientation on congregational ministry in the DRC, see Schoeman (2020).

[96] See Burger, C., Marais, F. and Van der Walt, P. eds (2021) for such reflection.

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the dominant interests in the missional discourse in South Africa. This is different from a *missiological discourse* which refers more broadly to the study of the church's mission or the church's missionary activity. Therefore, the contributions in this section will deal exclusively with contributions to the *missional discourse*. Furthermore, since this research is done within the parameters of the *South African missional discourse*, the contributions will be confined to South African scholars included in publications in South Africa, Africa and elsewhere in the world. The aim is not to analyse these contributions in terms of importance, different approaches, streams of thought, to get to the crux of South African missional theology or how it differentiates from the European and North American discourse. Nonetheless, by naming these themes one will not only be able to recognise the main priorities and interests accentuated in South African missional theology, but one would also be able to identify themes that does not receive attention. Such themes and the contributors thereto will now be addressed in the form of a literature review.

4.3.1 Missional ecclesiology.

The contours of a missional ecclesiology or missional identity of the church were dealt with extensively in chapter 3. Some of South Africa's leading scholars in this regard were therefore already mentioned and will not be mentioned again in this section. It will suffice to mention that South African contributors have written extensively about the missional identity of the church, i.e., not what the church *does*, but rather what the church *is* (Niemandt 2017a: 199; 2019a: 12). A missional church is a church participating in the life of the Trinity, the *Missio Dei*, and joining the work of the Holy Spirit (Niemandt 2019a: 16-27). The church does not do mission work, the church is God's mission to the world. The church is God's people, called to participate in God's mission (Niemandt 2007a: 148). The values of such an identity include that the church is focussed on the Triune God, is incarnational and transformational, it makes disciples and is relational (Nel, M 2017: 4, Niemandt 2019a: 58). A missional ecclesiology determined by the *Missio Dei*, becomes visible through "an incarnational approach to the church; relationality in the community of believers; the role of the kingdom of God; discernment as the first act in mission; *imago Dei* and creativity; the ecclesia and local community and finally mission and ethics" (Niemandt 2012: 8). Niemandt (2013a: 30-33, 59; 2019a: 31-38) also adds that missional churches multiply, they are involved in the

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transformation of creation, they emphasise the sending of all members of the congregation, and they are contextual and inculturated.

Marius Nel (2017) describes congregations as participating in the story of God (*Missio Dei*) as a missional hermeneutic. To achieve this the missional identity is described as a movement from maintenance to mission. This is confirmed in an article called, *Van Instandhouding na Gestuurdheid – Die Buitelyne van 'n Missionale Teologie* (From maintenance to mission – the perimeters of a missional theology) by Niemandt and Claassen (2012), where this emphasis on God sending the church is described as a paradigm shift in the life and practice of congregations. In the *Framework Document on the Missional Nature and Calling of the Dutch Reformed Church*, it is described as "(T)he church's primary focus is on the world to which God has sent it, and not in the first place on itself or its survival" (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013:6).

Nell (2020), however, identifies some potential dangers in this understanding of the church as a movement from maintenance to mission. He cautions against a dualistic - either maintenance or mission - epistemology; a one-sided interpretation of the Trinity; amnesia relating to historicity and contextuality; a disregard of different types of being church; and reducing it to "new thought" in the missional movement. Nell then proposes "maintaining mission" as a more integrated, inclusive and balanced approach to maintenance and mission.

A comprehensive contribution on missional ecclesiology, *Missional Ecclesiology: Participating in the mission of the Triune God* (edited by Coenie Burger, Fredrick Marais and Pieter Van der Walt) was published in 2021. From a variety of historical, traditional, biblical and contextual angles, it explores the connection between the church's ecclesiology and its missionality in the wake of lessons learned since the introduction of missional theology in South Africa. I will come back to this publication later in this study.

A recent invaluable offering on missional ecclesiology, is Marius Nel's contribution, *Reframing: Novel metaphors for reimaging the church and the Bible* (2023). In this monograph Nel aims to renew (reframe) the mission (message and praxis) of the church by intentionally changing the root metaphor of the church and other metaphors that govern its mission, message and praxis. As such Nel renews the mission of the church by reframing the church, Scripture, the resurrection, discernment, exegesis, congregations, spiritual formation, the gospel, and unity.

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Other contributors unpacking the identity of the missional church include Hendriks (2004), Kganyapa & Kgatla (2016); M.J. Nel (2017) Niemandt (2010a, 2010b), Niemandt and Meiring 2014, Sheridan and Hendriks (2013), Tucker (2016, 2020); Van der Merwe (2011), Van der Merwe (2014) and Van Niekerk (2014).

4.3.2 Missional praxis.

After establishing the missional identity of the church, we move on to what a missional church *does*, because what the missional church *is*, determines what the missional church *does* (Niemandt 2019a: 12). In the words of Niemandt (2019a: 43), "the life of the church is determined by the very nature of the church, and that is to participate in God's mission." By participating in God's mission, the church becomes a sign and a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. Pillay (2017b) concludes that this happens when the church fulfils the role of a "transformation and change agent" (2017b: 1) in the lives of individuals and communities. More so in this world where we see increasing "poverty, violence and injustices in the world, the Christian church is called upon to embrace, engage and continue with its task of being an agent for transformation and change" (2017b: 11). Niemandt (2016a) confirms the faith community as an agent of transformation by being a "redemptive presence" (2016: 89) in the world. Linking with Willem Saayman's concept of "humanisations", he concludes that the church is invited "to participate in the liberating, healing and evangelising mission of Jesus of Nazareth, thus 'being missionary while being human'" (2016: 89) In this way the church is being transformed by the community it serves and vice versa and consequently becomes "a foretaste of redemption and reconciliation" (2016: 89) and an instrument of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The church achieves this through discernment, missional leadership and a transformative missional spirituality. Additionally, according to Niemandt (2019a: 46-53), this happens when the church functions as a community of contextually relevant disciples practicing transformative discipleship; by being a faithfully, transformative presence in its neighbourhood and community; and by shaping and transforming disciples through disciplines, habits and liturgy.

On a practical level, what a missional church does can be summarised as follows: it is a faith community that value togetherness, open and flat leadership structures, participatory membership, a willingness to take risks, less structure and more fluidity, worship emphasising

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experience and participation, awareness of justice, compassion with those in need and celebrating diversity (Niemandt 2007a: 150).

As an agent of change and transformation, the church also needs to be a prophetic voice. Sadly, according to Baron and Maponya (2020) the church in South Africa lost its prophetic voice when apartheid was abolished. The authors identified three ecclesiological imaginations among congregants as reasons for this situation: a theatrical or attractional ecclesiology, a "stokvel" or inward-looking ecclesiology that only caters for the needs of its members, and a business ecclesiology characterised by consumerism and prosperity. For the church to find its prophetic voice again calls for an ecclesiological re-imagination and re-structuring of the church as a missional church that takes the *Missio Dei* seriously.

Writing from the fold of the Baptist church, Desmond Henry (2018) highlights the essential role of the church as agents of God's mission in the real world. To achieve this, intentional habits or missional postures and practices needs to be discerningly cultivated. These include vital spirituality evidenced by communal prayer; discernment and consensus; deeply rooted fellowship; community understanding and service; grassroots evangelism; and biblical discipleship.

Whereas, White and Niemandt (2015) discusses the missional role of the Holy Spirit from a Ghanaian Pentecostal's perspective. As point of departure the trinitarian mission approach is used and then narrowed down to the missional role of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit is twofold, it convicts unbelievers of their sins and the need for Jesus Christ in their lives and it empowers believers for ministry, mission as well as personal character building.

On a practical level, Baron and Pali (2021) examines the responses of Pentecostal township congregations in the Mangaung Metro Municipality during the Covid-19 pandemic. As such the authors provide some contours for the missional role of the church and the formation and shaping of a missional ecclesiology in this context. During this time the concepts of the church, mission and coronavirus were re-imagined, while missional practice, especially regarding responsible social involvement was enhanced by ecumenical involvement. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic, as a unique challenge for the church, enhanced the missional character and praxis of the churches in the Mangaung District Municipality. Also from a Pentecostal backdrop, Resane (2021b) selected two churches, namely the Classical Pentecostal, Assemblies of God and the Neo-Charismatic (Third Wave Pentecostal) Grace Bible Church, to

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argue that Pentecostalism in South Africa has become missional in activity and indigenous in character.

Hendriks (2007a) concentrates on "the advent of missional theology and how it leads to a methodology of doing theology that ultimately engages congregational members in becoming involved in society" (2007a: 1000), especially by being agents of social development in post-apartheid South Africa. Hendriks argues that missional theology pursues a missional and practical ecclesiology that aims to form a contextually relevant church. It is thus focussed on global, local and particular issues with the intention of doing something about it. In conclusion Hendriks (2007a: 1013) summarises the tenets of a missional theology as, "the discernment that takes place in a faith community; that leads to active involvement in church and society; being a reaction to the presence of a Triune missional God; who speaks to us through Scripture and tradition; in our context; and who beckons to us from the future." Understanding missional theology as such, ideally positions the church to play a decisive role in social development in post-apartheid South Africa.

4.3.3 Missional cultural change.

To do what a missional church does, requires a cultural change in the broader church structures and in congregations. Using the insights of Everett Rogers on innovation and decision-making, Marais (2017a: 76-78) concludes that the SAPMC succeeded in creating a missional awareness (and resulting cultural change) through "knowledge on the missional vision and practices" (2017a: 77), which then led to the leadership persuading the different "decision-making bodies to adopt a missional policy" (2017a: 77). Flowing from this the implementation stage requires the "development of innovative missional practices"; a missional church order that supports the practices; and a "re-imagination of theological education" (2017: 77-78). Mouton (2017: 166-172) then outlines how such cultural changes, facilitated during the SAPMC process, impacted the DRC in the Eastern Cape and the DRC general synod, while Niemandt (2015b; 2017: 200-202) describes the cultural changes in the Highveld synod of the DRC.

Baron (2019) argues for a change where the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa (URCSA) and its members move away from being the "objects" or mere partners in mission towards a "missional consciousness" with grassroots members being "actively involved in the

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discussions, construction and shaping of the church—whether in its theology, its doctrine, or its confessions" (2019: 17).

Marais (2010a) also highlights the importance of listening to one another and to God to enhance missional cultural change, while Marais and Ellison (2014) reflect on an ethnographic contextual model to help congregations understand what they are doing and why they are doing it in order to map a new way forward.

In support of a missional ecclesiology, Niemandt, Marais, Schoeman, Van der Walt and Simpson (2018) designed a practice-oriented research process in service of faith communities. The goal thereof, is to inform and serve the process of missional transformation in congregations. In the authors' own words, "The innovate process comprises three cycles moving through four quadrants in the deployment of a missional strategy, the four quadrants being: guidance, research, design and training. This was developed along 12 movements: (1) articulate the pain, (2) clarify the question, (3) develop the prototype, (4) testing, (5) practice capacities, (6) observe patterns, (7) build a model, (8) implementation, (9) accepting into the culture, (10) describe breakthroughs, (11) support the learning community, and (12) institutional alignment" (2018: 1). During this research process, faith communities, through a process of discernment, will participate in the *Missio Dei*.

Highlighting this process of discernment in the life of missional communities, Love and Niemandt (2014), seek to learn from the Quaker tradition and practice of communal discernment. Through this process of communal discernment, the missional community will participate in the *Missio Dei* by finding its vocation in its local neighbourhood and community.

Niemandt (2013: 131-145) explains the type of leadership needed for the creation of a missional climate and cultural change in congregations and highlights the importance of trust and covenantal relationships in navigating cultural change.

In terms of cultivating transformation, Niemandt (2019a: 205-208) uses the work of Roxburgh and Romanuk to explain that congregational change should focus on the culture, not the organisation. But focussing on the congregational culture is also not enough, they must be aware of the neighbourhood and community the congregation finds itself in; accept that change takes time and happens in small steps; and that change is non-linear and unpredictable.

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Commissioned by the missional church task team of the Dutch Reformed Church, Cordier et al. (2020) wrote a practical guide to help leaders facilitate cultural change in their congregations. They identify five rhythms or best practices supported by fifteen habits which will lead to new missional life and culture in the congregation. These rhythms, implemented in congregations and practiced over time, include 1) discover and celebrate, 2) listen and discernment, 3) risk taking and experimentation, 4) clarification and focus, and 5) implementation and practice.

4.3.4 Missional leadership.

To facilitate transformation and to do what the missional church does, requires missional leadership. In the words of Niemandt (2019a: 69): "God's mission, and thus his presence in all places, can and does use the structure of organised, gifted leadership." The function of such leadership is to discern what the Holy Spirit is up to and to equip, organise and lead the faith community to partake in God's mission. Missional leadership is concentrated on relationships and transformation, specifically the transformation of people and institutions through meaningful relationships, in order to join God's mission in the world under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Niemandt 2008a: 610; 2013a: 57; 2015b: 3; 2016: 86; 2017: 202; 2019a: 72-73). As such, missional leadership is transformative leadership and is always understood to be trinitarian and pneumatological (Niemandt 2015b: 3; 2017: 203).

Niemandt (2019a: 74-83) further describes missional leadership as transformational, adaptive, organic and relational leadership in "an ever-changing world of discontinues change" (2019a: 75). As such "(I)t ignites and drives change; starting with the inner transformation of the leader, leading to the transformation of the church as well as the context wherein the church finds itself" (Niemandt 2015b: 3, 2019a: 74). Cordier and Niemandt (2015) describe missional leadership as the "the most important contributing factor towards the formation of a missional congregational culture" (2015: 4). Four roles for the minister as a cultivator of missional transformation are thus identified, namely the minister as apostle modulating a missional lifestyle; the minister as theologian and cultivator of missional language; the minister as facilitator of the process of adaptive cultural change; and the minister as spiritual director and mentor (Cordier 2014; Niemandt 2014c; Cordier and Niemandt 2015).

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Nelus Niemandt further highlights the following aspects of missional leadership: He describes the contours of missional leadership as discipleship and discernment, Biblical imagination, the art of listening and storytelling, creator of a missional climate and cultural change, developer of networks, willing to take risks, empowering and encouraging lay leadership, and embodying a missional spirituality (2008a: 613-631; 2013a: 70-192). Within a complex organisation such as the church, Niemandt (2015b, 2017a, 2019a: 120) argues for missional leadership that disrupt existing patterns, encourage novelty and act as sense makers.

Placing missional leadership within the context of missional ecclesiology, Niemandt (2016a) asserts that missional leadership is transformational, sustained by missional spirituality, based in discernment where the Bible, culture and church interact, to eventually organise and implement meaningful missional change, strategies and processes. This type of leadership is necessary in an age of complexity and accelerations, which impact the church, society and leadership itself. In this age, missional leadership recognises two types of leadership, "gatekeepers", who guard the status quo and "traders", who are innovators focused on finding creative solutions. Underlying missional leadership is spirituality that moves away from knowing and believing to hungering and thirsting and discernment that bring together church, culture and biblical narrative, within a hermeneutic of love which allows deep contextualisation (Niemandt 2019d).

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Investigating the transformative influence of missional leadership within a low-income socio-economic environment, Nell (2011) refers to *embodied leadership*, i.e., leadership that does not depend on successful models and strategies, but rests within the broken body of the vulnerable, ordinary and marginalised believers. He finds that "leadership is not only for the mighty and influential, but … is mostly about the "falling and stumbling of ordinary people" (2011: 3). Using Manuel Castell's work on the power of identity as a framework, Nell concludes for embodied leadership to flourish, the threefold challenges of power relations, collaboration and teamwork in the face of individualism and dialogical pedagogy that takes the concerns and wisdom of ordinary people seriously, needs to be addressed.

Nell (2015a) also investigated the impact of the societal changes since the end of apartheid on the leadership and congregations in a suburban circuit of the DRC in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. The societal spheres influencing the leadership of these congregations include "the economic sphere (money), the political sphere (power), the sphere of influence

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(socialisation and integration) and the sphere of commitment (values and culture)" (2015a: 290-296). In terms of the type of leadership taking up most of the time of these leaders, the distinction was made between "task leadership (pastoral care, preaching, teaching etc.) transactional leadership (management, administration, etc.) and transformational leadership (the changing of the culture of the congregation)" (2015a: 297-298). Most leaders recognised the need for transformational leadership but spend most of their time on task leadership. To explain this Nell (2015a: 289) uses Mary Douglas's *enclave theory* as a lens and concludes that a "new enclave" was taking shape in the leadership and congregations of the DRC in this suburban area.[97] The characteristics of this "new enclave" is summed up by the concepts of stabilisation (in an era of destabilisation, leaders and members are searching for new forms of stability and identity); emigration (emigrating into the enclave rather than facing "the other" and the realities of the new South Africa); and separation (again retreating into ethnic categories). To break free from the "new enclave" and the self-destructive illusion it creates, leaders and their congregations will need to "cross borders in order to be enriched and guided by the other" and "revisit the hermeneutical space of the ecumenical church in order to address societal ills in our country" (2015a: 302).

The importance of missional leadership in the South African context is emphasised by the development of a MTh programme in 2011 at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University (Nell 2015b). As a joint venture between Practical Theology, Missiology, and Ekklesia the programme serves as an ecumenical "learning community" for pastors and congregational leaders who want to build their missional and ministerial leadership capacities" (2015b: 82-83). The programme was designed according to a *hermeneutical-rhetorical* framework[98] and consists of the following six modules: 1) Congregations – their

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[97] Nell (2015: 299) describes an enclave as such: "An enclave – similar to which for instance formed around 'Afrikaner Identity' before and during apartheid – differentiates itself from other groups in order to create internal cohesion. An enclave is directed against the 'other', which could, again in the instance of historical Afrikaner identity, be seen as 'other' empires (such as the British – during the Anglo-Boer wars), 'other' races (as expressed during apartheid), 'other' languages (as exemplified during the so-called 'language movement': or 'Taalbeweging'), etc. Enclaves often operate with syndromes of anxiety (the 'black danger', or the 'red, i.e., Roman Catholic danger', etc.) and (often extreme) efforts to maintain the 'purity' of the enclave."

[98] "The hermeneutical approach has to do with the interpretation and understanding of various texts and contexts in the wider sense of the word. The rhetorical approach focuses on pathos (the character of the audience), logos (the character of the message) and ethos (the character of the messenger) and communicates that missional leadership works with certain communicative convictions regarding the gospel" (Nell 2015b: 85).

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formation, deformation and reformation. Reading the culture of a congregation and community; 2) Trinity and *Missio Dei*. The plot of the gospel. Developing a missional language; 3) The spirituality of the missional leader. The personal practice of missional faith habits; 4) Missional leadership/guidance in faith and insights from secular leadership; 5) Kingdom communities and faith formation in the community. Spiritual formation; and 6) Missional ministry integration. Developing a missional ministry of empowerment through formation. Confirming the importance of missional leadership in South Africa, Nell (2015b: 97) affirms "Developing a MTh-program for building missional leadership capacity within the post-apartheid context is part of dreaming a different world".

4.3.5 Missional formation and discipleship.

Niemandt (2019a: 87) defines discipleship in the following way: "Discipleship means following Jesus, and thus following Jesus as being called and sent … (T)o be a Christian is to be a disciple, and that implies participation in the mission of the church." Thus, the work of the church is not only to be disciples, following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, but also to form disciples under direction of the Holy Spirit. Hence, missional discipleship is a process of continuing conversion, formation and transformation (2019a: 45).

For this continuing process of transformational discipleship, one needs missional formation. According to Marais (2017b: 372-391), missional formation is a continued process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming more like Christ, for the sake of the world. Therefore, missional formation is participating in the *Missio Dei*; it is intentional; it is communal and therefore accountable; and it is liturgical. Regrettably, missional formation is also complex, because as followers of Christ we have been shaped by the dominant culture of our time, Christendom ecclesiology and our anthropology. The process of missional formation thus includes constructing safe spaces, listening and observing, identifying toxic habits and constructing containers for practices and habits towards creating new life.

Linking with the World Council of Churches, Niemandt (2016b) explores discipleship as "participating in the Triune God's life-giving mission and as being on a journey towards flourishing life" (2016b: 1). Inviting people into discipleship (i.e., evangelism) should therefore be an invitation into joy and flourishing life. But it is a different kind of joy and peace. It is about participating in the life-giving mission of the Triune God and located in the *Missio Dei*.

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It is about the Gospel message of joy, good news and life to the full. Discipleship, understood in this way is a celebration of that which is good, just, righteous, peace, dignity, generosity and a love of life. This goes against a world where consumerism and the prosperity gospel thrive, which makes discipleship counter-cultural and radical.

In an article on the radical implications of being missional in our being and doing (discipleship) Malan Nel (2017) reflects whether "we have shallowed the concept of discipleship and with it missionality, and with it the reality of membership, to become a culturally safe and comfortable belonging to a community of the "same"? And what would radical missionality entail?" (2017: 2) He concludes that missional congregations cannot escape a radical reformation. That "being missional challenges barriers of discomfort" (2017: 7).

Hancke and Verster (2013) examines the personal missional involvement of Christians in the local church. They ask: "Why are the majority of Christians in the world not missionally involved through personal witness and which factors consequently influence personal witness and missional involvement" (2013: 270)? Certain accelerators and decelerators to personal witness and missional involvement are thus considered, resulting in possible remedial strategies to enhance personal and ultimately corporate witness.

Smith and Niemandt (2022) remarked on the DRC's missional turn and the resulting shift in the understanding of discipleship. Consequently, a missional pedagogy, cultivating a transformed missional discipleship is suggested. Different aspects of such a missional pedagogy opening participants to the reality of the *Missio Trinitatis* are described, namely habitus – the plausibility structures helping people make sense of a specific (Trinitarian) way of life, habitat – the places or contexts wherein the church is called to discern God's activity, habituation – the life changing process needed to form new missional practices, and habits or rhythms of life that aid the formation of missional habits. Eight such habits or rhythms, incorporating elements of theology, questions, practices (exercises) and relationships and represented by specific symbols or icons, are then suggested as a potential missional pedagogy. This proposal for a missional pedagogy, to specifically assist in the cultivation of missional discipleship formation in the DRC, is described in more detail by Smith (2021) and in more general terms by Smith (2014).

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4.3.6 Missional spirituality.

Underlying missional identity, ecclesiology, leadership, formation and discipleship is a missional spirituality. According to Niemandt (2019a: 85-110) “authentic discipleship flows from spirituality” and “all of missional leadership (followership) revolve around spirituality” (2019a: 85). Christian spirituality revolves around the Trinity and it motivate and shape us to follow Jesus. Therefore, “Christian spirituality is missional spirituality” (2019a: 87). It is spiritual formation that equip the church to go deeper into the service of God. It is an incarnational, everyday spirituality that implies participation in the mission of the church. Although there is a personal dimension to it, missional spirituality is not an individualistic spirituality but a communal and corporate spirituality that happens in real-life settings under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Missional spirituality is transformative and starts with personal transformation; it is also a “spirituality for the road” because it is embodied in all areas of life; it is incarnational in ordinary life; it is *kenotic* (self-emptying); and should be practiced with bold humility, joy, and in worship and devotion. Furthermore, missional spirituality requires practices or habits. As Niemandt (2019a: 101) phrased it: “We need an embodied missional spirituality expressed in rich liturgies, practices and life-giving disciplines.” This is done through such habits or practices as prayer, an embodied scriptural life, hospitality, sabbath-rest, discernment and listening and a laborious joyful journey. Niemandt (2016a: 92-100) further highlights characteristics or virtues that assist “inner transformation and personal knowing” (2016a: 92). Each of these virtues has “a social, or relational dimension, as well as a personal, or emotional dimension” (2016a: 92) that helps to enhance missional spirituality. These virtues include transcendence, humanity, wisdom and knowledge, courage, justice and temperance.

Marius Nel (2013) examines one of the practices that has a profound impact on the missional transformation of congregations, namely the communal practice of *dwelling in the Word*. This refers to the “repeated communal listening to a passage of Scripture over long periods of time in order to enable a Christian community to undertake its decisions and actions in line with the biblical meta-narrative” (Nel 2013: 1). Nel finds that through this process of spiritual discernment members of local congregations began to imagine their lives lived in the presence of the triune God. It had a profound effect on the theology and practice of congregations, as well as a positive influence on the attitudes, beliefs and minimum

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knowledge base of congregants, leading to spontaneous missional activity, the discernment of a specific missionary calling, and the integration of theory and practice.

Pretorius and Niemandt (2018) reflect on helping congregational leaders and members to cultivate a missional character through the development of a missional spirituality. They work from the premise that Christian spirituality, being Trinitarian and focussed on everyday life, has everything to do with being transformational and missional. So, it is about spiritual formation to become followers of Christ through the following spiritual disciplines: Systematic reading of the Bible, to see what God sees in the ordinary, *kenosis* portrayed through hospitality, discernment together with other believers, connecting the everyday with the spiritual, rest with God and joining the table with fellow believers and others.

Van Niekerk (2019), specifically focus on missional spirituality by exploring the meanings that persons with disabilities ascribe to spirituality. Van Niekerk argues that a spirituality of vulnerability, imperfection and marginality is the primary modus of mission and humanity. In the post-Christendom era, the church should focus on mission from the margins, not on self-preservation, power and perfection. Van Niekerk concludes that "(B)oth mission and spirituality require a process of transformative reconstruction to form a missional spirituality (*missio spiritualis*), as incarnational, embodied, relational, Trinitarian, cruciform, this-worldly, diaconal and liberative – it embraces kenotic love, acknowledges imperfection and is justice orientated" (2019: vi).

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4.3.7 Missional worship.

A missional spirituality is cultivated through missional worship, liturgy and preaching. Wepener (2008), using data and insights gathered from SAPMC, explores what a missional liturgy would look like. He concludes that a missional liturgy "seeks to experience the presence of God or open up a space in which God can encounter the worshippers with His mission" (2008: 8). Such missional liturgy should keep the following two potential distractions in mind: 1) a true missional liturgy is not attractional; and 2) a true missional liturgy does not favour either liturgy or life but connects the two.

According to Niemandt (2014b), contemplating missional church also has important implications for the worship service and liturgy. The ecclesiology of a church becomes visible in its liturgy, with the implication that the missional nature of the church becomes evident in

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the way that the church worships. The worship service is the place where the sending God is met, where being sent is rehearsed and from where God's people are sent. Employing Leonard Sweet's concepts of "transductive" or "transincarnational" experiences, i.e., experiences that transforms the lives of participants and carry them along to the Kingdom of God and Christ's presence in this life, Niemandt emphasises the communal embodiment of Christ's presence and the transformation of the whole person. In this process, the music ministry in a missional church plays an important role in the service and support of a missional spirituality and liturgy.

In the same vein, Neels Jackson (2016) points out that the music (praise and worship) in a missional church should be both an expression of core missional beliefs and a way to mobilise its members. The problem is that some of the songs testifies to an individualistic and reductionist view of the gospel. Missional praise and worship should attest to God's presence in the world, as well as our calling to work with God in the world.

Campbell (2013) specifically explores the impact of the theological shift towards missional theology in the DRC on the liturgy and music in the worship domain. In line with the *Missio Dei* and the *Imago Dei*, missional worship becomes a paradigmatic way of life, with God as the focal point in worship and liturgy.

Malan Nel, et al. (2021) confirm that worship and preaching on its own will not make a missional church. Building up, cultivating and developing missional congregations is about everything we are and everything we do. However, without worship and preaching the cultivation of missional congregations will not happen either. Therefore, they embark on a descriptive theological project exploring the relationship between worship, preaching and the cultivation of missional congregations. Not only do they unpack the relationship between preaching and the liturgy and the development of missional congregations, but also what kind of preaching and preacher would best serve and facilitate such an undertaking.

4.3.8 Missional: Contextual, incultured and incarnational.

From the beginning, the Christian message incarnated itself into "the life and world of those who embraced it" (Bosch 1991a: 421). Such contextualisation involves the "construction of a

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variety of local theologies" (Bosch 1991a: 427).[99] The Christian faith cannot exist if not translated or incultured into a culture. It refers to "one of the patterns in which the pluriform character of contemporary Christianity manifests itself" (Bosch 1991a: 447).[100] Unfortunately, Christianity, as contextualised in the West, was elevated to a higher status and exported as such to other contexts demanding that others adhere to it. Such forms of contextual absolutism, universalism and superiority of any kind should be critically engaged, treated with suspicion and hopefully avoided (Bosch 1991a: 428, 448). A critical development in the construction of a contextual missional ecclesiology is what Bosch (1991a: 423) calls a "theology from below" with its main sources of engagement Scripture, tradition, social sciences, the poor and culturally marginalised. The emphasis on context and cultural analysis and the church being a hermeneutical community is therefore a positive development in South African missional theology. Added to this is the recent emphasis on the significance of the *kenotic* and incarnational dimension of Jesus Christ for the mission of the church (Bosch 1991a: 454, 513). In the words of Benade (2019: 79), "To be an effective missional church, the church and the congregation members need to have a good understanding of their context. Because the missional church takes the incarnation seriously, understanding the culture is central to the missional task of the church." Similarly, Marumo (2018) emphasises that mission will always be suspected of colonialism and imperialism, unless it is done through a missional church which is trinitarian in nature and based on *Missio Dei*. To achieve this in a post-colonial era, Morumo reiterates the importance of contextualisation. The following contributors unpack this contextual, incultured and incarnational focus in the South African missional discourse:

Du Plessis (2010) uses a grid derived from Luke-Acts, comprising the relationship with Jesus, inclusiveness, vulnerability vs. power, and movements of the Spirit, to explore possible different missional models of churches. He then concludes that there is multiple, contextually

[99] Bosch (1991a: 423) expresses his view on missional contextualiaation as follows: "… every text is an interpreted text and that, in a sense, the reader 'creates' the text when she or he reads it. The text is not only 'out there', waiting to be interpreted; the text 'becomes' as we engage with it. And yet, even this new hermeneutic approach is not going far enough. Interpreting a text is not only a literary exercise; it is also a social, economic, and political exercise."

[100] Bosch (1991a: 454) describes inculturation as, "…the gospel being 'enfleshed', 'embodied' in a people and its culture of a 'kind of *ongoing* incarnation' in a distinct form from any model that had been in vogue for over a thousand years. In this paradigm, it is not so much a case of the church being *expanded*, but of the church being *born anew* in each new context and culture."

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determined models that co-exist, i.e., “Missionality has its roots both in the identity and the actions of the faith community” (2010: 1).

Using the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan women in John 4 as an example, Kok and Niemandt (2009) explore a missional-incarnational ethos for the church within a broken reality in need of restoration. This missional-incarnational way of Jesus is a movement of life, restoration and transformation that transcends boundaries. The church needs to activate this movement ecclesiologically (from attractional to incarnational), spiritually (from dualistic to holistic) and in our leadership thinking (from hierarchical to egalitarian).

According to Nel (2011), congregations, as a trinitarian reality, are geographical gifts. As a gift to its geographical and social context the congregation is uniquely placed to understand the challenges of continuity and discontinuity within its surroundings. Thus, missional congregations will endeavour to understand its context through context analysis, because “die gemeente is kontekstueel missionêr of dit is nie gemeente of kerk nie” (The congregation is either contextually missional or it is not congregation or church) (2011: 4). The goal of this contextual focus is to make the community aware of the *shalom* of the Kingdom of God through community and service. In this way the congregation is Kingdom and missionally relevant. This is done by way of discipleship and discipling through service.

Ferreira (2017) highlights two global movements meeting each other. The first movement entails the migration of people to urban centres, while the second movement refers to the movement from the traditional Western centre of Christianity to the developing world. This process of *glocalisation* (globalisation and localisation) calls for a new “togetherness within the cities of our world… a new way of being part of God’s *Missio Dei*” (2017: 2). In missional terms, this is a call to “an urban theology” that “seek the welfare of the city (God’s shalom)” with “the goal of community transformation” (2017: 6).

Nelus Niemandt wrote extensively about being contextual and incarnational, as well as inculturation as necessities for the missional future. In an everchanging world, the church is challenged to discern new and creative ways to be an inclusive, missional church. In facing up to these changes, the missional church needs to be radically contextual. The ability of the early church, as described in Acts, to adapt to changing contexts, serves as a point of reference to develop a missional ecclesiology relevant for today’s changing world (Niemandt 2010c). Examining the new culture, notions, habits and patterns of thought emanating from

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globalisation and its associated effects, specifically human mobility and migration and the resulting increase in mobile communication and social media, Niemandt (2013b) highlights the changes and challenges to the mission of the church. Within this context "the convergence of globalisation, migration, the emergence of a network society and a Google culture pose profound questions on concepts such as inculturation and contextualisation" (2013b: 27). Within these circumstances inculturation and contextualisation will best be aided by a theology of dialogue; relationships through *diapraxis* – bringing together dialogue and praxis across the boundaries of faith, race, gender and culture; communitas; and the ability of social media to facilitate connection and hospitality to the stranger. Within a globalised context, missional theology with its emphasis on incarnation, contextualisation and inculturation is ideally positioned to focus on the local context in these changing times. Therefore Niemandt (2014a) concentrates on "discernment, greater focus on context, attention to ordinary life, emerging missional churches and missional spirituality" (2014a: 40). Thus, the focus should be twofold: 1) on the ordinary lives of people in local congregations and 2) the local context as the scope of discernment which happens in a trialogue between the Bible, the church and the culture. One example of such an ordinary, everyday, transformative encounter with deep theological significance centres around eating with others. Exploring the valuable contribution of missiology to the breaking down of walls or crossing boundaries, Niemandt (2017b) concludes that the concepts of "deep contextualisation" and "deep incarnation" supports a missional move to a post-anthropocentric understanding of mission which values the entire creation as deep history; it respects every context and thus unmasks the continuing influence of colonial mission enterprises; and imagines God's hopeful future.

Verster (2020) highlights the challenges for communities in informal settlements. He concludes "… that informal settlements experience extreme circumstances and that the challenges – both in development and human conditions – are huge" (2020: 77). Within these circumstances, can a missional ecclesiology help with the development, enhancement and enrichment of the people living in these situations? For the missional church to be a community of new life in the informal settlements, the relation to God is essential, the presence of the incarnated Christ makes it possible to be a church for the most humble, it needs to be a church for the poor and the despised, a living witness in a world of utter

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desolation, by being present in the deepest needs of the people, and by being a church seeking God's new future.

4.3.9 Missional: A theology of place.

A further aspect of contextualisation, inculturation and incarnation perused by Niemandt (2018; 2019b, 2020) within the contours of missional theology, is a theology of place, which can be defined as "an appreciation for the theological significance of specific geographic locations" (2019b: 1). There is not a place where God is not present. Place and faith are therefore entangled. Faith is rooted in a specific place (2018: 11, 14). A theology of place is especially significant "in the midst of a global sense of rootlessness, dislocation and displacement" and is enhanced by a "faithful presence and the restoration of the commons in missional ecclesiology" (2019b: 9). The contours of a theology of place are: "storied places; holy places, places of exile and displacement; places of quiet reflection; places where beauty and life flourish; ugly places; and places of healing and restoration" (2019b: 4). Niemandt (2018) also add strange places, place and the congregation, rediscovering the community, place and land reform within the South African context and the places we call home. Within these places, the missional church must be faithfully present, aiming to promote flourishing life in communities (Niemandt 2020).

A theology of place implies a faithful presence in a specific place. Doret Niemandt and Thinandavha Mashau both explore what a faithful presence might mean in the City of Tshwane. Mashau (2014) demonstrates the future of Christian mission in the public square (the City of Tshwane), with an eye to bringing God's shalom and justice to the marginalised city dwellers. Underpinning the missiological engagement with the hills and valleys of Tshwane, Mashua highlights the reimagining of mission in the public square by going missional, going urban, going public, going virtual and viral, and going educational. Whereas Niemandt (2022) reflects on the role of the church and local congregations in changing the congregational culture to contribute towards a missional ecclesiology focussed on the public space with the aim to establish a social contract between congregation and context, in this case, the City of Tshwane. She utilises a case study of the DRC Valleisig congregation in Tshwane to reimagine its relationship with the city as the first step towards establishing a new social contract between the congregation and the city.

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4.3.10 Missional diaconate.

In explaining missional diaconate, Knoetze (2022) highlights that mission is more than witnessing through words, it is more than mere evangelism, more than just spiritual. Being missional is about proclaiming the whole gospel, in service to the whole person and the whole world. Just like mission belongs to the essence of being church, *diaconia* is part of the very nature of the church. Expanding on this assertion, Knoetze points out that with the expanding of Christianity to the Global South, the church is faced with extreme social-political issues which asks for a conversion of the reduced missional message focussing on the forgiveness of sins to a more wholistic message of the Good News of the Kingdom of God. This leads to a new and broader understanding of *diaconia* for mission today. The theological ground for missional diaconate is found in a more comprehensive understanding of the Triune God. As such the twofold theological grounds of *diaconia* is *doxology*, to worship the Triune God, and *koinonia*, a loving attribute found between the three persons of the Trinity. In other words, loving God and loving your neighbour. As such, by doing missional diaconate, the missional church is a window of the Kingdom of God.

Van der Watt (2019) focuses on missional-diaconal practices and its influence in church formation in Japan and South Africa. Although there are vast differences between the religious contexts of Japan and South Africa, there is a close bond between the DRC and the Reformed Church in Japan. For example, both are exploring new ways to communicate God's presence and grace in their unique contexts. As such, in the aftermath of recent natural disasters, missional-diaconal initiatives play an important role in the expanding of these church's missional identity and footprint. As Van der Watt confirms, "(T)here is a new awareness of diakonia as a core element of the missio Dei and of its potential to strengthen church formation and neighbouring communities" (2019: 165).

4.3.11 Missional and creation.

Niemandt (2017c) underscores the growing interest "in God's incarnation and embodiment and the shift away from an anthropocentric understanding to one that has all of reality in sight" (2017c: 247) by including science and "cultural, economic, and ecological dimensions" (2017c: 248). It therefore links the body of Christ not only with the human existence, but with the whole, the origin, the present and the future, of creation and all life. Thus, the church

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with its eschatological focus and as part of the *Missio Dei* must proclaim "the good news to all humanity and creation" (2017c: 256).[101] This viewpoint on incarnation and embodiment is also highlighted and elucidated by Bentley (2016) as a hermeneutical lens for theology to converse with science. He concludes: "Through the Incarnation, God affirms creation's part in the fullness of God's being and hence redeems not only humankind, but all flesh and its accompanying processes" (2016: 7).

4.3.12 Missional: A Flourishing life.

Niemandt (2020) makes the point that "the idea of life in fullness or flourishing life represents a compelling discourse in theology" (2020: 19). Especially since the Triune God is a God of endless and abundant love and life. Flowing from this trinitarian perspective, Niemandt then examines the possible relation between the *Missio Dei* and flourishing life, concluding that flourishing life is an influential and contextually relevant clarification of the *Missio Dei*, which then have important implications for missional ecclesiology. Missional ecclesiology, through the concept of incarnation, has a special interest in everyday life. As such, missional ecclesiology engages with flourishing life in everyday life through the concepts of created life, sustained life and consummated life. Moreover, Niemandt, clarifies the connection between flourishing life and church life by highlighting a faithful presence in a specific place, neighbourhood or parish as a missional church praxis in service of the *Missio Dei*. In this way, the church makes God's Kingdom visible and serves as a conduit of hope in the community.

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4.3.13 Missional: Ecumenical perspectives.

Pillay (2017a) emphasises that ecumenical organisations, such as The World Communion of Reformed Churches, The Council of World Mission and the World Council of Churches, "are saying if few things: It is God's mission and we must partner with others in transforming the world. We must embrace the holistic view of mission. We must help churches to go outside the gate (from internal to external)" (2017a: 41). The most important place for these endeavours and for the future of ecumenism is the missionally-shaped local congregation. In South Africa this development "is not driven by ecclesiology, doctrine, tradition and denominationalism, but by a missional focus" (2017a: 41).

[101] For a helpful exploration of caring for creation as part of the *Missio Dei*, see Conradie 2009 and 2010.

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Niemandt (2015a) engages with the document accepted by the World Council of Churches at its 10th Assembly in Busan, South-Korea, in October 2013, namely *Together towards life – Mission and evangelism in changing landscapes* (TTL). He examines TTL according to three themes: 1) "Where do we come from?" – the church is missional because it originates in the Trinity and the *Missio Dei*; 2) "What is happening now?" – the key role of the Holy Spirit is emphasised with a focus on discernment within the contours of contextualisation and indigenisation and with the church embodying God's salvation, transformation and Kingdom; and 3) "What could the future look like?" – future endeavours presented by TTL include missions with creation at its heart; missional ecclesiology and missional leadership; mission supported by a "transformative spirituality", and mission from the margins.

4.3.14 Missional movements.

The missional renaissance led to different movements within the framework of missional theology. These are creative and fresh contextual expressions of church in an ever-changing world. Benade (2019) evaluates the historical and current missional development in the Dutch Reformed Church. Within this framework he focuses on the contours of a missional ecclesiology for the DRC; assessing the decisions of the General Synod of the DRC from 1990 to 2013; and by evaluating, from a Reformed point of view, the Fresh Expressions Movement, which originated in the United Kingdom and aims to form new contextual expressions of church.

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Niemandt (2007a: 47-144; 2007b; 2008b: 139-171) examines the Emerging Church Movement, emanating from the USA, as a new missional way of being church in a postmodern context. It is a movement that looks for fresh and innovative ways of being church while also celebrating the ancient roots of Christianity. It is therefore "'n dekonstruksie van die Christenheid en rekonstruksie van die Christelike lewe in 'n nuwe wêreld" (a deconstruction of Christianity and a reconstruction of the Christian life in a new world) (2007a: 50). The practices of these churches include identification with the life of Jesus and a strong focus on the Kingdom of God; renouncing the separation between the spiritual and the physical world; emphasising community; welcoming the stranger, service without ulterior motives; participatory membership culture; creativity; non-hierarchical, networking leadership; and ancient Christian truths presented afresh.

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4.3.15 Missional and reconciliation.

Niemandt and Pillay (2019: 34-52) endeavour to approach reconciliation from a religious and spiritual perspective as a paradigm for missiology in South Africa. Their undertaking focuses on the following four aspects: 1) Theological reflection on reconciliation as a paradigm for missiology. This is guided by five biblical steps, namely confession, repentance, forgiveness, restitution, and restoration; 2) Spiritual formation and empowerment – the impetus needed for reconciliation. A missional spirituality, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is crucial for reconciliation; 3) Reconciliation as the praxis of the church in South Africa. Reconciliation happens on a personal, cultural, political and a community level. The church as a Christocentric community, an initiator and bearer of *shalom* and as a missional and open community is an essential reconciliatory community; 4) Faith-based reconciliation, which is articulated through 8 core values: pluralism, inclusion, peace-making, social justice, forgiveness, healing, sovereignty, and atonement.

On a more practical level, reconciliation is assisted by increased diversity. According to Hendriks (2007b), this is enhanced by a missional identity that facilitates the crossing of borders and exposure to different cultures and races. The changing environment of post-apartheid South Africa created new opportunities for transformation through the crossing of racial boundaries and the celebration of diversity. This is demonstrated by lessons learned from the establishment of the Network for African Congregational Theology (NetACT) and the merger between the faculties of theology of the University of Stellenbosch and the University of the Western Cape. Although not without difficulty, over time, with the help of a newfound missional identity, personal relationships of trust and changing attitudes, change and transition was achieved. In the words of Hendriks (2007: 93), "(B)oundary-crossing experiences broke stereotypes and subverted? undermined? propaganda. 'The other' became known as people whose stories revealed realities not known before. Alternative futures became 'dreamable'".

4.3.16 Missional: Inclusivity and diversity.

In 2014 the Highveld Synod of the DRC assembled around the theme, "Veelkleurige gemeentes na 'n veelkleurige gemeenskap" (Multicoloured congregations towards multicoloured communities). They chose this theme because they wanted to be more

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inclusive, embrace diversity and cross borders to people they would otherwise not have reached (Rossouw 2016: 288). They took the decision to be a missional church, by reaching out to communities and by attending to a ministry that provides for diversity (Niemandt 2017a: 200). This corresponds with Niemandt's (2017b) view that missional theology is well suited to break down the symbolic walls that divide, segregate, preserve and institutionalise. Rossouw (2016: 387), referring to the context of the homogenous identity of the DRC, concluded that the "messianic lifestyle, inclusive ethos, interpretation lens or missional language house are shaping formal structures, faith communities and ministers to interpret scripture (and context) in a way that highlights the importance of diversity over and against homogenous cultural identity."

These insights concur with the missional perspectives on diversity and inclusivity as a roadmap for a fractured post-apartheid South Africa, as outlined by Marais (2010b). Marais argues that the Triune God is always the departure point of the missional church. Being an inclusive community is therefore based on who God is and what God does. God is the agent that calls, gathers and sends God's community. This means that the missional church is sensitive for and set on the inclusion of outsiders and the marginalised into the community of faith. Underlying this missional value is the guiding principle of *kenosis*, the self-emptying or self-donation of Christ. This, however, does not only refer to the church giving itself to and for the world, but also to the conscious loosening of ourselves from the dominant culture and the comfortable alliance with its rulers and privileges. Only then, in this position of obedience and vulnerability, will the church be a *kenotic* space where others come home and a new community will be established.

4.3.17 Missional theological education.

In an article about theological education in Africa, Hendriks (2012) argues for a missional hermeneutic that "would lead to a contextualised, missional theological curriculum and training" (2012: 1). The problem is that African theologians and seminaries are confronted with realities and challenges that are not addressed by current curriculums. These realities and challenges include the movement of the centre of Christianity from the North to the South; the decline of Christendom; globalisation, informationalisation and technology; the redefinition of power towards communities and social networks where people are participants and not just the audience; and the contextual, organic growth of churches in

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Africa. Thus, we are confronted with a new world and a new church, while seminaries are still stuck with a Christendom DNA forming Western theology proselytes. Therefore, Hendriks argues for a theological education and curricula based on a contextual, missional hermeneutical approach focussed on the *Missio Dei.* Other scholars writing about the contextualised, missional approach to theological education in (South) Africa, include Hendriks (2004), Du Preez, Hendriks and Carl (2014), Labuschagne (2019), Niemandt (2019c) and Pillay (2018).

Informed by the Missional Framework Document of the DRC, Myburgh et al. (2018) explores a broader missional understanding of the office of the minister in congregations. This led to a broadening of the ministerial office to include ordained ministers employed fulltime by congregations to fulfil all the requirements of congregational work; ministers trained for a specific missional context; ordained ministers in part-time positions for an indefinite term; ordained ministers with a specific mission, such as youth and family; church planters or community workers; and elders and deacons trained for a specific area of ministry such as preaching, pastoral care, diaconate, church planting etc. This new understanding of the ministerial model in congregations with the resulting shift in theological training in the DRC, is necessitated by the contextual focus of the missional calling as outlined by the framework document, as well as the economic realities facing congregations.

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D. Niemandt and N.C. Niemandt (2021) discusses the relation between theological education and spirituality. They point out that "(T)heology and spirituality are irrevocably connected and interdependent" (2021: 2) The task of missional spirituality is to ignite a spirituality that nurtures a way of life for the sake of others, while the task of theology is not only the academic formation of theologians but also equipping leaders for the *Missio Dei*. Regrettably, deliberate spiritual formation is not high on the agenda of theological education. This inevitably causes an imbalance. The authors therefore argue for a missional metanoia, a holistic model for the formation of missional leaders, that includes a missional understanding of the church, theological reflection, spiritual formation and cultural awareness.

4.3.18 Missional from the margins.

Dames (2008) examines the church as a missional "agent of change in the lives of marginalized people" (2008: 5). To succeed in this goal, "the cultural edges of society are beacons that can

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guide the church in its missional vocation to function as a transforming agent in today's world" (2008: 5) Focussing on the cultural edges, fringes, or marginalised serves as a countermeasure to "Christendom's control and default" in the centre (2008: 10). In this way the church discovers missional encounters on the edges because "God acts at the edges of people's lives and contexts" (2008: 14).

4.3.19 Missional: Postcolonial.[102]

Christianity in Africa has seen exponential growth since it was introduced by colonial missionaries. According to Desmond Henry (2016), this growth is expressed through different and diverse forms of Christianity and is "focussed on post-colonial forms reflecting traditional values" (2016: 2). It is therefore important for missional theology to understand the African worldview. In the words of Henry (2016: 2): "Assisting in understanding world views and in evaluating and correcting the mission of the church is one of the tasks of missiology." Using the Twana worldview as a lens, Henry focuses on the following elements prevalent in the African worldview: Holistic view of life; belief in the living dead (ancestors); importance of relationships and community; and the nature of spirituality. Exploring a holistic missional design for post-colonial African society, Henry lists the following challenges that needs to be dealt with: Continuity - amid the postcolonial corrosion of traditional values and the dichotomy between Christianity and traditional religions; identity – an African missional epistemology is needed because Christianity was disrupted and distorted by the link between missionaries and colonisers; discernment – to determine the African church's contextual response and praxis to political, social and religious issues; and enterprise – relating to the continuous paternal influence of missionaries and mother churches in postcolonial Africa. Thus, "The African Church must recognise its missional identity and formulate a contextually relevant African missional ecclesiology" (2016: 7).

Marumo (2018) argues that mission in Africa was mostly seen as a task by missionaries and based on the saving of ignorant souls. It was done from the understanding of the missionaries

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[102] R.W. Nel (2013: 22) highlights the difference between "post-colonial" (with a hyphen) which refers to a chronological moment when formerly colonised nations became politically independent (like South Africa) and "postcolonial" (without a hyphen) to indicate the critical stance against colonialism in the past and the continuing anticolonial movement against colonial discourse in the present. Although both are relevant within the South African context, I am writing this study with a more "postcolonial" perspective in mind and will therefore use such spelling, except of course where it is used in quotes.

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and did not take the African understanding, worldview and values into account. As such the gospel and education was treated with suspicion; as a way of colonising the African mind. Added to this is the influence of the postcolonial era and accompanying globalisation that had a detrimental effect on African churches. Within these parameters contextualisation (as envisioned by Lesslie Newbigin) embedded in the *Missio Dei,* is an empowering missional paradigm in the postcolonial era. In the words of Marumo (2018: 6): “The church is there as a tool for *Missio Dei*; thence, it should not undermine other people but live in harmony with them as God’s children and promote unity in diversity.”

Pieter Labuschagne (2019a, 2019b) calls for “the decolonisation and Africanisation of theological education, missiology and mission in the 21st century Africa” (2019a: 212). As such, he proposes “a transformative missional hermeneutic … that promotes mutualism between the theological curriculum, missiology, Scripture, and the African context” (2019a: 213). Transforming missional education in this way will contribute to a missional ecclesiology that “will bring about socioeconomic, political and religious transformation” (2019a: 212). To achieve this a missional hermeneutic that takes Klippies Kritzinger’s approach of *Encounterology* seriously is of utmost importance. In South Africa we need deliberate hermeneutical encounters “with Scripture, different contexts, and people who are different from us” in a way that “gives birth to a truly indigenous missional ecclesiology and transformative African theology” (2019a: 225).

South African reformed churches still suffer from ecclesial apartheid. Underlying this separateness is “the persistence of a colonial ecclesiology” that will only be resolved by discerning an appropriate African Reformed postcolonial missional ecclesiology (Nel 2014: 266). Nel therefore argues for a broader postcolonial missional conversation; a conversation that goes further that the “Northern and Western focus, on postmodern questions” (2014b: 270). It looks beyond a particular European based theological method and colonial ecclesiology to develop “new theologies in response to the challenges facing South Africa” (2014: 276). His interest is therefore in a postcolonial missional ecclesiology, done from a Southern and African perspective that takes “the local context of oppression, as it manifests itself in new ways” into account, i.e., missional contextualisation that does not obscure the context of the oppressed (2014: 277). This will help in discerning “bridge-building

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ecclesiologies" and confront ecclesial apartheid in South African reformed churches (2014: 278).

4.3.20 Missional church governance, order and polity.

Dreyer (2013) states that the reformation which is needed in the church of the 21st century, leaves nothing untouched and requires changes at the deepest levels. This includes the church order and polity. Writing in the context of the Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (HHKA) (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa) Dreyer pleads for the necessity of an ecclesiological paradigm shift to a more missional approach to ministry and church order. The NHKA needs to move from a typical presbyterial-synodical ecclesiological paradigm and church order to a *Missio Dei* paradigm, based on missional ecclesiology.

Niemandt (2015c) investigated the policy decisions by the 2013 General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church on the missional nature of the church in relation to the affirmation by the World Council of Churches Together towards life: Mission and evangelism in changing landscapes (2013) policy document. He concludes that the policy document of the DRC is in line with the World Council of Churches document and the current ecumenical discourse on church and mission. The DRC furthermore understands itself as a missional church with a missional ecclesiology which led the church to embark on a process to revise its governance, and important articles in its church order. As such, the church polity of the DRC is informed by its missional ecclesiology.

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Concerning the structure of the church, Van Aarde (2017) states that the missional church conversation, with its focus on organic church structures, undermines existing institutional church structures. Using the structure set out in Ephesians 4, Van Aarde concludes that in a missional church, equipping the believers to fulfil their missional calling, vocation and function is paramount, that the inward and outward ministries should function dynamically together, with no differentiation between clergy and laity, and institutional and organic church.

4.3.21 Missional pastoral care.

In an early reflection on missional pastoral care, Symington and Fourie et al. (2007) explored different dimensions of pastoral care in missional congregations. This DRC journal publication

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was a tentative attempt by different scholars to unpack missional pastoral care at a time when the DRC was still struggling to articulate the impact of missional theology on congregations.

Smit (2015) examines “the challenge of conducting pastoral ministry in the context of South African, middleclass congregations adapting to a rapidly changing, post-apartheid environment” (2015: 1). Smit takes up this challenge by investigating some practical theological perspectives on pastoral counselling, narrative therapy as a theory of deconstruction guiding congregations towards a missional understanding of church life in local communities, cognitive behaviour therapy and the theological paradigm of missional ecclesiology. A missional pastoral theory focussing on the following three aspects is developed, namely, re-establishing pastoral identity: exploring Christ; pastoral development: intentional faith formation; and pastoral ministry: enabling Christ-centred lives. To enable the missional pastoral theory, four practices are necessary: A cognitive approach to increasing knowledge of the biblical narrative; development of emotional intelligence; small groups, where the focus falls on the personality development of members; and the acquisition of life coaching skills, where leaders can be adequately mentored in their roles as coaches.

Buffel (2021) deals with the pastoral responsibility of the missional church in specific contexts. Using as a case study, the Zandspruit informal settlement in the northwest of Johannesburg where the people face the double burden of poverty and COVID-19, Buffel proposes a holistic missional-pastoral approach as part of the *Missio Dei*. As such, the church must be pastorally present and actively involved in social ministries in struggling communities in a way that will transform society and give agency to the impoverished communities.

4.3.22 Missional funerals and bereavement counselling.

According to Kotze and Niemandt (2015), the church needs to transform its nature to become agents of hope in its praxis. As a missional church, the church must be willing to carry this hope into the world and more specifically into aspects of the funeral and bereavement process. As such, hope can be an instrument of healing, even in a secular society. This can be done through the funeral and its liturgy, a new language of love and empathy and by the incarnational presence of the members of the church community during the bereavement process and counselling. Kotze and Niemandt (2015: 7) therefore concludes that “a missional

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perspective on the funeral and bereavement counselling can support the nature and praxis of congregations in secular societies."

4.3.23 Missional youth ministry.

Africa is a youth continent where 200 million of the population is between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age. Africans are also well known for their religiosity and spirituality, although these aspects do not get the deserved attention when thinking of and planning for development. It is in this context that Knoetze (2021) examines the role of missional diaconate as method of sustainable development amongst African youth. Missional diaconate is described as "the participation of the church in God's life-giving, healing, and restoration encounters with a broken world" (2021: 5). It is found that "while development is commonly designed to overcome material needs, which will always change and are not sustainable, missional diaconate contributes to develop identity, calling (vision) and values within relationships that are sustainable and empowering" (2021: 7).

Reggie Nel (2013, 2019) examines what re-imagined African missional ecclesiology in the Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA) will look like. He does this in dialogue with African youth ministry as practiced in the Christian Youth Ministry, the youth structure of URCSA. Nel (2015), furthermore investigates the role of social media in the "new struggles of young people against marginalisation, but more specifically, its relationship to social networks and how it challenges southern African missional ecclesiology" (2015: 521). He recommends that the role of social media in this age of the network society, be included in the academic discourse on the southern African missional church, especially regarding young people and their contemporary struggles.

Over the years Malan Nel wrote extensively about different aspects of youth ministry. In an extensive offering (2018) he deals with an inclusive missional approach to youth ministry. The basic premise is that the church is either missional or it is not church. Therefore, youth ministry is a ministry to, with and through youth, within the context of a missional congregation. Nel unpacks this by looking at the critical theological issues in an inclusive missional approach to youth ministry, the people involved in youth ministry, the praxis of youth ministry and the organisation and administration of youth ministry in a missional church.

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4.3.24 Missional small groups.

One of the aims of missional churches is to transform the communities in which they exist. Many churches, according to Tucker (2016), function with a dual structure combining small groups and the main larger worship meeting ("ecclesiolae in ecclesia"). However, it would appear, they are not, from a missional perspective, utilising the dual structure effectively to fulfil the missional aim to transform their respective communities. In fact, many of the small groups does not have a missional goal, which means, they easily become self-centred and cliquish. Tucker argues that the dual structure can be missionally fruitful by "combining what may be learnt about this dual structure from the sociology of groups, church history, perception theory in the area of ecclesial paradigms, missional and Trinitarian ecclesiology, and contemporary contextual studies" (2016: 1).

4.3.25 Missional in Africa.

Christianity is thriving on the African continent. Inevitably impacting the political, social, economic and ecclesial spheres. Niemandt (2022) thus emphasis how the missional church developed into a very particular expression of church in Africa, invariably serving as both a sample and a challenge to missional ecclesiology and missional theology. Reflecting on the particularities of the missional church in Africa, Niemandt concludes that the bondage of the modern Western culture must be released in favour of the culture and world view of the people among whom the missional church operates. Niemandt therefore underscores the importance of the missional church as incarnational, contextual and inculturated. To explain a relevant African missional ecclesiology, Niemandt then highlights the contributions of the Fresh Expressions movement, especially Fresh Africa, and African Independent Churches as a uniquely Afrocentric expression of the missional church that needs further research.

According to Potgieter (2022) a missional ethics refers to the ways the believing community's behaviour is in and of itself missional. Taking her cue from Paul's embodied theology as described in 2 Corinthians 2: 12-17, Potgieter emphasises an embodied understanding of missional ethics, guiding the missional church as having an impact on its environment as well as its environment having an impact on the missional church. With 2 Corinthians 2: 12-17 as reference point, Potgieter concludes that being a believer entails having a pleasant fragrance that gives life, i.e., having a positive effect wherever you are situated. In Africa in general and

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in the South African context in particular, there are a multitude of issues that require believers to make a difference. That requires a bodily understanding of the *Missio Dei* by the missional church. In this regard Potgieter discusses justice, the abuse of power, digital church, and ecology as specific issues that needs further research. An African missional ethic, with *ubuntu* as its springboard will help people to rediscover their identities as sent people and help to restore the bond between Africa and its environment.

Envisioning a different world, Peter White (2022) argues for the "integration of African values and spirituality in ministerial and missional leadership formation in Africa" (2022: 227). In a context where theological training is loaded with Western theological theories and praxis, his main contention is that the inclusion of traditional African values and spirituality in theological curricula, will influence African ministerial formation and ethical missional leadership development. In line with the DRC's missional framework document calling for a renewal in ministerial development, White (2022: 233) submits "that ministerial and missional leadership formation in an African context should be incarnational, contextual and inculturated. It should also embody African grassroot theology (oral theology, symbolic theology and written theology) as well as cross-culture mission and ministry exposure and experience." This will help ministers to be missionally relevant in their local communities, Africa and the world.

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In sum: The themes and contributions detailed in this section of chapter 4 reflects the South African missional conversation. On the one hand it gives one a general feel for the main developments in South African Missional Theology, while on the other, it also confirms that missional theology is constantly evolving as it is confronted by new challenges.

4.4 Conclusion.

Reflecting on the argument of the thesis thus far, the image of a funnel comes to mind. Chapter 2 started with the precursors to missional theology, the bigger picture, the widest part of the funnel, if you will. Thereafter, the broader development in missional theology was discussed in chapter 3. The goal of chapter 4, the narrowest part of the funnel, was to give an overview of the South African discourse on missional theology. It begins with a historical look at the development of mission in South Africa, according to the four waves of mission as originally identified by missiologist, Willem Saayman.

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Since then, a fifth missional wave was identified by numerous South African scholars, that is the emergence of missional theology. Therefore, the global and local trends and influences that impacted the rise of missional theology as fifth wave is unpacked. This development was especially exacerbated by the unique social and political events in post-1994 South Africa, which necessitated a new vision, identity and calling for the church.

In this realignment, the SAPMC played a crucial role. It helped the mostly White mainline churches to discern and refocus its theological framework and priorities in post-apartheid South Africa. However, despite the positive impact of missional theology in (mostly White, middle-class) South African churches, some challenges and concerns remain. To ensure a productive missional conversation some of these challenges and concerns are highlighted. The need for a broader conversation which includes Northern and Western postmodern and post-Christendom questions as well as the uniquely (South) African postcolonial and Christendom context, is highlighted.

Furthermore, a literature review, expounding the main themes and contributions to the South African missional discourse is conducted. This enables one to form a picture of what is addressed and what is not. From this picture, three conclusions can be drawn: Firstly, it confirms that missional theology as it is practiced in South Africa is constantly evolving as it is confronted with new challenges. Secondly, it corroborates that the South African missional church is missional through-and-through. Every aspect of the church is viewed through a missional lens. Yet, thirdly, it seems that discussions on the themes of race in general and Whiteness in particular is lacking in missional research.

As such, the first part of the research problem, namely the background and development of missional theology in general and in South Africa in particular, as well as a review and critical analysis of the main contributions to missional theology in South Africa was addressed.

In the next phase of the study, the theme of "Whiteness" and Whiteness studies will be addressed. This will again be done with the image of a funnel in mind. The wider scope, detailing Whiteness studies will be discussed in chapter 5, followed by the more specific South African discourse on theology and Whiteness in chapter 6. These discussions of Whiteness will eventually culminate in the third phase of the study, vis-à vis the question whether and if so, how the theme of Whiteness is addressed explicitly or implicitly in the missional discourse

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in South Africa. Ultimately, Whiteness will be held up as a mirror for missional discourse in South Africa to face its own image reflected in the mirror.

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CHAPTER 5: Facing Whiteness

5.1 Introduction.

Speaking on a podcast about loving yourself, your heritage and the oppressive other, Native American activist and author Mark Charles (2021) said the following:

> Race, whether you like it or not, is defined or centered by whiteness … It's technically the white, landowning Christian male that's at the center. And then every other group is kind of defined in these circles beyond that…

Suffice to say, this centrality of Whiteness or Whiteness as the "master narrative" (Steyn 2001: 3) grant White individuals power, material and psychological benefits and privilege (Foste 2017: 4). It also serves as the norm to define all other groups around it and "has historically used its normative power to suppress and marginalize its others" (Lopez 2005: 2). As Perkinson (2004: 153) simply puts it: "whiteness is a power of opposition."[103] As such Whiteness is not confined to ethnicity or skin colour, but can rather be described as a social identity, a socially constructed or conceptualised ideology, embracing the unearned inherent rights and "consequences, material and otherwise" (Steyn 2001: 186) that comes with it (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007: 393; Spickernell 2016: 1; Steyn 2001: 186).[104] In the words of Verwey and Quayle (2012: 566): "whiteness is not about 'race', but about power and privilege" and Van der Westhuizen (2018: 35), "whiteness is therefore not skin pigmentation, but the meaning attached to pinkish, white-ish skin." While Pilossof (2022: 177) highlights that Whiteness is not about Whites per se, but rather "about power, privilege and race and understanding how these become embedded in various forms of hierarchy in society."

According to Foste (2017: 22), an ideology refers to the historical "accumulation of ideas" that serves as a guide or a framework to interpret, navigate and make sense of the social world.

[103] Perkinson (2004: 153) expands on this in the following way: "whiteness is, in fact, a very peculiar kind of opposite—a position, a privilege, a presumption, a pride, a propertied entitlement, a protected comportment, a way of walking, talking and "being" that operates not simply as an equal and inverse form of the thing it differs from, but rather precisely as its supreme judge."

[104] Leonardo (2002: 31-32) differentiates between "White people", "Whiteness" and "White culture." "White people" describes an identity based on the colour of your skin, whereas "Whiteness" refers to a racial discourse. "White culture" refers more to a social concept. Whiteness is different from White culture but connected to it through historical association.

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Steyn (2001: 18) highlights three functions of ideology: "to represent sectional interests as universal; to deny or transmute contradictions; and to naturalise the present through reification." Whiteness as "master narrative" obliged these functions particularly well and thus gained an ideological authority (Steyn 2001: 185) that functions as a hermeneutical structure, enhances "a range of institutional, cultural, social, and historical practices" (Foste 2017: 10) and perpetuates the status quo. It functions as the lens through which considerations are made and the racial others are viewed (Foste 2017: 3, 10).[105] Therefore, in line with Foste (2017) and Steyn (2001) I will conceptualise Whiteness as an ideological framework creating, benefitting and directing White identity.

When reflecting on Whiteness as the "master narrative" (Steyn 2001: 3), it is also important to consider the tension between the *heterogeneity* and *homogeneity* within White social identity. Seen from a homogenous point of view, Whiteness is described as the defining characteristic which transcends other intersections of identity such as gender, class, history and region (Jennings 2020: 6-7). Moreover, it represents control and sameness; "a control that aims for sameness and a sameness that imagines control" (2020: 7). Contrastingly, proponents of the heterogeneity of Whiteness point out that homogeneity does not account for the intricate differences between cultures, contexts, etc. By treating Whiteness in a decontextualised, monolithic and uniform manner, reduces the opportunity to unmask Whiteness as a nuanced, multifaceted and situationally specific identity (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007: 393; Spickernell 2016: 1-2).[106] This is especially evident in South Africa where certain traits of homogeneous Whiteness are apparent but where different kinds of "Whitenesses" are also noticeable (Spickernell 2016: 40). Therefore, this enquiry into Whiteness will take cognisance of both positions. After all, to face Whiteness properly in the uniquely South African context where the monolithic nature of Whiteness is challenged, it needs to be particularised.

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[105] In the words of McLaren (1997: 9), "As an ideological formation transformed into a principle of life, into an ensemble of social relations and practices, Whiteness needs to be understood as conjunctural, as a composite term that shifts in denotative and connotative emphasis, depending upon how its elements are combined and upon the contexts in which it operates."

[106] See Hunter and Van der Westhuizen et al. (2022c) for an exposition of Whitenesses in different contexts and intersectionalities.

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This chapter will therefore firstly focus on the broader view of Whiteness, whereafter the more particularised South African Whiteness will be introduced. Thereafter, the perpetuating capabilities of Whiteness and the academic field of Whiteness studies will be explored. Since this study is situated in the South African context, the particularities thereof, as well as the views of South African interlocuters will be woven into the discussion throughout. Nonetheless, the depiction and development of the ideology of Whiteness will now be presented.

5.2 Presenting Whiteness.

In the context of a study of Whiteness, the first question to be raised is of course: What is Whiteness? It is not so easy to get a grip on a definition of Whiteness, except to say that it is socially constructed and that it is kept in place by a system of privileges. Melissa Steyn (2005: 121) defines Whiteness as follows:

> I believe it is best understood as an ideologically supported social positionality that has accrued to people of European descent as a consequence of the economic and political advantage gained during and subsequent to European colonial expansion. The position was originally facilitated by the construction of “race,” which acted as a marker of entitlement to this position. The phenotypes, especially skin color, around which the notion of “race” was organized, acted as a useful means of naturalising what in fact were political and economic relationships, supporting the fiction that the inequalities structured into the relationships were the result of endogenous, probably genetic, inequalities between “races.” Whiteness is the shared social space in which the psychological, cultural, political, and economic dimensions of this privileged positionality are normalized, and rendered unremarkable.

Defining Whiteness as “an ideologically supported social positionality” (Steyn 2005: 121) confirms the multifaceted, variable and ambivalent character of Whiteness. Steyn identifies the historical construction of Whiteness with the resulting intersection between the economic, political, psychological and cultural dimensions that aims to naturalise and normalise Whiteness (Van Wyngaard 2016a: 6). This concurs with McLaren (1997: 9) who describes Whiteness as a “sociocultural, sociopolitical, and geopolitical process.” This process

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can also be described as a "racial ordering", with Whites at the top of the hierarchy, designed to enhance "the development of global capitalism and imperialism" (Southall 2022: 10). Subsequently, Whiteness becomes the norm, the universalised standard "working in the background" (Vice 2010: 324). Within this system, Whites are advantaged in ways that are invisible to themselves; advantages that are not even seen as advantages, because it "is just the way things are" (2010: 324).

Furthermore, by positioning Whiteness as an ideology validates it as a dominant racial framework that determines daily racial interactions. It has "the power to define both itself and the other" (Steyn 2001: 8), i.e., it is the standard by which all other groups are compared (DiAngelo 2018: loc 456; Foste 2017: 23). Because it is the norm, it dominates and stubbornly knows how to sustain itself and as such takes its own myths for granted and much too seriously (Maluleke 2020b). Additionally, understood as a social construct, verifies that Whiteness is full of contradictions and paradoxes (Steyn 2001: 16). It is homogenous and heterogenous (Jennings 2020), it is systemic but also retains a sense of individuality (Foste 2017: 23), it is invisible but also counterintuitively visible (Lindner 2018: 44), it is "everywhere and nowhere, everything and nothing" (Perkinson 1999: 438), it is based on inclusion and exclusion, it is both the oppressor and the innocent (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 25), on a daily basis it is created and recreated (Lindner 2018: 47), and it is global but also contextually and geographically relevant. Whiteness is rhetorically perpetuated, but it is also more than words. It's not just a set of ideas or a theory. It is material, it is institutional, it is consequential and relational, it is rooted in law, in culture, in customs and in policy (Maluleke 2020b), held up and enabled by sexuality (Saldanha 2022), economy, power, gender, class, Christianity (Martin 2020), theology (Van Wyngaard 2016a: 6), missionary activity (Maluleke 2020b) and as we've seen throughout history, Whiteness has also been weaponised (Maluleke 2020b).

Nevertheless, even though Whiteness is dominant and normative, or maybe precisely because of its dominance and normativity, it is not static. It evolves, it includes, it seduces, negotiates, adopts and assimilates – "its borders must be understood as malleable and porous … it is always in a state of flux and fibrillation" (McLaren 1997: 8). Jennings' (2020: 9) description of Whiteness reflects this evolving character:

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> (Whiteness) does not refer to people of European descent but to a way of being in the world and seeing the world that forms cognitive and effective structures able to seduce people into its habitation and its meaning making.

Jennings (2020) confirms the heterogenous character of Whiteness by also including people of non-European descent. Whiteness as an ideology is also "a way of being in the world" (2020: 9) that keeps on producing and perpetuating through different structures and furthermore uses these structures to draw or seduce people into its world, into its sense-making. It is what Jennings (2020: 19) calls "the convening power of whiteness", the ability granted to Whiteness, already visible during the colonial and imperial eras, to convene or "gather the world" (2020: 19) according to its understanding of how the gathering should be and what it should look like. This power afforded Whiteness a "son of God status" which enabled it to incarnationally cross boundaries and stamp its authority and view of civilisation onto others (Leonardo 2002: 34). Today, this plays out, for example, in the way people from different origins (e.g., Hispanic, Asian, etc) are willingly or otherwise, incorporated into American Whiteness. Similarly, during apartheid South Africa (pre-1994), people from Taiwanese and Japanese descent was granted "honorary-White" status. As such, Whiteness as a social construction, happens where *chance* ("features and ancestry"), *context* ("social setting") and conscious *choice* (to alter identity) overlaps (McLaren 1997: 9).[107]

Thus, situating Whiteness as an ideology (Steyn 2005), a social construct (Steyn 2001), a racial discourse (Maluleke 2020b) and a way of being (Jennings 2020) gives it both a historical context and allows it to function as a toolkit or racial frame for Whites to draw from as they interpret, navigate and make sense of daily situations (Foste 2017: 26). It also gives Whiteness the ability to draw people into its way of seeing and being in the world. This shows that Whiteness cannot be neutral as it is also an assumed and negotiated identity (Lindner 2018: 51). Moreover, it allows us to interrogate Whiteness, how it is perpetuated and how it is related to evolving forms of racism (Foste 2017: 23).

[107] Njabulo Ndebele (2015) describes this convening ability of Whiteness in the current South African context: "Whiteness in South Africa is encoded in lived life – in laws, in the built environment and in every significant sphere of organised public life. The dilemma of the Black elite in this situation is that they find themselves participating in a system, still deeply entrenched, that was created by whites working in what has been for them a profitable economic system which has deployed conquered peoples around the world in its service, and, in the process, also produced racism on a global scale. 'Whiteness' keeps getting recruits."

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With this understanding of Whiteness in mind, we can now move on to explore the properties of Whiteness and the racial framework of Whiteness as precursors to the South African version of Whiteness.

5.2.1 Properties of Whiteness.

In order to properly understand Whiteness and the way in which it replicates its superiority, we need to understand it's functionality. In the words of Owen (2007: 205), we need to ascertain the "'functional properties' that characterize aspects of how Whiteness operates or functions as a socio-historical phenomenon that reproduces White supremacy." Foste (2017: 24-25) and Owen (2007: 206) highlight the following functional properties of Whiteness.[108]

The first functional property stresses that Whiteness works with a particular perspective that shapes an understanding of the White self and the world.

Second, Whiteness advances both from a location of difference and a location of economic, political, social and cultural advantage.[109]

Third, Whiteness is normalised, which contributes to its invisibility in White dominated societies.

Flowing from the third, the fourth property emphasises that Whiteness is generally invisible to Whites but highly visible to people of colour.[110]

The fifth property points out that although Whiteness does not refer to mere skin colour, it is nonetheless embodied, i.e., it is a way of being that "shapes actions, social practices and dispositions" (Owen 2007: 206). This corresponds with Jennings' (2020: 9) definition of Whiteness as "a way of being in the world", and with Ahmed (2007), Alcoff (1999) and Saldanha (2022) considering Whiteness through the lens of phenomenology and the co-

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[108] From a South African perspective, McKaizer (2011: 453-454) highlights four typifying features of Whiteness that are integrated into the eight functional properties: because it operates in the background it is *invisible*; because it is second nature to White people it is *habitual*; it assumes to be the standard of behaviour and is therefore *normative*; and it is *unearned* because of the racial privileges that comes with it.

[109] I would also include theological, but more on that in later chapters of this thesis.

[110] I will use the designation "people of colour" to refer in broader terms (especially in the South African context) to all those not racialised or demarcated as white. In some instances, I will also use the term "non-white" either because this was the language of the text being analysed at the time, or in a critical sense to illustrate the views of a particular white perspective.

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constitutive epistemic and ontological power of Whiteness highlighted by Hunter and Van der Westhuizen (2022: 15).

A sixth property of Whiteness confirms the continuous redefining of its boundaries. This echoes the contextual and heteronomous nature of Whiteness.

Seventh is the inherently violent nature of Whiteness. Historically its roots are drenched in violence, while presently still maintaining supremacy through actual or potential violence. This is expounded by Leonardo (2002: 32) when he writes: "we must come to terms with the whiteness of violence and the violence of whiteness." With the violence of apartheid Whiteness in mind, Hook (2011: 7) refers to this trope as "whiteness as terror", that is, "whiteness is accordingly thus assigned the values of brutality, inhumanity and capricious violence."

Finally, Foste (2017: 25), supported by Hunter and Van der Westhuizen (2022: 183) adds an eighth property, namely "the intersectional nature of whiteness." Whiteness is a place of privilege, which is modified (not diminished) by a range of different intersecting identities, such as sexuality, gender and class.[111]

Through social systems, embodiment and the institutionalising and ordering of power, these properties contribute to the reproduction of systems of White supremacy (Owen 2007: 207). Underlying these functional properties though, is a White racial framework or structure that contributes to the formation of a social order that works to the benefit of Whiteness.

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5.2.2 White racial framework.

> I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group (McIntosh 1989: 1).

With these words, Peggy McIntosh (1989) began her seminal paper on the invisible advantages bestowed on Whites. She describes this invisible system, framework or structure as a knapsack of unearned assets available to Whites; "an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks" (1989:

[111] For example, see Robertson (2020) for an exposition on the intersectionality between Whiteness, Christianity and queer politics in South Africa.

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1).[112] In other words, it functions as the frame in the background, holding up the mirror that reflects Whiteness. This implies that Whiteness continuously and unknowingly structures the social order to its advantage. According to Owen (2007: 207), this is done by the conditioning of social practices, cultural representations and the formation of identity. McLaren (1997: 8) depicts it as a "sociohistorical form of consciousness … (that) constitutes and demarcates ideas, feelings, knowledge, social practices, cultural formations, and systems of intelligibility that are identified with or attributed to white people and that are invested in by white people as 'White'." Ahmed (2007: 154) describes it as an orientation that brings certain advantageous objects, which were historically set in place, within reach and is thereafter reproduced through inheritance and sharing. Steyn (2001: 5-22) refers to this structure as a common White identity, historically shaped by defining Whites against others, entrenched by societal norms, religious norms and the so-called natural or scientific order of things. Jansen (2009: 171) refers to it as "knowledge in the blood", which is embedded, transmitted, habitual, emphatic, defensive and not easily changed. Schneider (2017: 373) frames it as a White *habitus*, which refers to "a system constructed by enduring dispositions, tastes, practices, preferences, moral norms, epistemologies, and ideologies." Whereas Jennings (2020: 63), portrays it as a design "that circulated and still circulates ideas of the true, the good, the beautiful, the noble, the insightful, the penetrating, the transcendent, and the full range of human existence around the white body."

Understood as such, Whiteness firstly functions as a "structuring property" or social system shaping the "cognitive and evaluative frameworks" of individuals through socialisation and acculturation, and secondly creating the conditions, whether "acknowledged or unacknowledged", of action (Owen 2007: 208). This means the social world is shaped by the "needs, interests and values of whites", resulting in individuals being socialised and assimilated into Whiteness, which again will lead to them reflecting this Whiteness in everyday social practices (2007: 208). Hence, Whiteness becomes the "medium and the outcome of social practices", which inevitably leads to the normalising and systematising of Whiteness (2007: 209). From this perspective, Whiteness is "a racial perspective", or

[112] Although McIntosh's metaphor of a knapsack is valuable, it is also problematic. A knapsack is something that can be taken of or disowned at will, while the racial framework is not something that Whites can get rid of. Furthermore, the knapsack can be too individualistic, in the process obscuring the relational element of the racial frame and White privilege (Applebaum 2016).

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worldview endorsed by practices and institutions that White people are frequently the subjects of, because it benefits them (Leonardo 2002: 31). In this sense, Whiteness functions in the background to systemically inform every aspect of the social order and to continuously entrench White advantage. It gives meaning to every aspect of life, it is internalised, not objective and so entrenched that Whites, being fully invested, cannot even admit to it (DiAngelo & Menakem 2021).

With Whiteness situated as an ideology, constructed and reproduced through functional properties and with a racial framework holding it in place, we can now turn to the particular South African reflection of Whiteness.

5.3 Whiteness: A South African outlook.

The song "Shot down", written by South African singer-songwriter James Phillips during the turbulent and violent 1980's in South Africa, is probably one of the most important songs depicting the complexities of South African Whiteness (Bezuidenhout 2021). Phillips wrote this haunting song after seeing a photograph of a Black man shot down in the street and realising that his White privilege was due to the labour of such Black people. Here are some of the words:

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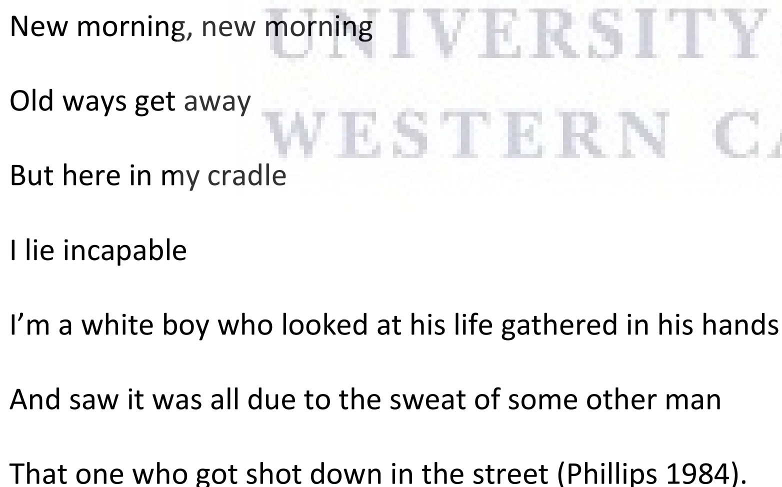

New morning, new morning

Old ways get away

But here in my cradle

I lie incapable

I'm a white boy who looked at his life gathered in his hands

And saw it was all due to the sweat of some other man

That one who got shot down in the street (Phillips 1984).

On the one hand the song confirms the shameful and violent history of Whiteness in South Africa. It reveals that the "performance of whiteness" (Ratele & Laubscher 2010: 98) in South Africa involved violence to authenticate and affirm White racial identity. In this sense it serves as a mirror reflecting the worst of South African Whiteness. On the other hand, it reflects that South African Whiteness and its accompanying privilege was achieved through systemic

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exclusion and manufactured othering (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 6). As such, the particularity of South African Whiteness is reflected. It confirms one of the facets of Whiteness pointed out in previous sections of this chapter, namely that Whiteness is by no means homogenous (Steyn 2005: 122). There are striking differences between contexts, for example the difference in Whiteness between Europe and the USA and Whiteness in different postcolonial settings. Steyn (2000, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2005) points out that the South African discourse on Whiteness is profoundly influenced by the particularity of its historical and political context. It shares the theoretical framework of Whiteness in general but also has uniquely South African features. The particularity of the South African context has a profound impact on Whiteness here (Steyn 2000: 6, Vice 2010: 324).

For one, the demographics of the South African society means that Whites are in the minority (Steyn 2001: xxiv). In the words of Hunter and Van der Westhuizen (2022a: 11):

> (South Africa) … "is the only postcolonial African state that retains a sizeable white population. However, it is also unique among former British settler states in that white people form a demographic, political and, increasingly, cultural minority."

This, together with the South African colonial and apartheid history and the assumptions that goes with it, afforded Whites and their accompanying advantage the experience of being visible, i.e., very "conscious of their 'whiteness'" (Steyn 2000: 7), as opposed to other settler countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where Whites have the demographic, political and economic power and are therefore regarded as the invisible norm (Steyn 2001: xxiv). The advantage and privilege of White South Africa despite their demographic minority was entrenched by their European colonial roots and the ensuing structures and processes of the apartheid system and its accompanying differentiated racialisation (Steyn 2000, 2001, 2003, 2005). Consequently, in contrast to other Western contexts, "South Africa provides a unique situation in which white dominance has occurred, and continues to occur in some forms, despite numerical inferiority" (Salusbury and Foster 2004: 93). This numerical inferiority, however, at some level always reminded Whites of their fragile position (Steyn 2001: 25). As Steyn (2001: 25) puts it: "The fear of being overrun, the fear of domination, the fear of losing the purity that was supposed to guarantee their superior position, the fear of cultural genocide through intermingling – the anxieties were always present." Such anxieties and insecurities led to White South Africans tenaciously holding on

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to “colonial assumptions that helped to underwrite the social construction of whiteness” (Steyn 2003: 25) and inevitably motivated and perpetuated the quest for White supremacy.

For another, we must recognise the complex intersectional positionality of White South Africa (Steyn 2005: 120). White South Africans are the descendants of European settlers (originally mostly Dutch and British) and are for the most part brought up within the cultural contours and narratives of these roots. At the same time, over generations they became historically and economically deeply rooted in South Africa (Steyn 2001, 2005). In the words of Steyn (2001: xxiv), “they are a permanent group; although not aboriginal, they are sociologically indigenous.” This form of Whiteness where European and South African Whiteness intersect, is called “diasporic Whiteness” (Steyn 2005: 119). In other words, although South African Whiteness is numerically marginalised and particularised, they still maintain links with international Whiteness. In typically diasporic fashion they maintain and nurture the bonds with centres of Whiteness such as Europe, the USA and Australasia (Steyn 2005: 126). In this sense, “home is where ‘other’ whites are” (Steyn 2003: 5). Even after breaking with the British Commonwealth and becoming a republic in 1961, White South Africa held on to the European notions of “racial and cultural superiority, of entitlement to political control and land ownership and of the right to benefit from their access to the world capitalist system at the expense of an exploited, subjugated non-white majority” (Steyn 2001: xxiii).

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In this sense South African diasporic Whiteness differs from traditional diaspora because they hold so much power and privilege in their adopted location. Usually, diaspora refers to those being dislocated from their centre of identity and having limited power in relation to the centre of their new location. Subsequently, White South Africans live with a duality and tension of strength and vulnerability, usually managed by the discursive strategies which aims to balance the privileges afforded their racial identity and being dispersed (Steyn 2003: 6). They also maintain a degree of choice, for example they can travel internationally or relocate with relative ease, and they can choose how much “Africanness” or “Europeanness” they want to embrace (Steyn 2005:126). In the words of Steyn (2005: 125): “While decentered in the local context, their whiteness links them to the centers of international power: economically, culturally, politically, socially.” This confirms the notion of “hybridity”, i.e.,

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"multiple, fluid identities" in South African diasporic whiteness (Steyn 2003: 31).[113] Perhaps this uncomfortable position contributes to some Whites, especially in post-apartheid South Africa, emphasising that they are "African" (Vice 2010: 331).[114] It is however important to note that while European Whiteness remains important in the construction of Whiteness, the movement away from Europe has influenced the construction of Whiteness as well. There are important differences between Euro-American Whiteness and South African Whiteness that needs to be recognised and considered (Steyn 2005: 132). This will become more apparent as we navigate through this discussion.

Added to the above factors differentiating South African Whiteness, is the unique South African "multiplicity of whitenesess" (West 2010: 117). White South Africa is divided geographically, politically, religiously, economically and culturally (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 93; Hunter & Van der Westhuizen 2022: 11). In the words of Njabulo S. Ndebele (West 2010: 117):

> It occurred to me that, in fact, there is a multiplicity of 'whitenesses' which we don't understand because these differences have all been papered over by the official whiteness of apartheid, in the same way that apartheid papered over everyone who was Black.

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The most public and historically significant schism however, is between Afrikaans (or Afrikaner) and English-speaking Whiteness (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 93, Steyn 2003: 2).[115] South African Whiteness is defined by this paradoxically "intra-white" rivalry "for domination of the land, it's resources and it's indigenous populations" (Steyn 2003: 2), while at the same time being united by their disassociation from the non-white other, their fear of losing their

[113] This study does not deal with White South Africans emigrating to other countries where Whiteness is more visible. This is also called diaspora. In this sense they do share the hybrid character of South African Whiteness by often establishing South African communities in their adopted countries (Steyn 2004b: 74). Conversely, we also see what Steyn (2003: 39) highlights as "counter-diasporic resistance", which refers to them "disidentifying themselves from their homeland."

[114] This phenomenon might need further exploration. I am uncertain whether these White South Africans position themselves as "African" or as "South African". In my experience the loyalties of White South Africans lie more with South Africa and not so much with Africa as a continent. The motivation for this designation might also include such factors as shame and guilt because of apartheid, economic realities and a historical rootedness and responsibility towards South Africa.

[115] Within the parameters of Afrikaans and English Whiteness we also find among others, Portuguese, Greek, Jewish, rich, poor and queer Whitenesses. A more recent articulation of different Whitenesses is between those Whites who "want to know" the Black other, as opposed to those who "don't want to know" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 55).

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privilege and being overwhelmed by an African majority (Steyn 2001: 25, 35; 2004a: 147). This construction of Whiteness is described as an "internal colonisation within the White group", meaning that at certain times they recognised their White unity, but "neither wanted to be white in the same way" (Steyn 2001: 26). This is perhaps best illustrated by tropes such as Cape Town's "boerewors curtain", "an imaginary divide between Afrikaans en English residential areas" (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 94). Of course, neither of these groups are in themselves homogenous. Both are composed from different peoples that over time found common ground and developed unique identities. Apart from individual immigrants from different contexts included in both groups, the core of Afrikaners originally came from the Dutch and French Huguenots, while English-speaking South Africans derived from such diverse groups as the British and Portuguese settlers (Steyn 2003: 3). Nonetheless, both groups grew into a broader group called "Europeans" (Whites), tied together by accrued privilege and the manufactured distance from "non-whites" (2003: 3). Since these differing cultural identities over time played such a significant role in the development of South African Whiteness, a brief contextualisation of the two groups will suffice.

Historically, the central belief of Afrikaner Whiteness is that they are legitimate, elected and God-ordained, racially superior occupants of South Africa (Van der Merwe 2009: 118–123).[116] Moreover, having been conquered by the English on more than one occasion, "being marked as just-about-White in relation to hegemonic Whiteness, represented by British colonialists" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 4) and being defeated by the British forces during the South African war of 1899-1902, helped to forge the White Afrikaner identity.[117] In this sense, Afrikaner Whiteness has an affinity with so-called "subaltern Whiteness", i.e., Whiteness that had to cope with another dominant form of Whiteness (Steyn 2004a: 148).[118] As such, this type of Whiteness is characterised by patterns of inclusion and exclusion and "domination and subordination". Making them both the object and the perpetrator of racism (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 25). This resistance against the more powerful English Whiteness on the one side and indigenous populations on the other, along with experiences of trauma and loss

[116] Van Wyngaard (2019: 44, 190) points to the "appropriation of Old Testament themes of 'election', 'volk' and 'promised land'", as well as supersessionist theology underlying the construction of Afrikaner Whiteness.

[117] See Müller (2004) for a comprehensive discussion on the relationship between the South African war, religion and White supremacy in South Africa.

[118] For a critical reflection on the discourse of 'subaltern Whiteness', see Kaunda (2017).

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during and after the war, as well as feelings of inferiority and humiliation, accompanied by the "poor White" question of the 1930's and the struggle for an independent language (Steyn 2004a, 2004b), culminated in White Afrikaner nationalism which centred around the themes of religious, racial and cultural purity, superiority, calling, paternalism, pride, noble suffering, Calvinist decency, land and the Afrikaans language (Verwey & Quayle 2012: 553). Müller (2004: 24) cuts to the core of this Afrikaner positionality:

> Afrikaner white supremacy was deeply rooted in the insecurities brought about by the knowledge of the precarious nature of their identity as the only white tribe in Africa.

Therefore, the aim was "constructing an essentialised ethnicity – incorporating a resolute whiteness" (Steyn 2003: 220), wherein "conformism" was entrenched and "thinking differently" was penalised (Van der Westhuizen 2018: 36).[119] Subsequently, Afrikaner nationalism was consolidated in 1948 when the National Party came to power and established the system of apartheid to primarily protect White advantage and Afrikanerdom (Jansen 2009, Steyn 2001, 2004a, Van der Westhuizen 2017, Verwey & Quayle 2012).[120] As summarised by Jansen (2009: 31):

> A disparate group of white settlers from Europe comes to the southernmost tip of Africa, overcomes the elements and the imperialists, establishes a strong tribal identity and founds one of the longest-surviving and only white nationalist party on the harsh soil of another continent.

Hence, Afrikaner Whiteness is drenched in resistance (Steyn 2003: 218), e.g., against the elements, the English, indigenous populations, economic hardship, racial impurity, liberalists, socialists, loss of privilege and cultural and linguistic hegemony. Furthermore, a noticeable aspect in this type of resistant Afrikaner Whiteness is the discourse of victimhood: "They saw themselves as besieged, having to fight for the 'right' to their own brand of White supremacy, in which claiming the land for themselves and appropriating Black labour have featured

[119] Ironically the Afrikaners, like the Coloured community, can be considered Creole. Along with sharing a Creole language, these two groups share a genetic pool, consisting of European, slave and indigenous ancestry. As the racial boundaries and the quest for Afrikaner selfhood became more pronounced, the Afrikaners tried very hard to suppress and exorcise this intersectionality from memory (Steyn 2003: 219, 2004b: 70).

[120] For a comprehensive overview of the history and development of the Afrikaner identity, see Gilliomee (2003), Pretorius, et. al. (2012), Van der Merwe (2009) and Van der Westhuizen (2007).

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prominently" (Steyn 2003: 218). In post-apartheid South Africa, Afrikaner victimhood is still prevalent with Afrikaner nationalist movements depicting Afrikaners as the victims of Black empowerment. In this sense the "laager" remains an appropriate metaphor to encapsulate the construction of Afrikaner (and South African) Whiteness. It highlights withdrawal and drawing together as an alternative to the constant threats facing the Afrikaner (Van Wyngaard 2019: 44). [121]

On the other hand, the history of White English-speaking South Africans (WESSAs) can be described as complex and ambivalent. According to Salusbury and Foster (2004: 93-95), this is especially evident in the lack of academic interest shown in comparison to Afrikaner Whiteness. Two reasons for this are given by Salusbury and Foster: Firstly, the diversity within this grouping begs the question whether it can even be characterised as a group at all. It encompasses such ethnicities as Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Greek, Jewish and even Afrikaner ancestries. It is only in the face of other more obviously defined cultural groupings that it exists as a WESSA grouping. Secondly, there is apparently not much to say about them. This uncertainty about who they are, is eloquently summarised by Salusbury and Foster (2004: 94): "the group's self-definition by what they are not – not Black and not Afrikaans – has left them with very little sense of what they in fact are." Whereas Afrikaner Whiteness "has been always already marked", English-speaking Whiteness "has remained largely unexamined, just normal and unspecific" (Steyn 2003: 218). In this sense, English-speaking South African Whiteness corresponds with discourses of "culturelessness" and "cultural normativeness" of British and American Whiteness (Salusbury and Foster 2004: 96). In the end, "to claim culturelessness is to claim normalcy" (2004: 98). Moreover, they resist any form of group classification or nationalistic group consciousness by positioning "themselves exclusively as individuals" (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 98). Historically they adhere to the philosophy of individualism, which helps to obscure Whiteness. Claiming culturelessness and individualism in this way, gives them a more powerful position despite their group minority identity (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 97-98). As Salusbury and Foster (2004: 99) point out:

[121] For an anthropological study of the Afrikaner in post-Apartheid South Africa, see Van der Merwe (2009).

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> Although WESSAs may be in the political minority, while masquerading as a-cultural and/or a-collective they position themselves in a way that enables them to consolidate their social and economic status … (and) … by positioning themselves as individuals … (they) … may appear to be able to act in the best interests of all South Africans.

Furthermore, WESSA identity "draws on global Anglo whiteness" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 25). In 1795, the British seized the Cape and until "the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910", British imperialism was prevalent (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 25). Englishness, with its "cultural and racial superiority" (Steyn 2003: 30) and exclusivism was at the centre (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 25). Their mission was to be a "civilising influence on the natives" in exchange for economic benefits (Steyn 2003: 31), while in their eyes, the Afrikaner was culturally and socially inferior (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 26); hence, not White enough. Accordingly, other than the Afrikaners, who were embedded in South Africa, WESSAs maintained a close bond with Europe and their European identities (Steyn 2001: 31). As such they have a more global belonging and retention of close links with Western cultural concerns. An attachment other South Africans criticise them for (especially in the context of South African national pride) but also gave them unique opportunities, power and an unmarked position. Coupled with WESSAs global belonging, is access and privilege afforded them by being English language speakers. After all, the privilege of Whiteness is easily and obscurely communicated through the English language (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 104, 106-107). All things considered, this global connection does allow WESSAs to "tap into a transnational culture of whiteness" (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 2004) and "universalism in denial of its ethnic particularity" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 29).

Nevertheless, initially the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century, culminating in the National Party taking power in 1948, left the WESSAs feeling estranged and insecure (Steyn 2003: 217). White South African coherence and solidarity was however gradually achieved by the apartheid government "using a fear psychosis constellated around a 'Black peril' complex" and by changing the European versus native narrative to White versus non-white (Steyn 2003: 218). Yet, in the past, WESSAs minority status, perceived culturelessness, individualism, economic strength and lack of political muscle within the bigger South African political landscape allowed them to deny commonality between

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Afrikaner politics and their own. The question however remains: is this not just a convenient excuse for their role and the benefits they accrued during South Africa's ill-fated racial history (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 94)? As Van der Westhuizen (2017: 56) rightly points out: "Indeed, a prevalent attribution of apartheid as an exclusively Afrikaner project … deflects accountability from the WESSA subject position." In other words, they are not as White as "those other Whites" (Steyn 2001: 107).[122]

For three centuries, Afrikaner and English-speaking Whites in South Africa, while in the presence of the non-white majority, managed to "maintain their advantage as the dominating group" in all spheres of society (Steyn 2001: 43). As such, "the center was constituted around the marginalised" (2001: 43) and both White groups played a role in this endeavour (2001: 151). Of course, this situation was never going to hold. In the early 1990's everything changed, resulting in all racial groups having to re-evaluate and re-imagine their positionalities. Obviously, it had major implications for Whiteness, as described in the next section.

5.3.1 A dislocated Whiteness.

Steyn (2004a: 150) describes dislocation "as occurring when social changes result in the previously unseen or denied being made forcibly visible, when the representations and constructions that shaped identities are recognized, and the boundaries of the approved have moved to such an extent that new horizons for the social imaginary have to be forged." Such dislocations are hugely disruptive and traumatic, but also opens new and "different possibilities" for all subjects involved (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 13).

The demise of "official apartheid is such a dislocatory event", especially for White South Africans (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 13). Indeed, in South Africa, "the master narrative fell apart" (Steyn 2003: 151). Jansen (2009: 46) calls it an experience of defeat where the "treasured knowledge of the past is shattered." A situation, especially applicable to Afrikaners because they were explicitly implicated in institutionalising and maintaining apartheid, whereas WESSAs, who also benefitted from apartheid (by virtue of the racial contract) could claim they did not partake in the intricacies of apartheid (Steyn 2018: 10). Apartheid was a modernist construction which was effective in entrenching and centring the "master narrative of Whiteness" (Steyn 2001: 3). The advent of post-apartheid South Africa not only disrupted

[122] For a comprehensive summary of the history of English-speaking Whites in South Africa, see Lambert (2012).

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and dislocated the "master narrative" (2001: 3) but also changed the relationships between White South Africa and the previously colonised to such a degree that the post-apartheid era brought "South Africa to fully-fledged postcoloniality" (Steyn 2001: 150). This forced White South Africans to look for "new ways of relating to other racial groups", while also justifying their continued belonging in South Africa (Schneider 2017: 379).

After 1994 Whites lost political power, but to a large extent still held on to economic power, and, because of the hegemony of universal Western culture (Steyn 2005: 122), their position "is certainly not that of marginalization" (2005: 122). In the words of Van der Westhuizen (2018: 35): "While apartheid has officially come to an end, White power persists, symbolically and materially." Nevertheless, the loss of political power demand a reframing, renegotiation and reconstruction of their social identity, frequently causing feelings of irrelevance, dissonance, victimhood and fear. This often culminates in recycling "the old Master Narrative" (Steyn 2005: 122), "constructing innocence" (Steyn 2018: 10), "claiming victim status" (2018: 10), White flight to other countries where Whiteness is more visible, or withdrawing into White enclaves locally (Steyn 2004a, 2005, 2018). Moreover, especially among Afrikaners this phenomenon is further exacerbated by fears of being targeted by the state culminating in discourses of "victimhood and ethnic cleansing", with farm murders being used as proof that White farmers are being "attacked and victimised" (Pilossof 2022: 171).

Conversely, some Whites lean towards a more "liberatory attitude" aiming to reconstruct Whiteness along "new, more appropriate lines", constructive attitudes (Steyn 2001: 151) and attempt to manage privilege in more "ethically responsible" ways (Schneider 2017: 380). Consequently, Whiteness "demonstrates a postmodern aspect" (Steyn 2001: xxxi) with beliefs and reactions ranging from the "fundamentalist" to the "constructivist" (Steyn 2001: 152), from "straight denial to full confession" (Jansen 2009: 41), or between "retreat" and "engagement" (Southall 2022: 187). As such, this leads us back to a diasporic understanding of post-apartheid Whiteness. Whereas White South Africa is politically decentred, they still have links to "Western international power" (Steyn 2003: 38), while also being highly visible in the African context. Within this transitional environment White South Africans wrestle with how to make "meaningful adjustments" (Steyn 2003: 38).

Subsequently, I will briefly examine an attempt by Steyn (2001) to construct a future for Whiteness in the new South Africa. Analysing the time of political and social transition after

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1994, Steyn identifies five narratives which reflect the different ways in which White South Africa endeavours to make sense of this new reality. Although there is probably a fluidity in White responses, these narratives do provide us with a useful way to conceptualise the different ways Whites respond to the transitional environment that is South Africa.[123] Remarkably, maybe unsurprisingly, some twenty years later, Southall (2022: 121) points out that there are still strong reverberations of these narratives prevalent among White South Africans.

The first and most fundamentalist narrative is called, *Still colonial after all these years* (Steyn 2001: 59-67). This narrative holds on to the master narrative and the power to influence and "dictate the content and pace of change" (2001: 59). Within this narrative we find the equally paternalistic *Hardliner Colonial* (2001: 59-64) who holds on to the "superiority" of Whites (2001: 60) and the *Altruistic Colonial* (2001: 64-67) who wants to move forward in the new South Africa while harking "back to an earlier era" (2001: 65). It is apparent that in present day South Africa there are those who still harbour such racist attitudes and seek to isolate themselves and protect their privilege from the majority of South Africans (Burton 2018: 29).

The second narrative, *This Shouldn't happen to a white* (Steyn 2001: 69-81), holds on to White supremacy and the "colonial binaries" (2001: 69), but denies "any systemic, structural or economic advantage for Whites" in the current dispensation (2001: 71). In this sense we see a reversal of the traditional binaries, with Whites now being the victims (2001: 73). The only options left within this scenario is withdrawal by emigrating to other countries or into White enclaves, or defiance (2001: 79). This plays into the "Afrikaner psyche" of being "perpetually persecuted", whereas WESSAs "draw on Afro-pessimism" linked to their "colonial history" (2001: 80). Accordingly, this narrative is perpetuated through the remnants of apartheid spatial imaginary. As such, even after 1994, identities are still "spatially organised" (Van der Westhuizen 2016: 1). Ballard (2004) highlights how this happens through "assimilation, emigration, semigration and integration" (2004: 52). *Assimilation* refers to other race groups being conditionally accepted into White spaces (2004: 54). *Emigration* is the movement of

[123] Specifically, within the political sphere, Southall (2022: 187-202) highlights the Afrikaner responses to democracy as "*armed opposers*, who actively combat the ANC government; *passive resisters*, who withdraw from the new democracy; *inclusive proponents*, who identify with democracy and attempts at reconciliation; and *active proponents*, who use democratic rights to engage with the government in defense of Afrikaner and minority rights" (2022: 188).

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Whites to countries that can be unmistakably characterised as Western, modern and first world, in other words, predominantly White (2004: 59). Since, emigration is a privileged undertaking and thus not an available option to all, *semigration* into privatised enclaves or comfort zones became more prevalent (2004: 60). Even among the poor, semigration occurs with poor Whites moving into so-called White squatter camps. Therefore, "the process of othering" (2004: 63), so dominant during the apartheid era, is now enabled through the privatisation of space. It is "an attempt to restore a certain sense of 'our' identity through boundary maintenance" (2004: 63). Regrettably, *integration*, referring to a "cosmopolitan space" which moves beyond a regulated and constrained living environment towards an accommodation of otherness, is still in the minority (2004: 64).[124]

Similarly, Van der Westhuizen (2016, 2017, 2021) highlights *inward migration* and *enclave nationalism* amongst the Afrikaner community. After the fall of apartheid, South Africa was re-introduced to the global stage. Referencing cultural theorist Stuart Hall, Van der Westhuizen (2017: 179) highlights the "global postmodern" influence in South Africa. With the global shift away from the "nation-state" with its hold over "collective social identities" and "impression of homogeneity" towards fragmented identities, retrogressive "counter shifts" happened towards the local and "a rediscovery of ethnicity". As global reconfigurations bring more local uncertainty, boundary making, and closure are provoked. Hence, when the hegemonic hold of apartheid collapsed, a new "proliferation of identities" arose, which in turn provokes exclusivist tendencies. Thus, *Inward migration* refers to the process of "whitening", "under the guise of culture" that constitutes "Afrikaans spaces" in suburban "metropolitan areas" (2017: 181). This phenomenon is characterised by people turning inwards, away from those who look, talk, or pray differently. As such, pockets of Afrikaner *enclave nationalism* (or neo-nationalism) built around institutions like family, educational institutions, churches and shopping centres are created. These are further enhanced by the consumption of Afrikaans services, media, arts and cultural products (2017: 191). In other words, it is a South African version of neo-liberalism borrowed from the Global North wherein racism is redefined as culture, a defensive "turn to the local", or spatial "micro-apartheid" covertly created (2017: 191). Consequently, these first two narratives can also be termed "resistant Whiteness"

[124] Also see Ballard (2004b) in this regard.

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(Steyn & Foster 2008: 26). Its aim is "to maintain its advantages in a situation in which Black people have legally and legitimately achieved political power" (Steyn & Foster 2008: 26).

Conversely, in the third narrative, *Don't think white, It's All Right* (Steyn 2001: 83-100), Whites still hold on to their integral White identity, but accepts that Whiteness has been relativised (or marginalised). They are thus more open and pragmatic about their new position in a "multicultural" society (2001: 84). There are two versions in this narrative, the *Whites are doing it for themselves* (2001: 86-93) version which holds on to cultural preservation while willing to contribute. "The value of white expertise" is staunchly emphasised (2001: 88). The Afrikaners find their cultural base in a strong connection with the land, while WESSAs are culturally Eurocentric with a suggestion of "cultural chauvinism" (2001: 93). The second version, *We can work it out* (2001: 93-99), is pragmatic and cooperative but without losing too much Whiteness and influence in the New South Africa.

Narrative four, *A Whither shade of white* (Steyn 2001: 101-114), is a tale of "rationalisation", "denial", projection, evasion, a call for "innocence" (2001: 113-114) and "colour-blindness" (2001: 106). It is a construction of Whiteness that disclaims any implication in Whiteness, evades issues of privilege and power and distances themselves from those groups responsible for the countries racial discord (2001: 102). It further appeals to "an overarching identity" of South African-ness which includes both Afrikaners and WESSAs (2001: 102), while ignoring the impact of race and without fully identifying with "issues facing indigenous Africans" (2001: 103). This narrative also corresponds with Jansen's (2009: 38-41) depiction of two groupings within Afrikanerdom: those who believe "that nothing out of the ordinary happened" (2009: 38) during apartheid and those who acknowledge that some bad has happened during apartheid but now it's time "to get over it" (2009: 39) and move on. Ironically, this denialist approach only serves to protect Whiteness and confirms fragility.

The fifth narrative, *Under African Skies, or white, but not quite* (Steyn 2001: 115-147), refrains from earlier White discourses. It is willing to let go of the old and take on responsibility for becoming (2001: 115). This plays out in three versions namely, *I don't know what to do, being white* (2001: 116) whom acknowledges the new beginning and the need for a reorientated Whiteness in an Africanising society, but they are ambivalent about how to negotiate their place in it; *I don't wanna be white no more* (2001: 120) deals with White guilt and the pain caused by confronting Whiteness by a "public overidentification with everything Black" (2001:

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121), or through living a life of penance; whereas *Hybridisation, that's the name of the game* (2001: 127) tries to deconstruct Whiteness and its privileged positionality. They do not deny race or the racialised effects of apartheid, they face the distressing truth about their own Whiteness, they are honest about the past (2001: 134) and accept that "new approaches, new attitudes and new expectations are required" (2001: 136) from White South Africans. They embrace "personal growth and learning" (2001: 136), a "dialogical approach" towards both self and the other (2001: 138), does not pretend to understand or take on the issues of those "oppressed by Apartheid" (2001: 141) and are willing to sort out the difficult "issues of power" (2001: 142).

According to Jonathan Jansen (2009: 41-44), within the Afrikaner community, three strains of "hybridisation" (Steyn 2001: 127) became apparent after 1994, namely the *activists*, who early on owned up to the atrocities of the past and conceded their privilege (2009: 41); the *gradualists*, who gradually felt "embarrassment, shame and guilt" as they began to understand the consequences of the apartheid past and then go on to work to correct the wrongs (2009: 42); and the *confessionalists*, who had a disturbing and "traumatic encounter with the past", resulting in them wanting to confront the torment they feel and "settle and reconcile" with the hurt other (2009: 43). Regrettably, these strains are still in the minority and must usually deal with strong opposition. Still today, it seems only a small cohort of Afrikaners seem to embrace "the fully inclusive sense of citizenship which the realization of non-racialism requires" (Southall 2020:204). In sum, hybridisation is a postmodernist emancipatory project that moves further and further away from the "modernist master narrative" (Steyn 2001: 170) of Whiteness while looking for new and exciting ways of being White in South Africa. It is therefore a significantly important narrative for dismantling Whiteness and to ensure a movement away from homogenous identities in South Africa (2001: 168).

5.3.2 A shameful Whiteness.

Faced with being White in a context determined by Black South Africans, not only led to traumatic dislocation, but it also caused a sense of loss among some White South Africans. In this new dispensation they are faced with a loss of the "familiar", of "certainty", "comfort", "privilege" and "well-known roles" (Steyn 2001: 156). It is also a "loss of autonomy and control" amid the undeniable realisation of dependence upon the African other (2009: 158).

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Further losses some White people are trying to come to terms with, is the loss of a dominant position and "legitimacy", culminating in feelings of "irrelevance" and "marginalisation" (2001: 159), in turn leading to unwarranted discourses of victimisation and oppression. And then, of course, there is the "loss of honor" (2001: 161). It is uncomfortable being "found out" as the perpetrators (2001: 161).

Most adult White South Africans live with the memories of the injustices and inhumanity caused by the apartheid system. Even when unacknowledged, it is not something they can get away from. As much as people of colour, Whites are shaped by the legacy of apartheid. Additionally, Whites realise they are officially welcomed in a reconciling South Africa but are confronted daily with the stark reality that "materially", not much has changed for Black or White (Vice 2010: 332). This realisation of being welcome but also not feeling welcome because of the legacy of apartheid and the continuing disparities leads to a moral burden and appropriate feelings of "guilt, regret and shame" (2010: 332).[125]

Of these emotions "shame" has the most transformative potential (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 206). Guilt is a subjective state (Durrheim 2021), a more individualist emotion and more about "specific acts that harmed another" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 206). It frequently leads to defensive reactions and transferring the responsibility for forgiveness onto blacks (Fourie 2021). Whereas shame is more socially positioned. It works in both "inter- and intra-subjective modes" where subjects regard themselves in relation to others but is also impacted and formed by those same others (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 206). Therefore, shame has more potential to transform social relations. This, however, depends on whether the shame is acknowledged or not. "Unacknowledged shame" activates destructive anger which often leads to more shame, while "acknowledged shame" avoids anger and allow for the healing of social relationships (2017: 206). Applied to South African Whiteness, unacknowledged shame leads to Whites clinging to "defensive Whiteness" (2017: 210) and the fear associated with the losses as described above. Contrarywise, acknowledged White shame (a position which corresponds with the fifth narrative identified by Melissa Steyn) has the potential to break through the apartheid boundaries, strengthen "humanness" (2017: 210) and create new

[125] According to Fourie (2021) this leads to three responses by Whites: 1) denial of structural racism; 2) accepting the implications; and 3) White guilt.

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social relationships. Indeed, shame has the potential to be a revolutionary emotion (Kritzinger 2001: 239).

5.3.3 A decolonialising Whiteness.

Thus far the discussion focussed on the construction of South African Whiteness and the influence of the post-apartheid era on Whiteness. More recently, however, as pointed out by Steyn (2018), De Villiers (2018) and Pilossof (2022), South African Whiteness took a "decolonial turn" (Steyn 2018: 11). This new phase was brought to the fore by the "fallist" student movement in 2015[126] which deepened and extended the scope of the analyses of Whiteness. This decolonial perspective does not only focus on the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, "decolonial theory emphasises the longer arc of coloniality" (Steyn 2018: 12). As such, colonial atrocities and injuries to Blackness from before 1948 are also considered, which means that no White South African are exempt from accountability. Consequently, there is a greater awareness of how "racial injustice" formed our society "over generations" and how coloniality shaped a world in favour of those who are White and against those who are Black (Steyn 2018: 12).

Steyn then asks how Whites should deal "with this new wave of awareness and self-assertion in black South Africans" (2018: 13)? After all, according to Motlanthe (2018: 3) "all conscious efforts have to be made to decentre whiteness through the creation of spaces for marginalised narratives, all of which have an equally justifiable claim to the centre of historical consciousness." It will therefore take a lot more than the work done post-1994 for Whites to move from inherited White dominance to being supportive of this decolonial project. In the words of Steyn (2018: 13):

> Decolonising whiteness will require much more than just rehearsing the widely acknowledged implications of white privilege, and its concomitant blindness and ignorance. A decolonised whiteness would mean changes in all facets of being – cognitive and epistemological, affective and ethical.

[126] Movement initiated by students to remove colonial symbols from university campuses. It started with "Rhodes must fall", i.e., the statue of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes on the campus of the University of Cape Town. It then evolved into "#feesmustfall", highlighting the ongoing effects of inequality (Van Wyngaard 2016a: 7).

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Steyn (2018: 11-14) then argues that Whites should do more to educate themselves about the realities of Black lived experience, "black pain" (2018: 13) and the colonial and apartheid legacies which still burdens the majority of their fellow South Africans with "poverty", "hardship" and "indignity" (2018: 14). This will mean a fresh look at history and how Whiteness contributed and is still contributing to the present-day condition. Moreover, Whites must on the one hand deal with the inappropriate emotions of "indifference", "denial", "avoidance", "fragility" and escapism, while on the other hand also deal with the more appropriate decolonial emotions such as "guilt", "shame" and "outrage at inequality and suffering" (2018: 14). They must take responsibility and remain engaged and committed to building a new society.

Vice (2010) contributes to this discussion by emphasising that Whites should do introspection, but more importantly Whites should restrain themselves and reduce their presence to "humility and silence" (2010: 335), especially in the political sphere, i.e., "making pronouncements about a situation in which one is so deeply implicated seems a moral mistake…" (2010: 335). However, it is not a "passive" (2010: 335) silence or a silence that equates to withdrawal or a lack of "self-examination" (2010: 336). It is also not a failure to "listen and engage" (2010: 335). Vice advises that Whites should read the "literature of the oppressed", engage with "other voices" and "actively listen to nonwhite voices" (2010: 335-336). It is a silence that aims for "the excluded others to find their own voice" (Van Wyngaard 2015: 485).

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Responding to Vice, Van Wyngaard (2015: 492) expanded on the importance of listening to others and concluded, "my own disorder needs to remind me that I should listen more, to take blackness as a pedagogue for living in this place, and that what is required is a continuing conversion from my own whiteness."

Contrary to Vice, McKaizer (2011) points out that Whites should not be silent in the political sphere. They have the same citizen rights, entitlements and interests as non-whites and should therefore participate in the public political processes but their "tonal and attitudinal changes should reflect their newfound awareness of the nature, scope and continued unjust presence of whiteliness" (2011: 460). In other words, as pointed out by South African theologian Klippies Kritzinger (2016), Whites will need to cross four thresholds to make a

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constructive contribution. They need to say, “farewell to innocence”, to “ignorance”, to “arrogance” and “say ‘yes’ to Africa.” [127]

Overall, from this section one can conclude that South African Whiteness reflects a global, as well as a particular, heterogenous and persistent character. As Van Wyngaard (2016b: 2; 2019:232) confirms:

> …whiteness is constructed globally (such as the relation to economic power), but also reveals the particularities of South African whiteness (such as the particular way in which whiteness is tied to land or language) and also that whiteness in South Africa changes over time (primarily in how whiteness is constructed in relation to the state)

The question remains however if South African Whiteness will be able to play a constructive and transformational role in the new South Africa, especially considering Whiteness’ ability to maintain and perpetuate its dominating influence.[128] The next section will therefore concentrate on the ways and means Whiteness finds to keep its dominance.

5.4 Perpetuating Whiteness.

With the definition of Whiteness, the functional properties thereof, the White racial framework and the contextualised South African Whiteness in mind, this section will deal with different but interrelated ways in which Whiteness is produced and perpetuated. It aims to answer the question: “how does whiteness holds its place” (Ahmed 2007: 156). Before delving into eight concepts that play a significant role in maintaining Whiteness globally, some clarifying remarks about the strategies Whiteness employs to ensure its continuation and maintenance are necessary.

In its quest to remain a dominant global phenomenon, Whiteness employs the concepts attributed to globalisation, namely *multinationalism, fragmentation* and *flexibility* (Leonardo

[127] In a recent contribution, Roger Southall (2022) examines the current place and role of Whites in South African political life. He emphasizes the road to non-racialism through a societally shared commitment to democracy, rapid progress towards racial equality, addressing the land question, addressing Black poverty and the promotion of a more racially mixed society. All of these will place certain demands on White South Africans (2022: 238-247).

[128] More recent offerings confirming the complexities of South African Whiteness and how it plays out in post-1994 South Africa are from Anelia Heese (2023) and Thandiwe Ntshinga (2023).

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2002: 29). As a multinational force, Whiteness succeeded in controlling and transforming "into its own image almost every nook and cranny of the earth" (2002: 32) and is continuing to do so through a process of neo-colonisation. The fragmentary nature of Whiteness refers to Whiteness maintaining its invisibility and privilege by a (purposefully) "fragmented" (2002: 36) understanding of racial history and formation and a misinterpretation of the world as it is, while to attain its dominance, Whiteness also needed to become "flexible" (2002: 41) by accommodating people previously described as "others".

Salusbury and Foster (2004: 104) further highlight Whiteness being enabled by *global capitalism*, specifically "international banks, corporations and mass media". This global power of capitalism further invades and expands into local, particularised spaces through "consumption as pleasure" (Van der Westhuizen 2016: 6; 2017: 186). Whiteness furthermore exerts its influence through the global power inherent in the *English language.* Because English can be learned, "the ideology of whiteness is easily communicated", while projecting itself as ideology-less (Salusbury & Foster 2004: 107).

Added to these are the strategies of *knowledge construction,* which gives Whites the power to produce, construct, "define and articulate knowledge" about themselves and people of colour (Green, Sonn & Matsebula 2007: 399); the construction of a "*national identity and belonging"* where the rights of Whites are superior to those of other peoples and where Whites can consequently decide whom to include and exclude (2007: 402); and "*anti-racism practices"* which place questions on race and racism with non-white people, whereas White people can determine their involvement (2007: 404).

Central to the ongoing preservation of Whiteness are the neoliberal notions of *colour-blindness*, *White complicity* and *White innocence* (Foste 2017: 28-32). The term "*colour blind*" asserts that race is a colour and that colour does not matter, or "if we pretend not to notice race, then there can be no racism" (DiAngelo 2018: loc 692).[129] This of course reduces race to simply a colour, which ignores the social reality of race. It furthermore denies the link between race and systemic oppression, as well as the historical reality of "White domination" and non-white "subordination" (Harris 1993: 1768). Moreover, it perpetuates White privilege and denies the very different lived experiences of people of colour. In fact, it refuses to

[129] Boucher and Matias (2022) reframe colour blindness as *race-evasion*, which further disarms the innocence of Whiteness.

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acknowledge the non-white reality while keeping the White experience insular and unchallenged ("all lives matter" vs "Black lives matter" comes to mind). It also projects the White reality onto the non-white reality as if it is the same thing (DiAngelo 2018: loc 709).[130] Recent studies also demonstrate how White supremacy is further perpetuated by a kind of colour blindness that reinvests in White systems of dominance, while simultaneously becoming more racially conscious and aware of the lived experiences of people of colour (Boucher & Matias 2022). This occurs where the power of one's own positionality is ignored even though "structural racism" is acknowledged, thus resulting in the re-centring of White supremacy (Metha, Schneider & Howard 2021). As an alternative to colour-blindness, Brown (2013) proposes becoming *colour conscious* instead. Where colour-blindness chooses to ignore or disregard race, being colour conscious is to be "aware of race". Colour conscious people are comfortable with noticing racial difference but "without ascribing superiority and inferiority to those differences." They appreciate the cultural differences and diversity inherent in the differences, while also exploring and celebrating racial difference for all its "beauty, quirkiness" and "messiness" (Brown (2013).

White complicity and White innocence refers to all White people, irrespective of their intentions, continuously implicated in perpetuating and holding Whiteness in place as a way of being (Foste 2017: 30). It is done "through unconscious bias, assumptions and beliefs about people of colour", as well as "practices and habits of Whiteness and the consequences" thereof (Foste 2017: 30). Additionally, Whiteness is upheld by Whites viewing themselves as morally "good and innocent" by placing themselves outside of racism, locating racism elsewhere or rejecting any role in systemic racism (Foste 2017: 31). In South Africa, for example Whites feel absolved from the "moral burden" of apartheid and White guilt by "claiming White innocence" and relocating the responsibility for such exoneration onto people of colour (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 194). Conversely, even when Whites acknowledge and admit to privileges gained from Whiteness, situating themselves as "good Whites" (Applebaum 2016: 9), they can still contribute and collude with the system of

[130] Foste (2017: 29) highlights four colourblind frames that operates to distance Whites from individual and institutional racism: 1) abstract liberalism which involves free choice, individualism, meritocracy, equal opportunity and limited government interference to achieve equality; 2) naturalisation, i.e., the natural order of racial segregation; 3) cultural racism; and 4) minimisation or rationalisation of continuing incidents of individual and institutional racism.

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Whiteness by avoiding interrogation and self-critical reflection (Foste 2017: 32). As such, White innocence emerges as a “strategic white disposition” and a “white buffer” to entrench Whiteness, even when they are disturbed by their Black suppressed others (Van der Westhuizen 2016: 5-6; 2017: 185).

According to Ahmed (2007: 156) Whiteness holds its place through *habits*. Habits are described as “routine” or “second nature”; that which happens on an “unconscious” level (2007: 156). Thus, to describe Whiteness as a habit, is to suggest that Whiteness is something that White “bodies do” without even realising it (2007: 156). White bodies do not usually have to “face their Whiteness” (2007: 156), because it is second nature, they are oriented around it; “our very identities are constituted by these patterns of behavior” (Vice 2010: 325).[131] It furthermore implies that Whiteness can unknowingly influence the spaces it operates in. Spaces are shaped by those which inhabits it. Institutions for example are shaped by the bodies inhabiting it (Ahmed 2007: 157). When Whiteness determines the space (e.g., an institution such as a church), Whiteness becomes the centre, “the one who must control the space” (Jennings 2020: 86) and is thus invisible to those inhabiting it. It is “the privilege of owning spaces” (Dahlmanns 2018: 169) and being the centre of attention. The effect thereof is the institutionalising of a certain similarity. Subsequently, non-white bodies become the deviant, the “other” who feel uncomfortable and exposed when they enter this space. Standing out only confirms the Whiteness of the space (Ahmed 2007: 157). Conversely, this implies that non-white bodies can integrate and will be welcomed into White spaces by accepting and conforming to the ideals of the White space. In the words of Ballard (2004: 56), “While ‘non-whites’ would be accepted they would only be admitted if they made themselves acceptable as defined by white people.”[132]

This institutionalisation of Whiteness is not a given, it happens over time and it requires work (Ahmed 2007: 157). It is what Jennings (2020: 84) calls “a sustained work of building.” It is the result of “past decisions”, the “repetition of decisions”, the sharing of resources, as well as “recruitment” (Ahmed 2007: 157). Recruitment not only serves to renew the institution by bringing in new bodies, but it also serves to confirm it. As affirmed by Ahmed (2007:158):

[131] Except when Whites become conscious of White guilt and shame (see the section on shameful Whiteness earlier in this chapter (5.3.2).

[132] This confirms the “convening power of Whiteness” (Jennings 2020) as described earlier in this chapter.

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> Becoming a 'part' of an institution, which we can consider the demand to share in it, or even have a share of it, hence requires not only that one inhabits its buildings, but also that we follow its line: we might start by saying 'we'; by mourning its failures and rejoicing in its successes; by reading the documents that circulate within it, creating vertical and horizontal lines of communication; by the chance encounters we have with those who share its grounds.

Moreover, Ahmed (2007:158) points out that recruitment feeds the "ego" and the "character" of the institution. Essentially because institutions tend to recruit more of the same. Recruitment reflects those images reflected in the mirror. It validates "a form of comfort", well-being, satisfaction and safety (2007:159). It serves as an extension of the inhabited space. It is only through a profound "disorientation" (e.g., affirmative action policies) that this perpetuating cycle of White orientation might be broken (2007:160).[133]

5.5 Key concepts of Whiteness.

With these preservationist strategies in the background, we can now turn to eight concepts that play a significant role in the perpetuation of Whiteness. These eight concepts are widely recognised within the literature on Whiteness as the main driving forces behind the upkeep and protection of Whiteness in different contexts. At the outset, scholars like Dyer (1997) and McIntosh (1989) identified concepts such as *White privilege* and *unconscious bias* as means through which Whiteness holds its place. As the study of Whiteness progressed, other concepts were also identified by different scholars from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. Some of these concepts are more pertinent in certain contexts than in others, but they all share the same goal: They aim to uphold White agency and privilege. These eight concepts might not be the only ones perpetuating Whiteness, but they do feature strongly in the South African context. As will become apparent while we navigate through this section, the concepts were identified by South African scholars from different backgrounds and fields of study to assist us in understanding how Whiteness thrives, even where it is in the minority.

[133] Arguably, reunification with the predominantly Black Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa might just be the profound disorientation that is needed to break the cycle of White orientation prevalent in the predominantly White Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa.

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As I will attempt to show, these concepts serve as a mirror to our actions and decisions and will play an important role in the structuring of this thesis. With this in mind, we can now move on to a discussion of the eight concepts.

5.5.1 White privilege.

Kendall (2002: 1) defines White privilege as: "an institutional (rather than personal) set of benefits granted to those of us who, by race, resemble the people who dominate the powerful positions in our institutions." Peggy McIntosh (1989: 5) reminds those of us, who are White that White privilege is understood as universal "conditions of daily experience" that we take for granted. White privilege thus refers to an unseen and unconscious advantage that confers unearned and disproportionate entitlements and access to resources, strength, power and dominance to Whites and manifests systemically and is protected by denials. As Verwoerd (2000: 4) succinctly puts it, privilege is "like bad breath, those who have it tend not to smell it." As a systemic phenomenon, it plays out on many levels, e.g., individual, interpersonal, cultural and institutional (Potapchuck 2005: 54). As such, it serves White interests not to recognise and unmask privilege. Even when individual Whites are opposed to racism, they still benefit from the group system of White privilege (DiAngelo 2018: loc 433). In fact, the choice to oppose racism, the choice to question or to ignore (or not) discussions on "the existence of systemic oppression" is in itself a privileged position (Applebaum 2016: 15).

What does this mean for White South Africans who accrued privilege from the system of apartheid and continue to benefit from it? Writing about Whiteness in Southern Africa, Pilossof (2022: 178) points out that unlike Whiteness in other "parts of the Western World", the continuing prominent position of Whiteness in Southern Africa is complicated by the "historic patterns" of "privilege and power." This complicates the study of "whiteness in post-colonial Africa" because Whiteness is constantly looking for ways to hold on to its "privilege and superiority."

Furthermore, highlighting the complex challenges in the South African context, Vice (2010, 2022) understands White privilege in terms of habit. In this sense privilege is constructed by mentally and physically engaging with the world without conscious attention or reflection (2010: 325). Consequently, it is "nonvoluntary" (2010: 325), except when one should consciously decide to accept or reject it. Vice then puts privilege as a habit together with the

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"moral damage" done during times of oppression (2010: 325). Vice argues that moral damage is not only done to the oppressed, but also to the oppressor by habitual White privilege. Therefore "in spite of the nonvoluntary origins of these habits, they are our responsibility and they call for appropriate moral responses" (2010: 326). The moral damage done in South Africa is glaringly obvious and deciding how to live appropriately in these circumstances is a moral task facing all White people (2010: 326).[134] As one can expect, Whites are probably more likely to defend their interests and privileges. Thus, the important questions are, does this defence come "at the expense of others" and is there an openness to forgo some of these historical privileges and share it with others (Southall 2022: 228)? Verwoerd (2000) also picks up on this responsibility by framing White privilege in South Africa as a "burden" (2000: 4) emanating from apartheid that needs to be faced, dealt with and used for transformation. To do this the burden needs to be clarified, unmasked and acknowledged as the unearned "product of group privilege" (2000: 4), which might (hopefully) lead to the burden not only becoming bearable, but even liberating enough for one to accept the accompanying transformational and restitutional obligations. As such, White people have a "*response-ability"* (2000: 5) in post-apartheid South Africa. As stated by Verwoerd: "our *response* to past violations and privileging has the *ability* to harm or to heal, to cause or prevent further violations, to humiliate or to humanize" (2000: 5).[135]

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5.5.2 White fragility.

Being White means that one benefits from a system, even if one is well intentioned. It is the default setting, the internalised and "subliminal" worldview where one is comfortable (Southall 2022: 213). Accompanying this worldview are the "ideologies of individualism and meritocracy", leading Whites to believe their achievements are the result of hard work and effort, rather than a historically established racialised social system (2022: 213). Furthermore, in our segregated society, Whites are largely insulated from racial discomfort (Weldman 2018:

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[134] De Villiers (2018: 17-18), however, cautions against this line of thinking by pointing out that it is morally problematic to brand a group of people as "morally guilty from the outset." Not all White people "regard themselves as superior, are ignorant of the morally problematic origin of their privileged position or are unwilling to rectify the situation." As such Vice (2022) recognizes the ambiguous position some White people find themselves in. They are both reflective and conscientious about their privilege and the injustices of their society, while also wanting to live a fulfilling and good life with integrity and self-respect.

[135] For further reflection on White privilege, see Collins (2018), Giles (2020), Kendall (2017), Kollmann (2009), Lindner (2018), Müller & Trahar (2016), Rohr (2015) and Tune (2016).

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2). Where this insulated worldview "is challenged, disequilibrium results" (DiAngelo 2018: loc 1629). In the words of DiAngelo (2018: loc 1628):

> White fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress in the habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviours such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviours in turn, reinstate white racial equilibrium. Racial stress results from an interruption to the racial familiar.

Consequently, White fragility is a form of pushback to restore equilibrium and prevent self-reflection and racial feedback. It aims to protect "racial control" and White advantage, worldviews and positions by defensive reactions, laments about reverse racism, distorting reality, "bullying" and "keeping people of colour in line and 'in their place'" (DiAngelo 2018: loc 1764).

It is indeed a powerful "tool in highlighting and confronting a lack of white accountability for present and past racial injustices" (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen 2022: 17). For example, it is White fragility that motivates Herman (2018: 57, 60) to lament his White positionality: "Mother (Africa), why am I your discarded child?" and why do you "uphold the offender/victim relationship" and "put me in a permanent position of guilt." And it is White fragility that leads Roets (2018) to declare that the new South Africa is a place of "double standards", where Blacks are privileged and Whites are denied "job opportunities", treated "as second class citizens" and "exploited" (2018: 65-66). Indeed, as demonstrated by these examples, White fragility prevents any meaningful discussion on racial matters, in fact "white fragility holds racism in place" (Weldman 2018: 3).

It is, however, important to note that simply dismissing White views as White fragility might also lead to a lack of analysis and subsequent understanding of the complex nature of the ideas, motivations and structures motivating certain White reactions (Gray 2022: 329). Yet, the concept of White fragility does help us to better understand Whiteness and the discomfort Whites feel when confronted with racial dialogue (Boucher & Matias 2022: 341).

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5.5.3 White talk.

White talk (also known as "White speak" (Lindner 2018: 55) or "White ululation" (Steyn and Foster 2008: 1) is a concept especially prevalent in (but not exclusive to) post-apartheid South Africa. After 1994 White South Africans lost political power which necessitated a reconstruction of their social identities. This means that the shape and face of Whiteness has forever been changed. Despite this, Whiteness still carries considerable weight because of economic power and historical and generational privilege. Notwithstanding the continuing advantage, the losing of position and power is sometimes experienced as disempowering and leads to feelings of dissonance and irrelevance (Steyn 2000, 2001, 2004b, Steyn and Foster 2008, Spickernell 2016). In this context White talk emerged as a "rhetorical" (Steyn and Foster 2008: 35) strategy to both perpetuate the privilege and to deal with the "vulnerabilities" (Spickernell 2016: 96). In this sense, the aim of White talk is the "ideological" making and re-making of Whiteness in South Africa (Steyn 2004b: 70).

Typical strategies in this regard includes: "stacking up negative tropes, topics and debates; casting reconstruction as an unjust process; denouncing elite blacks; delegitimizing concerns with morality; stressing the dire consequences for the society of transformative measures and urging the necessity to regroup" (Foster & Steyn 2008: 35). Furthermore, White talk functions to insulate White people form examining their role in racism or to protect themselves from guilt induced by conversations about race (Lindner 2018: 55). In the words of Bailey (2015: 5):

> White people habitually fall into white talk as a strategy for steering clear of entertaining the possibility that many of our actions, utterances and thoughts contribute to the perpetuation of racial injustices and that we bear some responsibility for these.

In the post-apartheid South African context for example, this is enhanced by "a prevalent White discourse of the need to 'move on' and 'leave the past behind'" (Van der Westhuizen 2018: 86). According to Bailey (2015: 13-14), this manifestation of White talk is a form of "*wilful ignorance"* to keep White people from "feeling vulnerable". Wilful ignorance actively "manages ignorance" by blocking alternative ways of knowing. It is intentionally produced through habitual and persistent efforts and gives White people permission to sever historical occurrences from present realities and to resist contemporary issues. It becomes a "discursive

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strategy" for White people to disengage and to protect their "comfort" and the status quo (Applebaum 2016: 16).

Moreover, White talk is facilitated by "the continuing social removal of Black and White people in post-apartheid South Africa" (Van der Westhuizen 2018: 53). By using phrases such as "grew up together" and "did things together" with Black counterparts, social proximity is confused with equality (2018: 53). Through this strategy, the White centre is kept intact, and Whites are confirmed as non-racist and as "good Whites" (2018: 53). As such, by steering conversations away from their fears, anxieties and vulnerabilities, White people use White talk to augment their sense of moral goodness: "(G)oodness is the magnetic north of white talk" (Bailey 2015: 8).

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, South African Whiteness is characterised by the co-constructive relationship between Afrikaner and English-speaking Whiteness. When it comes to White talk though, there are noticeable differences. English-speaking White talk connects with the "international advantage" of "Anglo-ethnicity" and displays more characteristics of "normal" Whiteness. Conversely, Afrikaner "resistant Whiteness" draws more from its "ethnic/nationalistic" history on the one hand and from its "experience of dislocation" and the resulting attempts to "repackage Afrikanerness" in the new South Africa on the other hand (Steyn 2004b: 70).[136] That said, both groups employ White talk "to minimise damage to White privilege and maximise group advantage" (Steyn 2004b: 70). All things considered, "white talk protects the ideological interests of the 'civilised' West, as it digs in to protect its global hegemony in an increasingly 'post-colonial' world" (Steyn 2003: 158). Indeed, "(W)hite talk is the *lingua franca* of race talk among white folks" (Bailey 2015: 5).

[136] Analysing readers' letters to the Afrikaans newspaper *Rapport*, Steyn (2004a, 2004b) shows how Afrikaners use White talk "to adjust themselves and their 'Whiteness', into the post-apartheid realities" (2004b: 82) of South Africa. As such they engage "in a much more active and aggressive constitutive role: (de)(re)constructing a positionality for the Afrikaner in the new society from a position that is experienced as weak in relation to both the African Other, who possesses demographic power, and the English Other, whose brand of Whiteness comes with a powerful global backing" (2004a: 162). The following six discursive strategies were identified in these letters: 1) quarintine Whiteness ("Boers"); 2) repatriotise Whiteness ("AngloBoere/Pomfrikaners"); 3) bolster Whiteness ("White South Africans); 4) embrace semi-Whiteness ("Afrikaanses"); 5) launder Whiteness ("Afrikaners"); 6) melanise Whiteness ("Afrikaan") (2004b: 71-82).

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5.5.4 Implicit or unconscious bias.

Even the most well-intentioned people have biases that impact their perceptions and produce discriminatory behaviour. These biases are largely unconscious, rely on stereotypes and are exacerbated by homogeneity (DiAngelo 2018: loc. 2378). Such biases may be defined as "the attitudes or stereotypes affecting our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible" (Staats et al. 2017: 10).

Key characteristics of implicit bias involve that it is "unconscious and automatic", "pervasive" across a variety of sectors (Staats et al. 2017: 10), does not always align with explicit beliefs, depends on perceived "ingroups and outgroups" (Staats et al. 2013: 11) , leads to the reifying and justifying of prevailing inequities (Osta & Vasquez 2020: 2) and have "real world effects" on both individual and institutional behaviour (Staats et al. 2017: 10).

A good example of implicit bias is White people perceiving danger simply by the presence of non-white people (DiAngelo 2018: loc. 765). In South Africa, for instance, implicit bias informs the hostile responses of White people (and other middleclass citizens as well) to informal settlements and vagrants in the vicinity of their neighbourhoods. It leads to exclusionary language and actions and the formation of segregated spaces and othering (Ballard 2004a, 2004b). Whereas in the South African workplace, "the persistent white superiority assumption deems black people to be less competent than white people, resulting in blacks bearing the burden of proof to demonstrate their competence at work" (Bergh & Hoobler 2018: 4).

5.5.5 Institutional racism.

Racism is a social system embedded in the culture and its institutions into which we are all socialised. Within this system, institutional policies and practices create advantages for Whites and disadvantages for other groups. In this sense, it functions independently from individuals but at the same time benefits individuals (DiAngelo 2018: loc. 377, 1336). In other words, individuals cannot abdicate their role in institutional racism (Ahmed 2004: 2).

Leiderman, Potapchuk and Major (2005: 39) define institutional racism as "the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create

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advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as non-white.” An example of this is a government policy that restricts people from getting loans to buy or improve their homes in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of people of colour. Historically, in South Africa it was manufactured by the system of apartheid, but even today, in post-apartheid South Africa we still see it in institutions such as cultural organisations, financial and educational institutions and churches. Indeed, “members of various social identity groups in South Africa (still) tend to seek out organizations, schools, residential neighbourhoods, and social clubs populated by members of their same racial groups” (Bergh & Hoobler 2018: 9).

The question then is, how do we go about institutional transformation? Fourie (2021) makes the following suggestions: Education, which leads to better understanding; pull Whites into the conversation in a more productive way that does not evoke defensive and threatening responses; focus on what is visible in institutional culture; and create safe spaces for authentic discussions.

5.5.6 Structural racialisation.

Linked to institutional racism, is structural racialisation. Every day in South Africa we see neighbourhoods, schools and churches with vastly different resources. We see different outcomes in education, family wealth, medical care and even life span. We accept these structural inequities and conditions as normal, but it is not normal (Osta & Vasquez 2020: 5). It is the product of “cumulative and durable inequalities based on race (that) determines an individual’s or a group’s position in and in relation to physical, social and cultural opportunity structures” (Powell, Heller, Bundalli 2011: 6). In the words of Leiderman, Potapchuk & Major (2005: 39), “Structural racism includes the aspects of our history and culture that have allowed the privilege associated with ‘whiteness’ and the disadvantage of ‘colour’ to endure and adapt over time. It points out the ways in which public policies and institutional practices contribute to inequitable racial outcomes.” Thus, structural racism is made visible and is concretised through institutions (Nyoka 2021).

Another way that structural racism is kept in place in South Africa is through the continuing racialised segregation of space between those living in the more well of suburbs and those living in the informal settlements. Although the growing Black middle-class does help with

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desegregation, insufficient urban planning, high property prices and rates, inadequate improvements in townships and inherited racial divisions further entrench the segregation. Where Black people do move into formerly White areas they are sometimes met with hostility or are expected to adhere to White norms. Moreover, the desegregation project remains decidedly one-way. While former White areas will slowly become more mixed, the townships will remain distinctly Black (Southall 2022: 246-247).

5.5.7 Cultural racism.

Cultural racism refers to discrimination that is based on the cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups. Van der Westhuizen (2022) points out that cultural racism "uses people's experiences of different ways of understanding the world as a ruse to draw racial boundaries." As such, it is not dependant on racial stereotypes or typologies and it often occurs in the absence of a formal system of segregation and blatant forms of racism, e.g. in multicultural societies or where 'colour-blindness' is claimed (DiAngelo 2018: loc. 796-838). According to Pon (2009: 60), it "operates by essentializing culture, while "othering" non-whites without using racialist language." Whiteness thus becomes the standard by which all other cultures are measured (Pon 2009: 60). Often "the culture of a people determines the culture, language, and value systems of the institutions they create" (Leiderman, Potapchuk & Major 2005: 40) and in so doing, they are sustaining Whiteness.

Such cultural racism may also emerge in contexts of migration, for example in many European countries where cultural identity is used to repress immigration and exclude other cultures from assimilating, except it seems, when the immigrants are of White European decent, such as White South Africans emigrating to European countries or as we're currently experiencing with White Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We also see this phenomenon in South African cities and towns with a high concentration of migrants and refugees from other African countries and where neighbourhoods and institutions such as schools and churches are segregated under the guise of culture and language.

Also evident in present-day South Africa is the notion of "eie sake" (own affairs) for different cultural groups. As Van der Westhuizen (2022) so aptly puts it: "Race becomes wrapped up in culture. It allows people to insist that wanting to be socially separate from other people does not make them racist; they merely want to be with people who talk like them and look like

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them." This seems like a throwback to the 1980's when the apartheid government tried to reform the apartheid system by instituting the tricameral parliament, where Coloured[137] and Indian people got political representation alongside Whites, with the idea that each racial group are responsible for its own affairs. Black people were excluded, because in the apartheid mindset they had the so-called homelands that looked after Black affairs. In modern-day, post-apartheid South Africa we see a new form of "eie sake" emerging under the pretext of culture and language. Now the emphasis is on shared interests, community self-reliance, self-help and community security (Van der Westhuizen 2022).

5.5.8 Ignorance or racial contract.

The racial contract (or the epistemology of ignorance) is an important contributor to the global system of White supremacy and an unjust, exploitative society. As framed by Applebaum (2016: 13), "White ignorance itself not only is a *type* of white privilege (who has the privilege to be ignorant?) but also works to *safeguard* privilege." According to Mills (1997), the social contract pertaining to certain political and moral obligations was from its inception inherently racialised. It is built on a racial contract which rests upon three claims: 1) that "white supremacy, both local and global, exists and has existed for many years"; 2) "white supremacy should be thought of as itself a political system"; and 3) that "as a political system, white supremacy can illuminatingly be theorized based on a contract between whites, a Racial Contract" (1997: 7). This contract refers to an unacknowledged, but sometimes wilful and manufactured agreement and cooperation to perpetuate and actively maintain ignorance (Bailey 2015: 13) "to safeguard privilege" (Applebaum 2016: 13), to protect systemic racial injustice from challenge and to protect White people from vulnerability (Bailey 2015: 13) and alternative ways of knowing (Applebaum 2016: 14). It involves "'as a general rule', White misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion and self-deception on matters related to race" (Steyn 2012: 11) or in the words of Mills (2016: 230), it requires "evasion and denial of the realities of race." Such racial contract is often most transparent to its victims and recognised

[137] The term "Coloured", as used in the South African context, needs some clarification. Defining the term "Coloured" has always been a difficult and contentious undertaking. Usually, it either refers to people of mixed descent, descendants from slave communities or original indigenous communities, such as the Khoikhoi and San. (Gilliomee 2003: 110, 388). In present day South Africa, it is often perceived as a derogatory term, with people rather preferring to be called "Brown".

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as the "real moral/political agreement to be challenged" (Mills 2016: 230). Mills (2016: 230) writes "Nonwhites have always (at least in first encounters) been bemused or astonished by the invisibility of the racial contract to whites, the fact that whites have routinely talked in universalist terms even when it has been quite clear that the scope has really been limited to themselves."

After 1994 Whites in South Africa often do not want to acknowledge their role in the apartheid system, while also protecting their privilege by utilising the ignorance contract. This is done through claims of ignorance about apartheid such as, "we really did not know that this was happening" or "our leaders misled us" or "our newspapers did not tell us" (Kritzinger 2016). It requires buy-in, it involves denial, insolation to Black realities and commitment to your social group. Thus, if you are ignorant about your influence, you can hold on to your way of life and you do not have to cross boundaries, but live parallel to the world of others (Steyn 2020).

Having examined the definition of Whiteness, its functional properties, the racial framework underlying it, how it manifests in the South African context and the ways in which it is maintained through key strategies and concepts, we can now turn our attention to the field of Whiteness studies.

5.6 Introducing Whiteness Studies.

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Discourse on "Whiteness" emerged from within the same contexts as missional theology, namely the USA, Western Europe and more recently, South Africa. These are all countries with a colonial and a slave trade history. Since the early 1990's (Steyn 2007: 420), especially in the USA, scholars in a variety of fields, e.g., postcolonial studies, anthropology, philosophy, education, feminist studies, literary studies and psychology, have increasingly focused on Whiteness as a category in the study of race and racism. However, it is important to note that scholars of colour, like W.E.B. du Bois, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko and others wrote about Whiteness before 1990, whereas the field of Whiteness studies was only formalised in the early 1990's. Perhaps this distinction is indicative of Whiteness attempting to colonise

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academia. Nonetheless, this field of study has become known as "White studies", "Whiteness studies" or "critical Whiteness studies."[138]

According to Roediger (2001: 76-78), there were three reasons informing the newfound interest in Whiteness studies: Firstly, the more racially inclusive nature of academic life in the USA with the resulting interest in "the work of scholars of colour"; secondly, the assumption that Whites are "the normative subject" at universities was challenged by the growing number of "students of colour"; and thirdly, scholars were challenged to imagine a world where Whiteness is not at the centre of the narrative. Consequently, Whiteness studies "provide a framework for understanding how the tactics, emotionalities, and epistemologies of whiteness impact both whites and people of colour within a white supremacist power structure" (Boucher and Matias 2022: 341). Particularising Whiteness in this way, is an important development in the study of race and racism.

5.6.1 Origins and definition.

In an article on Whiteness studies in the USA, Roediger (2001: 72) asks the question, "why was it so hard to discuss whiteness?" and then concludes that discussions on race tend to turn its gaze away from Whites and focus more on "the behaviour of people of colour" (2001: 73). However, in recent decades there emerged a newfound awareness of Whiteness as a problem that needs explanation. A turning of the gaze towards Whites, because Whites especially need to understand their own Whiteness and their White understanding of society. As such scholarship turned its gaze away from "the traditional object of racism" (people of colour) to the White subject of racism (Spickernell 2016: 14). Credit for this fresh focus on Whiteness is usually attributed to early writings by Richard Dyer, Ruth Frankenberg, Peggy McIntosh, Toni Morrison and David Roediger. According to Bush (2004: 23), "(T)hese groundbreaking writings provide incisive depictions of whiteness and its "hidden" centrality within all aspects of modern life." By putting the spotlight on Whiteness in this way "involves redirecting the academic gaze: from 'racism', the way in which the center constructs the margins, to the way in which the center constructs itself" (Steyn 2005: 120).

For too long the focus was kept on the margins, concentrating on the "others" as the problem that needed to be aligned with the centre, with Whiteness as the self-constructed norm,

[138] For the sake of uniformity, I will refer to this field of study as "Whiteness studies".

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(Steyn 2005: 120; 2007: 420), while the problem actually lies with "the elephant in the room—the construction and maintenance of Whiteness" (Applebaum 2016: 2). Therefore, "whiteness needs to be made strange" (Dyer 1997: 10), it needs to be de-centered and dislodged from its normative position and critically probed (Foste 2017: 12). Consequently, in the words of Steyn (2007: 420), Whiteness studies emerged as:

> …radical critique of the racial order by tracing the historical processes that have created this social positioning relative to its 'others', examining the social identity construction of those who are racialised into whiteness, identifying the discursive and semiotic, political and legal, egregious and everyday practices that establish and maintain racial privilege as the normative place from which racial power is deployed.

According to Winddance Twine and Gallagher (2008: 6-15), this tracing of historical processes, examining of social identity construction and identifying of reifying practices of Whiteness plays out in three waves. The first wave unmasked the normality of Whiteness, while people of colour were racialised. This normalising of Whiteness only exists because people of colour were "othered." This rendered Whiteness invisible and allowed White people to be unconscious of their own racialisation and unearned advantages and privileges which they take for granted. The aim of Whiteness studies was thus to make Whiteness, its strategies and supremacy visible. Lindner (2018: 47-49) points out that during the first wave, the role of people of colour, as the original theorists of Whiteness, must be acknowledged. Fighting against oppression and discrimination they were constantly aware of their position as "others" in the context of the normalising of Whiteness. Subsequently they wrote about the condition of Whiteness from a position as outsiders. These scholars include David Walker, W.E.B. Du Bois; Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison.

The second wave of Whiteness studies also focussed on the normativity of Whiteness by highlighting how Whiteness is structurally and systemically entrenched. It furthermore particularised Whiteness through contextualising and explaining different "Whitenesses" which share the foundational story of White dominance but has different experiences due to such factors as history, gender, class and geography.

The third and most recent wave explores the more global, multiple and diverse aspects of Whiteness. It does not treat Whiteness as static or uniform, but rather as one of many social

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relations shaping White identity. This is firstly done through innovative research using internet sites, racial biographies, music and visual imagery not necessarily available during the previous waves. It is secondly characterised by interest in cultural and discursive practices and strategies employed by Whites to reclaim, restore and secure White identities and privilege in postcolonial, post-settler and post-apartheid contexts, such as South Africa and Australia. Thirdly, especially in the United States it shifts the investigative lens away from the European roots of Whiteness to the analyses of White identity formation among immigrant and post-immigrant communities with their origins in Mexican, Latin American, Asia and other contexts.[139] Through these waves, Whiteness studies as radical critique was and still is theorised, broadened and expanded to include different aspects and contours of Whiteness.

The aim of Whiteness studies therefore is to think critically about how Whiteness becomes embedded into a social system (psychological, cultural, political, and economic) and how it benefits Whites, often to the disadvantage of other races. Thus, the purpose of Whiteness studies is to reveal such invisible structures and privilege. According to Applebaum (2016: 2), it is an important objective of Whiteness studies to make Whiteness visible in order to disrupt White dominated systems of power. Similarly, Stevens (2007: 426) points out that the field of Whiteness studies "embraces a critique and deconstruction of (these) systemic privileges, a decentring of whiteness and its associated privileges by deploying this critique in an everyday anti-racist praxis." De Kock (2006: 179) describes it as such: "When critical scholars in the US write about whiteness vis-à-vis invisibility – a major trope in the field – they usually marshal their comments towards a critique of the pervasive but 'invisible' (that is, naturalised) hegemony of whiteness in a society…" In other words, Whiteness becomes the norm in a society to such an extent that Whites do not even realise how it benefits them and shapes society, i.e., it is rendered invisible. This is pointed out by Dyer (1997: 3) in his seminal work on White representation in the visual arts:

> The invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity. For most of the time white people speak

[139] Likewise, Leonardo (2002: 45) calls Whiteness studies a form of "neo-race theory": "More orthodox accounts of the racial formation traced white racism's effect on the lives of people of color through studies of slavery, discrimination, and school segregation. By contrast, neo-race theory finds it imperative to peer into the lives and consciousness of the white imaginary in attempts to produce a more complete portrait of global racism and ways to combat it. Recent themes of neo-race theory include white privilege, genesis of the white race, and white abolitionism."

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> about nothing but White people, it's just that we couch it in terms of 'people' in general … in Western representation whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles and above all are placed as the norm, the ordinary, the standard.

Hence, the objective of Whiteness studies is to "unmask and expose"; to redirect the normative gaze (De Kock 2006: 183). In the words of De Kock (2006: 181), "what scholars in the US have been doing is to bring whiteness out of its pretensions of universality by carefully pencilling in its lines of particularity."[140]

Whiteness studies as described above focus on the internal dynamics of Whiteness. Subsequently, scholars also focus on the following themes in Whiteness discourse: the construction of Whiteness through strategies of inclusion and exclusion, group-oriented tactics (e.g. discursive strategies, institutional policies, colour-blindness and ignorance) which either ensure and perpetuate advantage or wants to restore or reclaim Whiteness (DiAngelo 2018, 2020; Potapchuk, Leiderman, Bivens & Major 2005.), the need to particularise a specific Whiteness such as gender dynamics operating within Whiteness (Van der Westhuizen 2017), an understanding of the global dimensions of Whiteness in order to understand the particular, the phenomenology and embodiment of Whiteness, Whiteness in postcolonial and post-apartheid contexts (De Kock 2006; Lopez 2005; Netshitenzhe 2018, Pon 2009; Schneider 2017; Spickernell 2016; Steyn 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004a, 2005; Steyn & Foster 2008; Van der Westhuizen 2007, 2016), dealing with invisible and visible Whiteness (Steyn 2001), Whiteness and poverty, Whiteness and class, political economy and labour history, Whiteness as identity, cultural representations of Whiteness, constructions of Whiteness, Whiteness in pedagogy, discourse and academia (Bush 2004; Wepener & Nell 2021), Whiteness with an anti-racist focus (Brookfield & Hess 2021; Leiderman, Potapchuk & Major 2005) and Whiteness and religion (Jennings 2010, 2018, 2020, 2021; Perkinson 1999, 2004; Schneider 2017; Van Wyngaard 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2019, 2021).

[140] According to Steyn (2001: xxix) Whiteness has been truly exposed: "the historical construction of white privilege the institutional, rhetorical, discursive, performative, and psychological strategies used to maintain its centred positionality, the economic policies used to enforce and secure advantage, the protection offered by legal systems – these issues are now established as part of academe's analytical repertoire."

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5.6.2 Objectives of Whiteness Studies.

In the previous section the origins, definitions and aims of Whiteness studies were discussed. Underlying this growing discipline there are certain theoretical objectives or concepts that inform contemporary Whiteness studies. Hence, in this section these objectives will be briefly explicated.

5.6.2.1 Unmasking power.

Regarding Whiteness as an ideology confirms that it is much more than colour or biology. It is mostly a social and cultural construction aiding the welfare of White power. Whiteness stems from the desire and the demand to rule and to maintain political, economic and cultural hegemony (De Kock 2006: 180-181). White identity "grew from the experience of dominating" and is exacerbated and "decisively shaped by the exercise of power" (Roediger 2001: 81). This view of Whiteness is linked to the advantages embedded in the accumulation and acquiring of property, whether it be through the subjugation of slaves, material gain or through the dispossessing and owning of property. By connecting White identity and property in this way leads to Whiteness itself becoming a form of property (2001: 81-82). Even poor Whites, although not rich in material gains and property, derive benefits from White power, because they "possess the property of whiteness" (Roediger 2001: 83).[141]

With this power Whiteness gained the authority to define "self and other", and to justify the conquering and exploitation of continents (Steyn 2001: 8) and even when change occurs, e.g., in post-apartheid South Africa, to still construct Whiteness "around the belief that whites are in a position to define themselves and the 'other' more or less unilaterally" (Steyn 2001: 59). In a sense, Whites became the subjects of property, with others as its objects (Leonardo 2002: 38). Writing from the perspective of Whiteness in Western culture, Dyer (1997: 9) confirms the power of White people "to create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image" As such White people has the power

[141] Cheryl Harris (1993) analyses Whiteness as property from a legal perspective. She argues that Whiteness as property is rooted in the subordination of Blacks and Native Americans. Although different - the former involved the appropriation of labour and the latter the appropriation of land – both led to the "racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law" (1993: 1715), whereas Whiteness, even poor, working-class Whiteness, was "the characteristic, the attribute, the property of free human beings" (1993: 1721). Thus, Whiteness as an identity and a property interest becomes a resource, gained through subordination and codified by law. It has the right to exclude and can be used and enjoyed by taking advantage of the privileges legally bestowed on it.

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to “construct the world in their own image” and to reproduce itself. As described by Hunter and Van der Westhuizen (2022a: 17): “Whiteness depends on the fantasy of wholeness, authority, and control of others as a way of controlling and understanding the self.”

Subsequently, the objective of Whiteness studies is to unmask that Whiteness inherently possess value and power, historically gained through the dispossession of indigenous property, the owning of slaves, the conquering and exploitation of others, the continuing construction of Whiteness, and “the systematic property advantages channelled towards whites by segregation and other state policies” (Roediger 2001: 83). As such, Whiteness studies disrupt “white dominated systems of power” (Applebaum 2016: 2) created to pervade White normative societies and determine social power.

5.6.2.2 Divulging the systemic nature of Whiteness.

The power of Whiteness should always be understood as systemic, rather than individual. Too often the critique of Whiteness is seen as a way for individuals to rid themselves of their racial biases and impulses; to cleanse themselves on their way to a new identity, free of prejudice and racist urges. Whiteness, however, is perpetuated by a system designed to favour and benefit one racial group over another (Brookfield & Hess 2021: 21). Individual behaviour is only a reflection of this system and although necessary, if we focus to overtly on individual representations, we are not tackling the real cause underlying the problem, namely an “overarching political, economic and social system of domination” (DiAngelo 2018: loc 511). According to Roediger (2001: 88), we are helped in this endeavour by the contributions of writers of colour who for a long time insisted on separating Whiteness as a system of privilege from individuals who are called White. The objective of Whiteness studies should always be to divulge and change the systemic nature of Whiteness. After all: “individual whites may be ‘against’ racism, but they still benefit from a system that privileges whites as a group” (DiAngelo 2018: loc 433).

5.6.2.3 Exposing White supremacy.

White supremacy can be deemed a by-product of White systems of power. When discussing White supremacy, one is not referring to the blatantly hateful, prejudicial and meanspirited discriminatory actions of overtly racist individuals or groups. Seen as such, it only obscures and reduces the bigger system at work and prevents any attempts at addressing the problem

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(DiAngelo 2018: loc 508). White supremacy rather refers to an idea of inherent White superiority that becomes accepted as the obvious, natural, taken-for-granted way the world is ordered and racial disparities are perpetuated (Brookfield & Hess 2021: 21). Owen (2007: 215) describes it as comprising two important elements within modern racialised social formations: "'supremacy' refers to the role of domination and power in structuring the social formation; and 'white' refers to the particular social identity marked as superior and advantaged in that social formation."

Referencing Charles Mills, Applebaum (2016: 4) points out "that white supremacy is to race what patriarchy is to gender." White supremacy is a form of oppression and it "presumes a conception of racism as a system of privilege that white people, often unwittingly, perpetuate in what seems to white people as common, unremarkable, and sometimes even seemingly 'good' practices and in the implementation of what seems to be racially neutral policies" (2016:4). It furthermore manifests differently "across gender lines, within religious traditions, between sexual orientations, over the course of generations" (Perkinson 1999: 449).

This form of racism can be perpetuated even when one believes oneself not to be prejudiced, through good intentions such as colour blindness or overlooking racial difference as a way of promoting racial justice, and by reducing racism to mere individual acts without challenging the system as the structural source of such racism (Applebaum 2016: 4-6). Failing to acknowledge and address White supremacy, thus only serves to protect it "from examination and holds it in place" (DiAngelo 2018: loc 528).

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Over the years debates on how to tackle White supremacy abounded. Roediger (2001: 85) divided these debates into two camps: the *absolutionist* and the *preservationist* approaches. With the *absolutionist* approach (also called "race treason") one aims to abolish Whiteness, because Whiteness not only disconnects White people from the rest of humanity, but it also robs them of their own humanity. Some following this approach aim to abolish Whiteness altogether by refusing the advantages and privileges connected to Whiteness or even go as far as choosing not to be White (Leonardo 2002: 31; McLaren 1997: 10; Owen 2007: 204). The difficulty with this approach is numerous. Proponents thereof assumes that Whiteness is like a gift that can be refused and if you do manage to refuse this gift, well, what are you if not White? Furthermore, opting out of being White is just too easy and can easily lead to "colour-blindness" and the avoidance of self-critical reflection. Moreover, it is presumed that

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Whiteness is easily recognisable and thus easy to refuse. Additionally, it does not acknowledge the multiple differences within Whiteness that infects all social spheres, it rather presumes that Whiteness is one dimensional. Also, how is abolitionism achieved? What strategies are employed to give meaning to this approach? (Owen 2007: 204; Roediger 2001: 88-91). Bush (2004: 29) adds that the privilege to choose one's racial identity is extended only to Whites, not to other groups. It is thus a privilege based on the power of Whiteness. And finally, according to Leonardo (2002: 37), for this approach to work, abolishing must begin with the acknowledgement of racial privileges and disinvesting from them. You need to eradicate White privilege to eradicate Whiteness. Hence, Whites have much to lose for the sake of increasing their humanity by forsaking Whiteness. Because Whiteness forms the backbone of all dimensions of the social world, abolishing Whiteness will be reactionary, ineffective and impractical (Owen 2007: 218).

The *preservationist (*or neo-absolutionist) approach on the other hand holds on to Whiteness, but with the intention to refurbish, reconstruct or redeploy Whiteness in more constructive ways (Roediger 2001: 85). According to Leonardo (2002: 31), this does not mean the denying or dismantling of Whiteness, "but it does mean disrupting white discourses and unsettling their codes." Yet, this again runs the risk of essentialising Whiteness. Therefore, this positionality should preferably be guided by non-white discourses. As such, Whites "would do well to recognize the point that as they work against whiteness, they are undoing the self they know and coming to terms with a reconstructed identity" (2002: 46). An added advantage of the preservationist approach is that it does not invalidate the experiences of people of colour. It also benefits them because it helps them to understand and deal with the daily fluctuations and maintenance of Whiteness. "Thus, the goal is for students of color to engage whiteness while simultaneously working to dismantle it. White students benefit … because they come to terms with the daily fears associated with the upkeep of whiteness" (2002: 31). Consequently, naming and examining White supremacy has two advantages: it makes the system visible and it shifts the responsibility of change to White people - those who control and maintain the system (DiAngelo 2018: loc 588).

5.6.2.4 Revealing White privilege.

Flowing from White supremacy is the notion of White privilege. In fact, White privilege benefits and is kept in place by the system of White supremacy. McIntosh (1989: 1) describes

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White privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious." It is thus the objective of Whiteness studies to make this invisible package visible, to make us aware of that which is meant to remain oblivious. Without acknowledging that which is unseen, as well as the denials surrounding White privilege, "white people cannot contribute to the eradication of racism and, in fact, contribute to its maintenance" (Applebaum 2016: 7).

5.6.2.5 Rendering Whiteness visible.

One of the consequences of a White dominated system of power, is that it affords Whiteness invisibility (Steyn 2001). This happens because White people experience the world as universal, normalised and hegemonic, "the standard by which everyone else is measured (Steyn 2001: xxvi). This of course presupposes the perspective of Whites. To people of colour Whiteness is very visible (Owen 2007: 206). In the words of Applebaum (2016: 2), "whiteness often goes unnoticed for those who benefit from it, but, for those who don't, whiteness is often blatantly and painfully ubiquitous." The idea of Whiteness as the norm and its presumption of homogenous neutrality and normalcy, is the blind spot of Whiteness. Richard Dyer (1997: 3), citing Hazel Carby, therefore argues that the role of Whiteness studies is "to make visible what is rendered invisible when viewed as the normative state of existence".

5.6.2.6 Particularising Whiteness.

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Steyn (2001: 163), however, points out that "the invisibility of whiteness only holds under certain circumstances." As an example, Steyn (2001: 163) points to the demographic anomaly of Whites in South Africa where they are the minority and are thus highly visible to self and others.[142] Accordingly, "particularising whiteness in this context indicates the danger of generalising theory from one specific geographical and historical positionality" (2001: 163). In this regard Spickernell (2016: 21) also highlights that a blanket view of Whiteness as a homogenous social identity overlooks the ability of Whiteness to construct itself and "does not leave much space for the potential expressions of its hybridisation" within different contexts.[143] This ability of Whiteness is also illustrated by Roediger (2001) and Winddance

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[142] Also see Steyn (2000,2003, 2005, 2007) and Steyn and Foster (2008) in this regard.

[143] The following two quotes confirm the contextual construction of Whiteness: "…whiteness has definite cultural content characterized by assumptions, belief systems, value structures and institutional and discursive options that frame white people's self-understanding" (Steyn, 2004: 144) and "…situational and historical contingencies that reposition white identities lend themselves to what is referred to as the

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Twine and Gallagher (2008) who emphasises White identity formation in the USA among groups that are not traditionally identified as White. This call for the particularisation of Whiteness, which confirms the tension between the homogeneity and the heterogeneity of Whiteness within the context of South African Whiteness was already discussed earlier. It will therefore suffice to conclude with the following quote by Roediger (2001: 79) confirming that the contribution of Whiteness studies also "lies in 'marking' whiteness as a particular, even peculiar, identity, rather than as the presumed norm."

5.6.3 Interrogating Whiteness studies.

What does it mean for the field of Whiteness studies to take up the challenge of probing Whiteness? Will it not perhaps reify Whiteness as a category within racial studies and lived experience? What is the purpose of making the invisible, visible and will those who are critiquing invisibility not perhaps partake in the very thing it is critiquing? Will Whiteness studies not eventually lead to a point where Whiteness is held in place as an object and where we are caught up in continuously explaining Whiteness, instead of facing what Whiteness is doing? (Ahmed 2007: 149). Looking at these questions, it is no wonder that Dyer (1997:10) exposes the perpetual unease in Whiteness studies when he writes, "my blood runs cold at the thought that talking about whiteness could lead to the development of something called 'White Studies'." Hence in this section, some concerns in the study of Whiteness will be addressed, not to suspend the study of Whiteness but to critically interrogate it in order to advance the conversation.

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Flowing from his unease with Whiteness studies, Dyer (1997: 10-12) highlights the following concerns that needs to be guarded against: 1) The "green light" problem which gives Whites the go-ahead to talk and write about the stuff that has always concerned Whites, i.e., themselves; 2) "me-too-ism", which aims to reinstate Whiteness. This plays out in three ways: a) with the focus also on non-white people in racial studies, White people are wishing for the attention again; b) the feeling that being White has no great advantage; and c) White men as the new victims because of policies like affirmative action; 3) White "guilt" that acknowledges how awful Whites have been but avoids the examination of how they have been; 4) using the

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particularisation of whiteness by identifying, describing and contextualising more culturally divergent or heterogeneous types of white social identities" (Spickernell 2016: 22).

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colour White as a reference point when referring to people of colour. We need to recognise White as a colour among many others; and 5) White people are either imaged as individual or as diverse, complex and changing, whereas people of colour tend to be stereotyped.[144]

As described earlier, one of the objectives of Whiteness studies is to make Whiteness visible, or to de-center Whiteness. Making Whiteness visible, or de-centering Whiteness, however, creates the danger of re-centering Whiteness.[145] Ahmed (2007: 1) argues, "any project that aims to dismantle or challenge the categories that are made invisible through privilege is bound to participate in the object of its critique." Indeed, as Stevens (2007: 426) puts it, "we have to acknowledge that this possibility exists in which a paradoxical outcome will be attained in Whiteness studies — that in attempting to decentre and depower white privilege, we in fact arrive at an end point that re-centre and reinscribes it." Also considering the investment in terms of time, energy and resources to studying Whiteness. One may therefore ask whether this is money well spent? In the same vein, De Kock (2006: 184) citing Nakayama and Krizek, concludes that to avoid the danger of essentialising, the discourse on Whiteness should be mindful of the following six strategies:

> 1) tying whiteness to power in a crude, naked manner (white is the "majority"); 2) using negative definitions of white as opposed to a positive definition ("not being black, Hispanic, or the like"); 3) naturalising the definition of "white" as a scientific one ("white means nothing except the colour that I am", that is, a reference to superficial racial characteristics); 4) confusing whiteness with nationality ("white American"); 5) refusing to label oneself ("I don't agree with ethnic terms - I'm American and that's all"); and 6) seeing whiteness in relation to European ancestry (also known as "symbolic ethnicity" — "I am white, of European descent").

Re-centering Whiteness is furthermore enabled by *White narcissistic anti-racism, White heroism* and *White declarations* (Hook 2011: 10 -13). *Narcissistic anti-racism* occurs when the sacrifices made in the name of anti-racism paradoxically leads to a form of White-self-love or self-promotion. Closely linked to this danger is *White heroism* when the "heroic" involvement in anti-racist work actually consolidates and extend White agency. Whereas *White*

[144] In the same vein as Dyer, Steyn (2001: xxix-xxx) emphasises the dangers of reverting to accusations of reverse racism, appeals to alleged White disadvantage, victimhood, White guilt and denial.

[145] De Kock (2006) uses the terms "non-essentialising" versus "essentialising" Whiteness.

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declarations happens when Whites declare their racism to prove how well-intentioned and anti-racist they are. This typically goes along with an apology, an admission or a confession but does not convert into any actions. Ahmed (2004: 4) calls this the "non-performativity" of anti-racism that "may even provide the conditions for a new discourse of white pride."

This corresponds with three kinds of White positions that tends to re-centre Whiteness while trying to do the opposite, namely *handwringing Whiteness* which refers to an overly self-conscious and narcissistic writing about Whiteness; *best Whiteness* which signals a kind of race-traitorship through hyper-individualisation and self-immolation that actually leaves unequal power relations in tact; and *essential Whiteness* where Whiteness is seen as essential to their being and therefore they cannot pursue anti-racism or stand in solidarity with the racialised other (Hunter & Van der Westhuizen 2022a: 18; 2022b). Therefore, Whiteness studies should always be critically watchful of not being complicit in enforcing precisely that which it aims to disrupt (Applebaum 2016: 3). The central focus should be the disruption of White racial oppression (i.e., it is a White problem) and "its purpose must be in the service of liberation" (Owen 2007: 217).

Drawing from their experiences as people of colour in a White world, firstly Ahmed (2007), reframes the question of Whiteness as a phenomenological issue, "as a question of how whiteness is lived as a background to experience" (2007:150). In this way she highlights the concern of Whiteness studies being caught up in describing Whiteness as what we are doing to Whiteness, "rather than what whiteness is doing" (2007:150). She thus aims to describe Whiteness, as a real and lived "category of experience" or to make it more "worldly", i.e., the "very 'what' that coheres the world" and how it becomes "worldly" as "an effect of reification" (2007: 150).

Secondly, Ratele (2007) appreciates the spotlight put on Whiteness, but wonders if the concept of Whiteness really is the best way to disrupt racism, especially from the vantagepoint of people of colour? He asks, "what does 'a lens of whiteness' show to 'coloured' and indigenous peoples about the challenge they know they have marshalled for years against white regimes?" (2007: 432). Ratele argues that the turn to Whiteness might also mean a turn away from White domination of people of colour. In South Africa, for example, this might result in "blindness" towards the continuing challenges faced by people of colour because of the remnants of the apartheid system. Ratele (2007: 434), therefore

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implores for anti-racism studies to also reflect “the resilience, intimate life, beauty, laughter, and love of those at the cutting end of racism?” And referencing Steve Biko, Ratele (2007: 435) highlights “the oppressed have to free themselves from thinking about whiteness and white power and remove themselves from its viewfinder.” As such, Ratele acknowledges the value of Whiteness studies if it helps White people realising the power and privilege granted them by their Whiteness, but for people of colour it will be healthier if they were to be made unconscious of Whiteness.

However, responding to Ratele’s argument, Matsebula, Sonn and Green (2007: 438) point out that non-white academics have used Whiteness “to examine their and other people’s experiences and responses to the power and privilege of a white culture and white people they encounter and to critique this culture and these people.” In fact, Matsebula, Sonn and Green (2007: 439) argue that making Whiteness unconscious or repressing Whiteness might just have the opposite effect, i.e., it may render it invisible and even make it more intense. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the insights and voices of scholars of colour does not receive the appropriate prominence in the study and literature on Whiteness studies. In the words of Boucher and Matias (2022: 344): “This is of grave importance in that the voices of people of colour scholars who have deconstructed whiteness in relation to the racial oppression of people of colour are ignored and the recentering of white humanity is transfixed.”

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Focussing on the dangers of modern progressivism in post-colonial Whiteness studies, Lindner (2018: 45-55) describes how some, albeit well-intentioned Whites, buy into progressivist paradigms that is often paternalism and racism in disguise and only serves to “damage people of colour through silencing and whitewashing” (2018: 45). This is firstly attributed to an inadequate historical understanding of colonialism and how Whiteness as the normative identity “arisen to differentiate whites from undesirable ‘others’” (2018: 54); secondly the end of colonialism did not eradicate racism, it rather forced it to transform into new forms such as neo-liberalism. This led many Whites to supporting “colour blind” ideologies which allowed them to dismiss race under the guise of egalitarianism. However, this view fails to acknowledge the control Whites still hold over the cultures they inhabit; thirdly, the anti-racism conversation is more focussed on White intentions, rather than the impact. Consequently, Whites use anti-racist language to feel good about themselves,

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without having to change; and fourthly, it is exacerbated through the use of "White code" or "White speak" which allows White people to talk about race in a way that protects the status quo, remove them from complicity and secure the approval of other Whites. Lindner then makes certain suggestions how Whites can meaningfully take the conversation forward. This is done by considering others in comprehensive rather that reductive ways, through introspection that induce change, and through mutually, respectful relationships with people of colour. However, within a post-apartheid South African context, Majavu (2022) points out that colour-blindness and its more recent derivative, non-racialism, are now used more to defend than to fight racial inequality. It is utilised to undermine and question claims of White racism, even to the point of prohibiting the use of words such as "race" and "racism" because it makes people uncomfortable. Under the guise of non-racialism Whites are then shielded from being implicated in a White supremacist system that has historically benefitted them.

If there is one thing that became clear from this section, it is that Whiteness studies, although ambiguous and not always sufficient, is necessary. In this regard, it is appropriate to give De Kock (2006: 183) the final word:

> First, it is clear that the dominant trend in critical white studies is to unmask and expose. Second, the more acute scholars in the field quickly recognise that for every gesture of naming whiteness, there should be a counter gesture of remaining open to its variability or "difference within". Third, it is difficult to locate and particularise whiteness in a way that is non-essentialist because the practices of this group are webbed in the quotidian ubiquity of the everyday.

5.7 Conclusion.

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the second main theme of this study, namely Whiteness and its accompanying field of Whiteness studies. Initially, Whiteness was defined as a socially constructed ideological framework directing White identity. Positioning Whiteness as socially constructed emphasises that it is more than skin colour and not limited to people of European descent. Whiteness is "a way of being in the world" (Jennings 2020: 9) that keeps on producing, evolving, perpetuating and incorporating others into its dominance and advantage. In the words of Ndebele (Galloway 2015: 1), "whiteness keeps getting recruits."

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Helping Whiteness in this endeavour are certain functional properties, for instance, it is invisible, habitual, normative, unearned and intersectional. These properties operate through social systems, embodiment and institutionalising. Whereas, working in the background, continuously informing the social order is a White racial framework or orientation which is so entrenched that Whites struggle to acknowledge it, let alone admit to it. Central to Whiteness upholding its dominance are certain strategies. These include multinationalism, fragmentation, flexibility, knowledge construction, national identity and belonging, anti-racism practices and habits. Furthermore, the core concepts that play a significant role in perpetuating Whiteness include White privilege, White fragility, White talk, implicit bias, institutional racism, structural racialisation, cultural racism and the ignorance contract. These strategies and concepts functions as a mirror to our actions and decisions, as will become apparent in later sections of this study.

The section on South African Whiteness, described how Whiteness was configured in the South African context. What became clear is that South African Whiteness is not only complex and complicated but pervasive and enduring. By positioning South African Whiteness as "diasporic" (Steyn 2005), confirms "that white South Africans are a composite group, having arrived at different times, from different home countries in Europe and were forged into a similar positionality and (an imperfect) sense of shared identity through the racial politics operating within the country" (Steyn 2003: 35). It furthermore became apparent that Afrikaner Whiteness and English-speaking Whiteness are culturally distinctive and subaltern, but co-dependant. They should be understood as "co-constitutive white counterparts" (Van der Westhuizen 2017: 32), both defining themselves "in disassociation from the 'non-white' racial groups" (Steyn 2001: 26).

After the dislocation caused by the political implosion of apartheid, White South Africans reacted in different ways, ranging from the fundamentalist to the constructivist. One thing that does become apparent though, is that Whites, although a minority and not in political power, still hold material and economic advantage. South African Whiteness is also a shameful Whiteness having to deal with loss and the shame caused by the atrocities during the apartheid era. Whereas, the ongoing process of decolonising South African Whiteness, requires deep self-reflection, awareness, humility, active silence and engagement with our

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non-white South African counterparts. Hopefully this will contribute to a constructive, transformative and hybridised version of the future.

Having examined Whiteness, the accompanying field of Whiteness studies are expounded. The origins, definition and objectives of Whiteness studies aimed at the unmasking and exposing of the normative gaze of Whiteness are explained. Since Whiteness studies, although valuable, are also incomplete and ambiguous, the chapter ends with a critical reflection thereof. Although not in the scope of this study, it is important to note that the debate is not settled on whether Whiteness studies is in fact providing the anti-racist scholarship that is claimed. Nevertheless, Whiteness studies do help White people to critically face the reflection in the mirror. With these reflections in mind, I am aware of the danger that this study, which relies heavily on the contributions of White scholars, might be guilty of precisely that which is critiqued in this section.

Having confirmed the normativity of Whiteness and the need to examine and expose it as such, it is important to highlight that Whiteness also informs theology (Van Wyngaard 2019:5). Jennings (2020: 83) writes that "the church and the academy, theological or otherwise, have been bound to the same whiteness since the advent of colonialism." In South Africa White supremacy was theologically legitimised during the colonial and apartheid eras by the predominantly White churches. In the words of Steyn (2001: 12), "the white master race was sanctioned by divinity." This becomes apparent, for example, in the usage of Old Testament themes in the formation of Afrikanerdom (Van Wyngaard 2019: 44) and the way Christianity was racialised in South Africa (Steyn 2001: 28). Thus, unless it is critically faced it will continue to inform and impact theology and churches in South Africa. This intersection between Whiteness and theology will be further elaborated in the ensuing chapters.

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CHAPTER 6: Facing Whiteness in South African Theology

6.1 Introduction.

Whiteness studies, as described in chapter 5, informs different academic disciplines. The trend is to research the influence of race, and specifically Whiteness, *in* and *for* different academic disciplines, as well as everyday life. The focus of research is thus to understand the power inherent in Whiteness and how it causes suffering, discrimination, domination, etc. In other words, normative Whiteness is decentred by putting the spotlight on it. As a result, Whiteness must face its powerful, normative and dubious image in the mirror. This is in line with a shift in critical theories such as feminist, queer and race theories. Usually, the focus was on the lived experiences and the suffering of the victims or the oppressed, but the focus gradually shifted to not only include the experiences of the victims (such as women, people of colour and queer people) but also the causes of the problem, the reasons behind the problem and the perpetrators, e.g., masculinity, stereotyping, Whiteness and racism.[146] Whiteness studies stems from this shift.

However, since this study is not only situated in the field of Whiteness studies, but also in the field of theology, specifically missional theology, the question is, how does Whiteness and Whiteness studies inform theology and vice versa? The significance of this question, led some scholars, such as Schneider and Bjork-James (2020: 175-176) to explore the following:

> What role has the racial category of whiteness played in shaping religious life, particularly in the United States? Are there religious traditions and practices that we should categorise as "white Religion"? What is gained from analysing whiteness and religion together, and what is lost when whiteness is left out of the

[146] For example, during a conference co-hosted by the University of the Western Cape's Department of Theology and the Women's and Gender Studies Unit, the deliberate shift away from structuring rape as a women's issue to men's responsibility in rape was reflected on. For the essays emanating from this conference, see Clowes and Conradie (2003).

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> study of religion? Finally, how has normative whiteness shaped the theorisation of "religion" itself?[147]

Considering these questions, Schneider and Bjork-James (2020) point out that since Whiteness played such a pivotal role in the shaping of societies the world over, it is vital to examine the entanglements between Whiteness and religion. Unfortunately, studies explicitly focussing on this relationship remains limited. A lot has been done in the field of "Black theology", but comparatively little has been done to examine the relationship between Whiteness and theology or a "White theology". Attention is mostly paid to race when the race in question is not White. Consequently, not only is the divide between race and religion reinforced, but the racial dimension in religion, as well as the religious dimension in White supremacy remains hidden: "As a result, scholars of whiteness tend to neglect the powerful role of religion in shaping cultures of domination, and scholars of religion tend to neglect the significance of whiteness in religious discourses and practice" (2020: 185).

This chapter will briefly examine the relationship between Whiteness and theology, starting by situating Whiteness as an important contextual conversation partner within theology. Over the years, however, it became apparent that Whiteness is an uncomfortable, even problematic, contextual conversation partner for theology. To explore this awkward relationship, I will take a brief look at the contributions of Willie Jennings and James Perkinson. This then, led me to the question: what will a responsible White theology look like? I try to answer this question with the insights of James Cone, Jürgen Moltmann and again, with the help of Perkinson. This will serve as an introduction to a brief discussion on Whiteness in South African theology, which will ultimately lead to a discussion of the limited contributions explicitly dealing with Whiteness within South African missional theological discourse.

6.2 Whiteness as contextual conversation partner.

Steven Bevans, a Roman Catholic contextual theologian writes (1992: 1):

[147] These questions are asked in the context of the USA, but I think they are equally relevant in other contexts, such as South Africa. Also, the questions pertain to the broader category of "religion", of which Christian theology forms an obvious part.

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> The contextualisation of theology – the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context – is really a theological imperative. As we understand theology today, contextualisation is part of the very nature of theology itself.

Contextual theology, or the contextualisation of theology, came to prominence since the 1970's in order to understand the contextual nature of the faith (Bosch 1991: 420). According to Bosch (1991: 421), from the very beginning the message of "the Christian church incarnated itself in the life and world of those who embraced it." The implications thereof, was however, only realised from the middle of the twentieth century, through the work of literary critics such as Paul Ricoeur, who pointed out that our entire context comes into play when we interpret a biblical text. The same is true for all the different theological disciplines. Furthermore, the contextual nature of faith and theology was influenced by the birth of different so-called Third World theologies (1991: 423). Therefore, in the words of Bosch (1991: 423) "*all* theology (or sociology, political theory, etc) is, by its very nature, contextual." It is a "theological imperative", as pointed out by Bevans (1992: 1).

There is however a danger in describing all theology as contextual theology. In this regard Botha (2010: 191) points to the possible excessive broadening of contextualisation, hence, "if everything is contextualisation, nothing is contextualisation." This concurs with R.W. Nel (2013: 20-21) who highlights the risk of contextualisation becoming another universal, umbrella paradigm undermining the uniqueness of contextual theologies, such as Black and African theologies, and with Bosch (1991: 421) and Botha (2010: 191) who speculates whether contextualisation had not perhaps become a blanket term for a variety of theological models. This risk of contextualisation being to universal, might also open the door for contextualisation becoming an example of- and a conduit for Whiteness.

Therefore, Bosch identifies two models of contextual theologies that qualifies as contextual theology proper and helps to minimise the danger of everything becoming contextualisation (Botha 2010: 192). Bosch (1991: 421) explains that contextual theology is defined by an *inculturation* model, as well as a *revolutionary* (liberation theology, Black theology, feminist theology etc) model.[148] Or, as Bevans (1992: 5-10) frames it, *internal factors*, which takes the incarnation of Christ and cultural identity and cultural changes seriously and *external factors*,

[148] When David Bosch wrote about these models or theologies, they were still seen as profoundly revolutionary. Today, however, it will perhaps be more appropriate to speak of them as critical theologies.

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which includes historical events, intellectual currents, shifts and political forces. Contextualisation takes both seriously. This development constitutes an epistemological break from traditional theologies. Traditional theology was conducted *from above*, as an elitist (Western and White?) enterprise, with Scripture, tradition and philosophy as its main source and the educated non-believer as its main conversation partner. Whereas contextual theology takes its cue *from below*, with Scripture, tradition and the social sciences as its main source and the poor and marginalised as its main conversation partners (Bosch 1991: 421-423). Moltmann (2000: 141) phrases this as "hermeneutics from below" which takes the "human testimonies of faith" into account. This also confirms James Cone's view (2010: 16) that theology "is always done for particular times and places and addressed to a specific audience." In Cone's case "a specific audience" refers to an oppressed Black audience. The experience of the Black audience, in conjunction with Scripture, becomes the source that informs a Black theology. The human testimonies of Black people become the "hermeneutics from below" (Moltmann 2000: 141) that constructs a Black theology as a contextual theology. In other words, contextual theology is something different, yet, at the same time, it is also very traditional. It recognises the delicate balance between culture, social change and the traditional elements of scripture and tradition (Bevans 1992: 1-4).[149] As eloquently summed up by Bevans (1992: 1):

> Contextual theology can be defined as a way of doing theology in which one takes into account: the spirit and message of the gospel; the tradition of the Christian people; the culture in which one is theologizing; and social change in that culture…

This begs the question: can Whiteness, just like Blackness, become a legitimate, contextual hermeneutics through which to view culture and theology? If all theology is by nature contextual, can Whiteness, similarly to Blackness, also be included in the contextual conversation? Fessenden (2009: 19) answers in the affirmative:

> "Whiteness studies can help us formulate questions about the workings of power in Christianity that might help us better discern the various critiques of power that emerge from within Christianity."

[149] Botha (2010: 191) describes it as a circular movement where the context of different categories of people informs the text of the Bible, assisting a better interpretation of the text and conversely, the text of the Bible will illuminate the context of people, correcting and redeeming it.

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Thus, if Moltmann (2000: 60) is correct when he emphasises that "every theology, however conditioned it may be by its context, *kairos* and culture, says something about God and is important to all who believe in God", then it is necessary to also include Whiteness, conditioned as it is by its power and privilege, as an interlocutor of theology. Looking at theology through the lens of Whiteness and looking at Whiteness through the lens of theology show that Christianity functions not "simply alongside whiteness but often very much in tandem with whiteness" (Fessenden 2009: 12). In other words, in accordance with Moltmann, if Christian theology says something about God and is important to all who believe in God, while Christianity and Whiteness still functions in such close proximity, then Whiteness will, inevitably also say something about God and those who believe in God.

In this regard we are helped by contextual theologies, such as Black theology. Ironically, Whiteness is drawn into the conversation by Black theology. In line with Bosch's (1991: 424) contention of the profound suspicion towards the interests of the West, contextual models turn against those (mostly Western, male and White) structures and systems which exploited and oppressed them. In this process, they also serve as a mirror to those in positions of power. In fact, authentic Black theology, will "speak significantly to other theologies and uncover hitherto unthought-of areas for theological reflection" (Bevans 1992: 19). In this sense Black theology is not only a Black critique of Whiteness, but also of White theology. This, subsequently, makes a theological reflection and critique of Whiteness possible. Whiteness and White theology, therefore, is not only on the agenda of Black theology, but also becomes an important item on the agenda of White theologians (Conradie 2022b). Consequently, those in the positions of power are inevitably included in the conversation, albeit sometimes, with a lot of resistance. Since Whiteness is so normative and powerful in all societal spheres, it must take up the challenge and face its image in the theological mirror. In other words, it must become suspicious and critical, even revolutionary about its own assumptions, power and overarching influence. After all, as Cone (2010: 23) phrased it, "A community that does not analyse its existence theologically is a community that does not care what it says or does."

For too long, Whiteness did not analyse its existence theologically, mainly because, *from above*, its normative position gave it the breathing space not to care what it says or does. Thus, critical models, such as Black theology, unmasked the power and influence of Whiteness, thereby not only challenging Whiteness to self-critical reflection, but also inviting

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Whiteness into the theological conversation as a conversation partner. Nevertheless, because of its troubled history, the relationship between theology and Whiteness remains uncomfortable, even problematic.

6.3 Locating Whiteness as a theological problem.

If all theology is informed by context or by human existence, then race, specifically Whiteness, as an integral part of human existence, also informs theology. Religion plays "a significant role in race-making" (Blum 2009:4). Through religion, Whiteness is produced relationally (Hunter & Van der Westhuizen 2022: 30). This is especially true of Christianity. According to Dyer (1997: 17) "Christianity is of its essence white" and according to Jennings (2010: 35) "one sees Christian formation being reconfigured around white bodies." And as pointed out by Perkinson (2004: 192): "The very epitome (scandalously!) of Christianity—incarnation caricatured—the Jesus-God of the blue eye and fair hair. Whiteness is first of all "theological."

One cannot, therefore, fully comprehend Whiteness (and the whole racial order for that matter) "outside of Christian history" (Schneider & Bjork-James 2020: 178).[150] Or as Reddie (2020: 10) succinctly puts it:

> One cannot casually remove Christianity from the contaminating stain of Whiteness as if the problems of White supremacy exist solely beyond the parameters of the Christian faith itself and have not become embedded within the very epistemological framing of the phenomenon of Christianity across its history.

"Christianity gives content to Whiteness", endowing it with "a moral base and cultural character" (Razack 2022: 44), i.e., it has "the power to bend morals and actions" (Blum 2009: 2). Richard Dyer also points to this relationship between Whiteness and Christianity by emphasising that Christianity became "the religion, and religious export, of Europe, indelibly marking its culture and consciousness, it has also been thought and felt in distinctly white ways for most of its history" (1997: 17). Dyer goes on to name several racialising

[150] In the words of Schneider and Bjork-James (2020: 191): "This power to order the world is often given divine sanction through religion. To the extent that a white habitus is reinforced by religious practice and theological language—or itself functions with god-like power in relation to others—it becomes possible to discuss something like white religion."

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representations of Christianity including “the gentilising and whitening of the image of Christ and the Virgin in painting; the ready appeal to the God of Christianity in the prosecution of doctrines of racial superiority and imperialism” (1997: 17). Blum (2009: 7-8) also adds the “sanctification of Whiteness” through religious imagery and the “connection between Whiteness and godliness”. Whiteness is furthermore theologically kept in place by the belief in the unity of humankind and the equality of all races. This universalistic or colour-blind religious discourse happens despite White Christians co-existing with “everyday systems of racialized social inequality” (Schneider & Bjork-James 2020: 187-188). Thus, as Razack (2022: 47) tersely puts it: “Theology, in other words, rides in on racial feeling and vice versa.”

After this introduction highlighting the power and influence of Whiteness in theology, we can now turn to the contributions of Willie Jennings and James Perkinson; two scholars who help us understand the historical and continuing relational continuity between Whiteness and theology.[151] Willie Jennings is a Black professor of systematic theology and Africana studies at Yale University known for his seminal work on theology and the origins of race (2010). As someone with a keen interest in theological education and pedagogy, his most recent work (2020) aims to unpack the influence of Whiteness in theological education. James Perkinson, on the other hand, is a White professor of ethics and systematic theology at Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit. A city where Whites are in the minority, Detroit profoundly influenced Perkinson’s view of Whiteness. Perkinson positions himself as a religious studies scholar (Perkinson 2004: 9), pondering questions of race, class and colonialism in connection with religion and urban culture.[152] He is well-known for developing a critical White response to Whiteness as a theological problem, specifically a White theological response to Black theology (Perkinson 1999: 1, 2004: 3; Van Wyngaard 2019: 90). For the purposes of this study, it will suffice to give a brief overview of the respective contributions of Perkinson and Jennings on the relationship between Whiteness and theology.

6.3.1 Perkinson: Whiteness bound to salvation.

Jennings and Perkinson both help us to understand the question regarding the inception of race. While the debate continues whether race originated during early colonialism or during

[151] For a thorough exposition of the contributions of Jennings and Perkinson, see Van Wyngaard (2019).

[152] See his home page at https://www.etseminary.edu/james-perkinson (accessed 9 March 2022)

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the Enlightenment, both argue for the former (Jennings 2010: 8, 289; Perkinson 1999: 439; Van Wyngaard 2019: 46). Perkinson highlights that White people came to know themselves as White within the conflation of Christian mission and colonial exploitation. This conception of theological Whiteness happened over time as "commercial interest in appropriating New World wealth dictated the exploitation of both (indigenous) native and (imported) slave labour, theology supplied the theodicy" (Perkinson 1999: 439). As such Perkinson (2004: 153) describes Whiteness as "a power of opposition" which "emerges historically as perceived difference from, economic exploitation of, political dominance over, and presumed social superiority to, peoples of colour."

The European perception of colour was, furthermore, bound to the theological concept of salvation, effectively meaning that their religious valuations of colour initially determined the discourse of salvation and race. European Christianity connected goodness and purity with White, evil and sin with Black and impurity as mixed, resulting in salvation becoming a progressive "enlightenment" (Perkinson 1999: 439). In effect, Whiteness gathered "significance as a contrastive norm" (1999: 439).

Perkinson (2004: 3) further explores this soteriological dimension of Whiteness by arguing "that whiteness has functioned in modernity as a surrogate form of 'salvation', a mythic presumption of wholeness." Thus, behind White identity there lies a certain number of "soteriological presuppositions" (Kollman 2009: 912). In countries like the USA and South Africa these soteriological presuppositions were further entrenched by the Calvinist-inspired notion which equates Blackness with being non-elected and unsaved, in effect articulating Blackness and Whiteness as theological and everyday boundaries (Perkinson 2004: 58-60), which "in a historically unique manner—racialisation organised social differentiation by means of soteriological signification" (2004: 60). With this in mind, Perkinson writes, "I address the whiteness of mainstream theology by way of the *theological-ness of mainstream whiteness*" (2004: 2, emphasis original).[153]

6.3.2 Jennings: A disrupted intimacy.

Jennings describes Whiteness as a theological problem emanating from colonial contact where "race in general and whiteness, in particular, is being theologically constructed and

[153] For a similar argument on whiteness framing Christian pedagogy and mission, see Reddie (2020).

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challenged" (Van Wyngaard 2019: 21). It points to "a history in which the Christian theological imagination was woven into processes of colonial dominance" (Jennings 2010: 8). Underlying this movement of Whiteness from Europe, is what Jennings (2010: 32) refers to as "the most decisive and central theological distortion that exists in the church", namely *"supersessionism"*. Supersessionism refers to the church replacing Israel "in the mind and heart of God" (2010: 32) and conceptualising itself as "a universal theology of whiteness" (Van Wyngaard 2019: 17).[154] This led to a distorted social and Christian imagination. An imagination "where some people hoard and some people have been hoarded" (Jennings 2020: 136), where people are gathered and race, religion and nation are formed, "crafted in the power of whiteness" (2020: 136). It is a Christianity engulfed in racial and cultural difference, unrelated to geography and detached from people and spaces (2010: 4) and where Whiteness gave us a deformed and fragmented view of what community really entails (2020: 145).

Unpacking this argument, Jennings (2010) refers to the unsettling influence of *displacement* and *translation*, as well as *intimacy*, which is the disrupted goal of Christianity. *Displacement*, described as the dislodging of "particular identities from particular places" (2010: 29, 138), through a "soteriological vision" (2010: 29, 138) is "the central operation at work here" (2010: 29) or the "deepest theological problem" (2010: 25) of colonialism and beyond. It is summed up as, "the deepest theological distortion taking place is that the earth, the ground, spaces, and places are being removed as living organisers of identity and as facilitators of identity" (2010: 39). This theological displacement of bodies is situated within the doctrines of *incarnation* and *creation.* Through incarnation, "Christ is the creator of all things" (2010: 28) located in space and time" (2010: 28), while creation refers to "a doctrine of space and people" (2010: 248). Thus, Jennings (2010: 248) concluded: "one of the first factors in rendering the Scriptures impotent and unleashing segregated mentality into the social imagination of Christians was the loss of a world where people were bound to land."

[154] In the words of Van Wyngaard (2019: 42), "Whiteness is a particularly theological problem because European space and white bodies take the place of Israel in salvation history and Christ is remade as white. In taking over the mediating role of Israel and radically reimagining the eschaton in the image of whiteness, whiteness becomes a doctrine of creation, forcing the entire earth to be recreated in its image – conceptually, but also materially."

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Furthermore, integral to the colonial project are those who *translate* and interpret meaning. Jennings refers to those "who attempt to make sense of these events, those who interpret and give meaning to these events" (Van Wyngaard 2019: 52). After all, "there is power in the word … (that) … can break open a world and overturn worldly desire" (Jennings 2010: 203). The power at work is Whiteness from which all translation and interpretation is done. Mixed with this is "a theological vision which justifies this interpretation as universal and silences indigenous knowledge and interpretation" (Van Wyngaard 2019: 53). Indeed, "if translation is necessary to Christian theology, it is also dangerous" (Jennings 2010: 161).

Yet, Jennings still envisions Christianity as an "imagined space" (2010: 286). A space full of possibility and *intimacy*. A space compelled by "gestures of connection, belonging and invitation" (2010: 4), where a new spirit of cosmopolitism, of belonging and living together can be unearthed (2010: 11). A space where the world can be freed from its captivity to Whiteness by the desire (*eros*) that joins us into a deeper intimacy and communion (2010: 250; 2020: 151-152). Jennings' hope "is for a joining of peoples not only to each other but also to the God who calls them to touch his body" (2020: 288).

Flowing from these colonial and relational roots, as pointed out by Perkinson and Jennings, it is no wonder that race, particularly Whiteness, while also a social, ethical, political and economic problem, is increasingly identified and described as a theological problem (Van Wyngaard 2019: 11, 59). Already in the early part of the twentieth century, W.E.B. du Bois, while pondering why a group of people who call themselves followers of Christ, can also "see themselves as superior to others", concluded that Whiteness is an "intellectual, economic, social, and ultimately a religious problem" (Blum 2009: 2). Whereas Moltmann (2000: 212) points to the problem of "European theology" never in the past making the "enslavement of Black people" one of its chosen themes. It is only more recently, within the ecumenical context and in light of South Africa, where Christianity was used to condone apartheid, that the discussion moved to the irreconcilability of Christianity and racism. Cone (2004: 141) calls this "the poison of White supremacy", which ultimately leads him to conclude that "White supremacy was America's central theological problem" (2004: 143). I would argue that the same is true for South Africa.

Cone (2004) then goes on to examine why White scholars from other disciplines, "such as sociology, literature, history and anthropology" (2004: 142), engage with race and specifically

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Whiteness, while theologians, however, are reluctant to do so. The reasons identified by Cone are fourfold (2004: 144-150): 1) because they have the economic, political, social, cultural, intellectual and religious power, they do not have to engage with Whiteness; 2) it "arouses deep feelings of guilt" (2004: 145); 3) "they do not want to engage Black rage" (2004: 146); and 4) they are not prepared to let go of- and radically distribute privilege and power.[155] This state of affairs leads Jennings (2010: 291) to state: "Sadly, Christianity and its theologians live in conceptual worlds that have not in any way reckoned with the ramifications of colonialism for Christian identity or the identity of theology." Yet, this is not a conversation that can stop anytime soon. With Whiteness recognised as a theological problem, we can now take the conversation forward by exploring what a responsible White theology might look like.

6.4 Black theology informing a responsible White theology.

> By defining the problems of Christianity in isolation from the black condition, white theology becomes a theology of white oppressors (Cone 2010: 23).

With these words James Cone confirms that Whiteness needs Black theology. For a long time, White theologians had the luxury of studying all the usual beliefs, doctrines and views within theology without having to confront the role of White supremacy in theological history and studies.[156] To say the least, they were notoriously slow to recognise the role of Whiteness in theology. This of course led to an inverted way of doing theology where the traditional White, Western assumptions are validated repeatedly. It confirms that Whiteness is the natural order that needs no clarification, "explanation or special recognition" (Perkinson 1999: 439). It was Black writers and scholars, like W. E. B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, bell hooks, Cornel West, Toni Morrison, James Cone and Charles Long, who very early on pointed out that religion is very much present in the analysis of Whiteness (Blum 2009: 12). This led to a new wave of studies that "show the sometimes reciprocal, sometimes mutually reinforcing, and sometimes destabilizing relationships between race and religion" (Blum 2009: 3). Indeed, Whiteness as a

[155] Reflecting on this problem in South African theological education, Naidoo (2019: 171) identifies three similar fears, namely: 1) the fear of losing privilege; 2) the fear of continuing with the ways of the past; and (3) the fear of civil strife.

[156] As very succinctly pointed out by James Cone (2004: 142), "White theologians and philosophers write numerous articles and books on theodicy, asking why God permits massive suffering, but they hardly ever mention the horrendous crimes Whites have committed against people of color in the modern world."

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category of study within theology owes a lot to Black theology. In the words of James Baldwin (1962: 25):

> The white God has not delivered them; perhaps the black God will.

One of the most celebrated of these Black scholars, known for his advocacy of Black theology was James Cone, who called out American theologians for not bothering to address White supremacy as a moral evil and "a radical contradiction of our humanity and religious identities" (2004: 142). This, along with the failure of White theologians to relate the Gospel of Jesus with Black pain in a racist society, necessitated the development of a Black theology of liberation (Cone 2010: 20). Consequently, Cone (2010: 20) gives two reasons why Black theology is a contextual Christian theology. It is worth quoting this at length:

> Firstly, there can be no theology of the gospel which does not arise from an oppressed community. This is so because God is revealed in Jesus as a God whose righteousness is inseparable from the weak and helpless in human society. The goal of black theology is to interpret God's activity as related to the oppressed black community. Secondly, black theology is Christian theology because it centers on Jesus Christ. There can be no Christian theology which does not have Jesus Christ as its point of departure.

While seeking to develop Black theology as a contextual theology speaking to Black struggles and pain, Cone identifies the existence of "White theology". This, however, does not refer to the aesthetic of those who are doing theology. It is more of a critique of the "ways theological language and symbols are used either to justify or mystify the racist status quo" (Schneider & Bjork-James 2020: 186). It is a corrective of the notion that White theologians are doing theology in a neutral, objective and an abstract way (Cone 2010: 17). Cone does this because "there are white theologians who still claim an objectivity regarding their theological discourse, which they consider vastly superior to the subjective, interest-laden procedures of black and other liberation theologians" (2010: 16). Cone's challenge for White theologians to engage more directly with race and White supremacy is taken up by a growing number of scholars, among them James Perkinson and Jürgen Moltmann.

Moltmann (2000: 189-216) points out that the sole theme of Black theology is to apply the liberating power of the gospel to Black people who are under White suppression. God

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identifies Godself with the oppressed and the poor. "God cannot be colourless or colourblind" because God cannot be "indifferent towards victims and perpetrators" (2000: 213-214). In Moltmann's words: "God is the God who creates justice for those who suffer violence, not the God who justifies the sinners" (2000: 214). From this perspective Whites need to abandon their Whiteness as a sufficient form of human existence and risk the creation of "a new humanity" (2000: 215). As such, Black theology gives White theology the chance to open itself up, to relieve itself from the "blindness of White society" and truly "become Christian theology" (2000: 215). This is done, not only when Whites try to understand Black theology, but also when they see themselves and their history through the eyes of those who suffered and continue to suffer under White supremacy and subsequently identify with them, like Jesus already identified with them. In other words, Whiteness needs to walk in the shoes of Blackness. In this sense Black theology, which strives to make the world what it ought to be, namely a truly human community, invites Whites into the conversation enroute to a new humanity.

In response to Cone, Perkinson aims to challenge White theologians "to learn how to confess and redress white power in their intellectual work" (2004: 3). Because "whiteness is first of all theological" (2004: 192), Perkinson interrogates Whiteness from a theological perspective, in the light of Christian assumptions, thus bringing much needed reflection on the topic (Kollmann 2009: 912; Schneider & Bjork-James 2020: 189). As Perkinson (2004: 3) states, his "aim is to reimagine whiteness as a critical cultural construct." Moreover, Perkinson also aims to construct a "white theology of responsibility" with the goal to help White subjects interrogate White supremacy and navigate the practice and embodiment of Whiteness (2004: 2). Therefore Perkinson (1999) expresses that a White theological response requires an unambiguous construction of anti-racist White identity. Or an anti-racist *apostacy* against the god of White supremacy (2004: 233). Its task is threefold (1999: 437):

1. "A White theology must become self-conscious." It must learn to confess and analyse the historical structure of Whiteness as a system of oppression.
2. "It must deconstruct its cultural function." Whiteness functions as a "myth of normalcy" with the non-white experience as "abnormal and suspect." This must be unmasked and challenged. This includes the acknowledgement that race is carried by space. Spaces are the great divide, i.e., a geographical differential organisation according to race, class and

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culture at the expense of Blackness. This requires a profoundly incarnational struggle. Deconstruction further includes the unmasking (ritual exorcism) of the practices and rituals that sustains Whiteness. As such "whiteness must be comprehended, precisely with the aid of black invocation and reflection, as a cultural force whose effect has all too often been 'demonic'" (1999: 446).

3. A White theology must "point to ways of living White identity that offer integrity and practice solidarity with other groups of people." This implies a choice (a theological decision) not to be included into White empire, as well as the seeking of respectful, enriching and pedagogical encounters across racial lines. In this sense, Blackness also becomes the mirror or the pedagogue of "White self-recovery" (2004: 103).[157]

In sum: a responsible White theology looks for a rebirth, a reconversion of Whiteness; it must be both self-referential and other-oriented; it is to actively and practically pursue a new way of life; it is a theological struggle that inevitably leads to mourning in the face of fear and loss; and it is the realisation that White theology lives in the tension between what is and what could be, the already and the not yet, the exorcistic and the humanising (Perkinson 1999).[158] In the end, "Its ultimate joy, however, remains that of meeting an 'Other' God - discovered only in retrospect, in struggling alongside of its historical others - as a saving unknown" (1999: 460).

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6.5 Whiteness in South African theological discourse.

I start this section with two quotes illustrating the racialised situation in South African churches. In an article about racism in evangelical churches, published in *The Mail & Guardian*,

[157] In the same vein, Cone (2004: 150-151) asks, what would an *anti-racist white theology* look like? He explores four answers to this question: 1) It must "do something concrete about dismantling white supremacy"; 2) Begin the struggle where you are, i.e., in your local church or ecclesial structures, seminary, university, college etc; 3) "Support black empowerment" in society, church and theology; and 4) White theologians must engage "the histories, cultures and theologies of people of colour."

Likewise, Barret and Marsh (2022) write about a *critical white theology*, emphasising the following themes 1) all theology is 'coloured' by our location and identity, while a lot has been white theology without recognising it as such; 2) recognising the contribution of black theology as a hermeneutical lens calling out white supremacy and re-interpreting theology; 3) understand that whites cannot "do" black theology, but they can give it their attention and respond in ways that change them and change wider structures; 4) refrain from reinforcing the racist binary by setting up white theology as somehow on par with black theology, but rather focus on the conscious, critical, collaborative and creative work of dismantling, and disentangling our theology from whiteness.

[158] For an expansion on these themes, see Perkinson (2004).

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an online news publication, Pilane (2016) quoted Pastor Xola Skosana from Way of Life Church in Khayelitsha, Cape Town as follows:

> "I have given up on the church," Skosana said. "The God of the Bible has been captured by white power and continues to be used to maintain whiteness while ignoring black pain and the injustices that caused it."

In his book, *Knowledge in the Blood*, Jonathan Jansen (2009: 35) writes about White Afrikaner churches being enclaves of Whiteness. He writes:

> … churches are the most secure, they are the only space in which Afrikaners can be left alone to be white and Afrikaans without interference; they remain the only arena that is, in many cases, still all-white and all-Afrikaans in the new South Africa; true, there is external pressure to change from the broad church community, and there are voices of conscience within the mainstream Afrikaner churches pressing for a broader sense of mission and for recognition by world bodies that once rejected them from the international faith community; but it is entirely up to these churches, once indistinguishable from the state, to decide whether and when they will change it all.

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Both these quotes illustrate why it is important to have an on-going conversation about race and particularly Whiteness within the South African theological discourse. According to Van Wyngaard (2019: 4), White theologians are wounded racial beings and we have a responsibility to probe those wounds, or to be the "voices of conscience" as Jansen calls it. Regrettably, as Van Wyngaard (2019: 4) puts it, "for too long white theologians have withdrawn from this probing or refused to probe the particular way in which their own location as both white and theologian is deeply tied to the very production and reproduction of this wound."

Therefore, while acknowledging that there might be other voices as well, I will briefly look at some of the main South African theologians who did venture to critically probe their own White location. Hence, becoming "voices of conscience" (Jansen 2009: 35) within the White faith community. I will furthermore explore the unique contribution of some Black theologians to the discourse on Whiteness in South African theology. Their contribution is

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especially relevant in a post-apartheid era still grappling with the systemic nature of racism and White supremacy.

The aim is not to give a detailed description of the work done in this regard, but to rather get a feeling for the way Whiteness is dealt with in South African theological discourse in general. As pointed out in previous chapters, the South African society was deeply impacted by the transition from an apartheid to a post-apartheid dispensation. This, inevitably, also impacted the South African theological discourse. Therefore, as a starting point, I will focus on contributions on Whiteness in the South African theological landscape during the apartheid era and thereafter concentrate on contributions during the post-apartheid era.

6.5.1 Whiteness and theology during the apartheid era.

During the apartheid era, the contributions, not only represented solidarity with the struggle against apartheid and White racism but also searched for a White response to the challenges presented by Black theology and Black consciousness. Conversely, as one would expect, Black theologians from this era were not preoccupied with Whiteness but rather with the creation of a South African Black theology as a dimension of the liberation struggle against apartheid. They drew on Black theology emanating from the USA, as well as the broader context of liberation theology, biblical hermeneutics and their own experiences as the oppressed in apartheid South Africa (Molobi 2010, Mwambazambi 2010). As explained by Molobi (2010: 2):

> Most of the Black theologians of the 1970's and 1980's worked in groups and shared mostly similar point of views that "God was on the side of the oppressed". This is clear in the writings of scholars like Cochrane and West who mention Biko, Buthelezi, Boesak, Chikane, B Goba, Maimela, Maluleke, Mazamisa, Mazibuko, Mofokeng, Moila, Mosala, Motlhabi, Mozorewa, B Tlhagale, Ngcokovane, Nengwekhulu, Setiloane and Tutu. As independent thinkers, these men shared similar aspirations for the plight of Black people in South Africa.

South African Black theology presented theologians and activists with a particular Black Christian self-identity and affirmed the human dignity of Black people (Mwambazambi 2010: 3). Of course, this was a challenge to established Christianity, inevitably leading some White theologians to reflect on a White response to Black theology. In other words, one could say

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that Black theology drew Whiteness into the conversation, but Whiteness was uncertain how to react and how to respond. This need to work out a White response to Black consciousness was already recognised in the early 1970's when Kleinschmidt (1972: 1-3) and Nettleton (1972: 7-20) pointed out that Whites should learn to live off Black consciousness and Black power by supporting a program of White consciousness[159] and similarly by Kritzinger (1988) who opines for the development of a White liberation theology in response to Black liberation theology.

At a time when it was unheard of, even treacherous to do so, David Bosch was probably the first White South African theologian from one of the White mainline churches who deliberately highlighted the influence of Whiteness in South African theology, more specifically within the discipline of missiology. During the early 1970's, Bosch (1972, 1974) took the challenge of Black theology seriously. He thus recognised the normative, paternalistic and condescending power of Whiteness and how it succeeded in penetrating the church and its mission. Bosch then pleads for a metamorphosis, a reordering or reconversion of the theological priorities and assumptions of the White church by listening with empathy and humility to Black theology and oppressed Black people. Bosch was however very tentative and circumspect in his approach. Although he recognised the moment as an opportunity for "sincere self-examination", he emphasised that a White response to Black theology must be done in "subdued tones" (1974: 21). But he does make it clear that "nothing less than a new *metanoia* is expected of us, a new and radical conversion" (1974: 22).

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Other notable White South African theologians tentatively addressing Whiteness during this era, are Hennie Pretorius, Beyers Naudé and Klippies Kritzinger. Pretorius (1981) critiques a White South African ecclesiology. The fact that a White and a Black ecclesiology is distinguishable, displays the disharmony in the South African ecclesiastical landscape. Pretorius calls out the White churches as those who represent privilege and power and functions as the embodiment of the West and its ecclesiastical tradition. They are churches corrupted by the society in which they are placed. For example, in the White Afrikaans churches the "loyalty to historical structures, culturally bound attitudes and racial sentiments

[159] Whereas *Black consciousness* seeks to restore the dignity, worth and image of Black people, *White consciousness* rather focus on critical self-reflection and a keen awareness, i.e., consciousness of Whiteness as a problem needing transformation.

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have triumphed over loyalty to the Lord of the ecclesia" (1981: 30). This resulted in the White churches ending up "under the bushel of ecclesiastical colour-consciousness, exclusiveness, even polarisation" (1981: 32). Only a church who truly understands its identity as the people of God and the *corpus Christi*, can break free from the societal status quo. For this to happen, Pretorius calls for the difficult, but honest task of repentance, because church can only happen when White people are liberated from their status quo.

In 1963, Beyers Naudé, had to choose between becoming the director of the Christian Institute (CI)[160], an ecumenical organisation he co-founded, and his position as moderator of the Southern Transvaal Synod of the DRC, as well as his status as minister in the DRC. By choosing the directorship of the CI, he aligned himself more with the liberation struggle and the challenges posed by Black thinking on his reformed theology (Pauw 2005: 12). Initially, Naudé's goal was to promote inter-racial contact between Christians, in order to enhance the ecumenical movement and to provide an alternative set of beliefs to Afrikaners. Regrettably, this was too much for White people (Ryan 1990: 97). Among the projects sponsored by the CI was the Study Project of Christianity in Apartheid Society (SPROCAS) which they jointly undertook with the South African Council of Churches.[161] This venture, however, was still undertaken with mainly White interests in mind (Pauw 2005: 18). The controversy resulting from this project, led to SPROCAS II, which comprised two sections. The first focussed on "Black community programmes which built on the Black consciousness movement", while the second was a "White Consciousness of Values Programme" that attempted to help White South Africans to reflect on their lives and racist attitudes, to change direction and to work for the redistribution of power (Nash 2005: 37). Unfortunately, the latter fizzled out quickly in the repressive South African situation during this time. White South Africans had little appetite to change their attitudes or give up their power. This resulted in a new White programme, "the Programme for Social Change" (Nash 2005: 37), which hoped to work for change among Whites, but was also later abandoned because of White apathy (Nash 2005: 37; Ryan 1990: 146). The influence of the CI is not only far reaching in the history of the

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[160] The Christian Institute was built on the realisation that God is biased towards the voiceless, the oppressed, the hungry and the homeless. As such, it supported black consciousness and black theology (Tutu 2005: 50).

[161] Over a period of two years SPROCAS produced a number of publications through six independent commissions (all-in-all involving 130 people) that dealt respectively with the themes of education, economics, society, politics, law and the church (Pauw 2005: 18; Ryan 1990: 31).

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liberation struggle, but also demonstrates a shift in the theological thinking of White theologians opposed to apartheid and the DRC. It demonstrates a move from a more scholarly approach, based on the confessing church in Nazi Germany, to a more contextual theology "that drew on black consciousness and liberation theology" (Pauw 2005: 22). Nonetheless, Van Wyngaard (2019: 185-208) points out that Naudé pleaded for "true Christian community" (2019: 207). That meant White solidarity with Black programmes, as well as calling his White audiences into consciously multi-racial alternative communities, i.e., Afrikaners must become part of the broader community. Naudé also recognised the need for Whites to reject White supremacy and paternalism by supporting Black leadership and initiatives. In other words, Naudé stepped away from White Christianity's position as "eternal pedagogue" (2019: 207). In the words of Ryan (1990: 207), "Beyers has been called a prophet, the conscience of white South Africa."

Another valuable contribution was made as far back as 1988-1990 by the Institute for Contextual Theology's (ICT) project exploring the potential of a "liberating ministry to whites" (Kritzinger 2001: 248).[162] This project was an attempt by White South Africans to reflect on "a conscious ministry to the white community within the context of white racism and apartheid" (Van Wyngaard 2016a: 1), while paying particular attention to "issues such as guilt, fear and material interests in the white community" (2016a: 2). In the search for an appropriate ministry to the White community, this project deliberately drew from Black theology and Black consciousness, with the aim to move the White middle ground from sympathy to solidarity with the Black majority. With this goal in mind, the church was identified as a site of ideological struggle concerning beliefs, prayers and religious symbols (2016a). By focussing on the White church as a site of struggle the project serves as a "starting point to consciously explore how the church, as an ideological site, maintains whiteness through the faiths, beliefs, and symbols of Christianity" (2016a: 8). Flowing from this project, Klippies Kritzinger, one of the contributors to the work of the ICT, produced two publications, *A Theological Perspective on White Liberation* (1990a) and *Die Her-Evangelisering van die Wit Kerk* (Re-evangelising the White Church) (1991). Unfortunately, among the White community at the time, the ideas articulated in these publications did not get the traction it deserved (Kritzinger 2001: 248).

[162] In line with the argument in the introduction of this chapter, it is significant that this project is located in the domain of Contextual Theology.

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The work of Klippies Kritzinger, a South African missiologist and theologian mentioned above, still plays a central role in the conversations about race and Whiteness in South Africa. Kritzinger (1988, 1990b) proposes that Christian theology in South Africa should be understood in terms of liberation.[163] To make this point he uses Black theology as a starting point, because a Christian theology "must accord a 'hermeneutical privilege' to the oppressed" (1990b: 39). As such Kritzinger (1988, 2001, 2008, 2022a) moved away from the typical White responses to Black theology, namely rejection and sympathy towards solidarity. However, liberation does not only apply to the oppressed, but also to the oppressor, i.e., in the South African context it applies to both Black and White.[164] Thus, Kritzinger also aims to liberate Christian ministry in the White community. Kritzinger (1988: 272) summed up his work as "an attempt at mediating this black challenge to white Christianity, and to 'catch the boomerang' by working out a theology for a liberating ministry in the white community." In other words, Kritzinger formulates a White response to Black theology, by using Black theologians as conversation partners (Van Wyngaard 2016b: 2).

Liberating the White community is at the essence of Kritzinger's work. He is deeply concerned about the welfare of White people. By oppressing Black people, White people distorted their own humanity as well. Because of this harm caused by apartheid, White people are also in need of liberation (Kritzinger 1988: 202, 294). Furthermore, to describe Whiteness in South Africa theologically, Kritzinger (1988: 281-295; Van Wyngaard 2016b: 2-3) uses the language of idolatry. Hereby he refers to the false gods of the system of oppression, namely *the race idol, the land idol, the state idol* and *the money idol* that Whites need to turn away from. The turning away from these idols implies a movement away from White selfishness to White self-interest, that is, a movement in the interest of their own humanity and freedom so that they can experience "the joy of belonging to a just human community" (1990b: 44). Nevertheless, according to Van Wyngaard (2016b: 3), all Kritzinger's work on Whiteness should be read through the lens of transforming and liberating Whiteness. Kritzinger's work on a theology for liberating Whiteness, through the conversion of oppressors, the re-evangelisation of the

[163] "…a liberational approach to theology affirms the inseparable connection between the conversion of individuals, the building up of the church as a messianic community, and the struggle for justice in society…" (Kritzinger 1990: 40).

[164] "It is one of the fundamental tenets of Black Theology that oppression dehumanises not only the oppressed but also the oppressors" (Kritzinger 1988: 202).

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White church and mission as transformative encounters in a suggested ministry to the White community is a vital contribution to the theological debate on Whiteness.

6.5.2 Whiteness and theology in the post-apartheid era.

In the post-apartheid era, the focus shifted to how Whiteness distorted the South African society on the one hand and the continuing influence and impact of Whiteness on both the new South African society and theology on the other. Consequently, whereas the focus was previously on solidarity with the oppressed Black majority and the liberation of Whiteness, the emphasis is now more on critical self-reflexivity and articulating a suitable and responsible theological response to the enduring challenges presented to and by Whiteness. This is in line with the aim of White consciousness, already recognised in 1972 by Nettleton as the endeavour to help Whites "find a solution to their own white problem, primarily by recognising that they themselves are the problem, and that they themselves are to be changed" (1972: 9).

The intention is thus for Whites to not only acknowledge and critically engage their Whiteness but to furthermore expose and "out" their own whiteness (Snyman 2008: 94). For this reason, Snyman (2008), points out how "African hermeneutics" can help with the outing of what is perceived to be Western hermeneutics. The critique offered by African hermeneutics to Western imperialism and thought structures help to expose the unspoken Whiteness of Western Christianity and biblical scholarship. In this sense, the White epistemology of ignorance needs to be broken down and replaced by an "epistemic vulnerability, i.e., "an openness to be affected and shaped by others" (Snyman 2015a: 270). Snyman (2011a; 2011b; 2015a; 2015b), therefore proposes a "hermeneutics of vulnerability" as a necessary "imperative for a perpetrator in order to enable him or her to become more response-able and responsible to those who are still bearing the marks of apartheid" (2015b: 636). This will on the one hand empower the disgraced perpetrators to rebuild themselves and their culture, while on the other hand also take the effects on those on the receiving end of the performativity of Whiteness seriously. In the words of Snyman (2015b: 638), "it is recognition of the vulnerability of the other as well as a concomitant vulnerability in the self. It is only when one realizes vulnerability in the self that one can enter the conversation with the vulnerability of the other." Writing as a biblical scholar, Snyman (2011a) moreover highlights the Western dominance in the interpretation of the Old and New Testament. Subsequently,

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a hermeneutics of vulnerability will create awareness of the effects of interpretation on the vulnerable others, as well as rendering vulnerable the unmasked White self.

In similar fashion, Wepener and Nell (2021), writing as privileged White, male practical theologians from a mainline church tradition teaching students that reflect the full diversity of South African society, acknowledges the need for a move to vulnerability. Within this context they refer to a *spirituality of liminality* where one actively decentralises oneself as the (White) sage with all the knowledge, while simultaneously opening oneself up "for other worldviews and epistemologies" (2021: 4). This is an uncomfortable and vulnerable space where there is substantially less power, but it is also a space with creative potential; a space that requires constant self-reflection and the need for an "ontological and epistemological hospitality" (2021: 4). In other words, the challenge is to not remain *selfish* by nurturing and protecting one's Western theological identity, but to move forward by becoming *selfless* by thinking wider and by becoming epistemologically open-minded (Brunsdon 2019). This post-apartheid era shift will hopefully compel Whites to become more accountable and lead to mutual understanding. The following scholars reflect this shift from different theological and scholarly backgrounds.

Although Rachel Schneider (2017) is an American scholar from the Religion and Public Life Program at Rice University in Houston, Texas, her research focused on "how progressive white Christians living in Johannesburg sought to engage with histories of racism, contemporary racial inequality, and calls for racial redress" (2017: ii). In post-apartheid South Africa, Whites employed strategies, such as withdrawal, isolation and emigration to maintain their privilege. Within these circumstances, churches became key enclaves for maintaining White cultural norms and privilege. Nonetheless, some individuals and groups chose a different path where they sought to embrace, rather than resist, socio-political and racial change. Schneider (2017: ii) identifies this as "the ethics of whiteness—the beliefs, practices, and values that motivated those I studied to engage in efforts to think and act otherwise in relation to their conservative white peers." Informing the different path of her interlocutors, Schneider (2017: ii-iii) found three main influences, namely 1) Black theology and the history of multiracial religious activism against apartheid; 2) "liberal Protestantism" and its emphasis on "social development and civic engagement"; and 3) "the Emerging Church Movement."

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Etienne De Villiers (2018) and Cobus Van Wyngaard (2015) explore the challenges that Whiteness poses to South African public theology. De Villiers points out that public theology deals with the place, social form and role of the church in the broader society. On the one hand, this task includes reflection on the prophetic role of the church when it comes to unjust structures, practices and attitudes in society. On the other hand, it also includes critical self-reflection on how these unjust structures, practices and attitudes are exhibited in and by the church. As such, Whiteness is an important interlocutor of public theology. De Villiers then concludes by emphasising four challenges to public theology in South Africa. Firstly, as a starting point, public theology must find an understanding of Whiteness that does not essentialise Whiteness; secondly, public theology must criticise and expose White supremacist attitudes in the light of the Biblical understanding that all human beings are created in the image of God and must therefore be treated as such; thirdly, public theology should acknowledge the claims made by advocates of decolonisation that the discriminating economic and cultural structures of apartheid are still intact; and fourthly, public theology should help Whites to find an appropriate way of dealing with their own Whiteness as a first step to reconciliation.

Van Wyngaard concentrates on "the challenges race poses to white theologians participating in the South African public sphere" (2015: 479). He highlights how public theology is intertwined with historical relations of power, thus resulting in the need for White South Africans to work towards a race-cognisant public theology. To achieve this, Van Wyngaard then argues for a kind of listening which takes Blackness as pedagogue, allows for self-discovery and leads to conversion from systems from which Whites benefit unjustly.

Situated in the discipline of systematic theology, Cobus van Wyngaard (2019) further reflects on why Whiteness is a particular theological problem and what an appropriate theological response from White theologians would look like. He concludes that South Africa was thoroughly distorted by Whiteness and that theology was fully intertwined and foundational in this crisis. In conclusion, Van Wyngaard then names three themes that not only assist in naming the problem of Whiteness, but also help in the theological work of dislodging Whiteness. Firstly, any reflections on Whiteness and attempts to transform and re-evangelise the White self must "take stock of how salvation has been distorted through a racial imagination" (2019: 251). Secondly, a transformation of space is required. Whiteness is still

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constructed in terms of space and any disruption of Whiteness implies “a shifting of bodies in terms of space, and a transformation of the space in which white bodies move” (2019: 255). For this we need a theology of space, informed, for example, by the work of urban- and eco theologians. Thirdly, Whiteness needs to receive true humanity in local spaces not organised around Whiteness. For this “we need theologies that will inform a space in which common humanity can be rediscovered and received” (2019: 261).[165]

The following scholars confirm the post-apartheid focus on the self-critical reflection and possible transformational awareness of Whiteness in the South African theological discourse and (White) church landscape. Their work, referred to as “White work”, i.e., self-critical, intragroup work done to raise awareness of (inherited) consciousness of being White in South Africa, aims to contribute to real and deeper racial reconciliation (Verwoerd 2020: 1; Van der Riet & Verwoerd 2022c: 3). Van Wyngaard (2020: 153) describes White work as “in-reach”, which allows for a spirituality and church leadership that is willing to grapple with “white complicity and ties to historic injustice.” White (2022: 238-239) furthermore points out that this in-reach programme is not meant for the feint-hearted, because it deconstructs the preconceived ideas and habits formed within White communities.[166] Moreover, it is important to note that it is not at the expense or disregard of anyone else’s cultural experience. As such it also serves as a starting point to an honest and sincere cross-cultural journey.

In this regard, Helgard Pretorius (2018) uses the hermeneutical lens of trauma to explore White Christian witness in the afterlife of apartheid. Although apartheid is technically over since 1994, the afterlife of apartheid is always there. It is a hidden wound, “painfully alive and powerfully active, living under the collective skin of all who live in South Africa” (2018: 5). Approaching these wounds from a privileged position, Whites tend to spiritualise, interiorise and individualise it. Moreover, theologies that serve as a soothing bandage over these wounds, only partake in covering up the wounds, even furthering the suffering inflicted by

[165] Some of Van Wyngaard’s other contributions on whiteness and theology, include, “Responding to the Challenge of Black Theology: Liberating Ministry to the White Community – 1988-1990” (2016a) and “The theological anthropology of Simon Maimela: Democratisation of power and being human in relationship” (2017).

[166] Heese (2023: 229) describes White work as White people recognising and embracing that they are White, in the minority and privileged. They are at home, in their White skins, on a Black continent.

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these wounds. Referencing the exegetical work of Shelly Rambo on Jesus' return to his disciples in John 20: 19-28, Pretorius invites us "to take seriously the fact that God's resurrecting work includes the resurrection of wounds" (2018: 7). Faced with Jesus' wounds from the cross, the disciples are also confronted with their complicity in the wounding of Jesus. In other words, being confronted with historical and after-apartheid wounds, involves White South Africans acknowledging "that the hidden wound of apartheid is also *our* wound, that apartheid has inflicted wounds on *all of us*" (2018: 12). This implies Whites being touched by the wounds of others and by their own wounds. This, then requires "wound-work" (2018: 11) from Whites, i.e., working painfully through "denial, fear and the deceptive operations of privilege" (2018: 10), while also confronting "feelings of shame, guilt, loss and betrayal" (2018: 10). In this sense, the resurrection has liberating, empowering and healing implications, which creates the possibility of a reconciled future.

Writing about transformational White work, Wilhelm Verwoerd (2020: 1) "aims to contribute to the uprooting of white denialism, specifically amongst Afrikaans-speaking Christians from (Dutch) Reformed backgrounds." By using two contextualised crucifixion paintings, namely, *Black Christ* and *Cross-Roads Jesus*, as well as concepts from critical Whiteness studies, such as White fragility, White fatigue and the ignorance contract, Verwoerd contributes not only to Whiteness studies, but also to practical theology. At the core of this work is some of the theological and spiritual dimensions needed for transformational White work. As such, Verwoerd confronts intergenerational loyalty, moral emotions of guilt and shame and how White Christians, by betraying their dark-skinned brothers and sisters, also betrayed God. In conclusion, Verwoerd (2020: 8) argues that White South Africans "need to take off our armour of indifference and denial. We need to look the children and grandchildren of Luthuli in the eye, open the ears of our hearts, and in vulnerability, with humility, take up our daily, lifelong cross of restitutional responsibility as white Christians in South Africa."

In the same vein, Van der Riet and Verwoerd (2022a) reflect specifically on White work done in the Dutch Reformed Church. White work in the DRC, developed from 2018 as a process of facilitation and training, research, and the development of resources for faith leaders. Through this project some interesting elements of South African Whiteness emerged, which makes internal White work and the dismantling of pervasive Whiteness in the DRC a rather daunting task. These elements include, religiously motivated paternalism, racial formation

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through DRC mission and militarised White masculinity emanating from the church sanctioned war against the so-called "Total Onslaught."[167] From this White work project, some useful interwoven and complementary guidelines emerged to not only make neglected elements of South African Whiteness more visible, but also help with the possible dismantling of Whiteness. These incorporate the importance of raising consciousness, cultivating capacity and forming community.

Van der Riet and Verwoerd (2022b) furthermore reflects on the intergenerational dynamics of this faith based White work process in the DRC. The focus is specifically on how White work retreats, hosted by the synodical Task Team for Race and Reconciliation, creates a safe space to unsettle and disrupt historical and intergenerational continuities, while also settling a variety of intragroup and intergenerational conflicts through shared vulnerability across generations. As such, it succeeds in discerning not only individual responsibility, but also engaging the responsibility each generation carries.

Also, in the context of the DRC, Van der Riet and Van Wyngaard (2021) analysed developments concerning race, racism and racial reconciliation in the General Synod between 1986 and 2019 in search for a theology of racial reconciliation in the post-apartheid years. Although there was movement towards a more inclusive ecclesiology, a commitment to involvement in the reconstruction of South Africa after apartheid and the transformation towards interpersonal relationships built on respect and care for others, some limitations, omissions and theological shortcomings were noted. Chief among these is the continuing "formation of Whiteness" (2021: 15) into the present. While the church's privileged history is acknowledged and themes pertaining to reconciliation do receive attention, the continuous functioning of race and Whiteness, as well as the intentional dismantling of its White supremacist formation and segregationist imagination, needs further exploration.

Staying with the DRC, Van Wyngaard (2014b) critically engages the White location, theology and church life in the DRC, by evaluating the language of diversity and how it enables

[167] This refers to the perceived "total onslaught" of expansionist Soviet Communism against South Africa during the 1970's and 80's. Inevitably, this in turn led to a "total strategy" which led to the militarisation of South Africa. During this time thousands of young, white, male South Africans were called up to serve in the South African military in what is known as the "Grensoorlog" (Border War) in the north of South West Africa, now Namibia.(https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/cis/omalley/OMalleyWeb/03lv00017/04lv01495/05lv01506.htm, accessed 18 April 2022). The war and being conscripted into the military were sanctioned by the Reformed Churches as civic and Christian duty.

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Whiteness in the church. He argues that theological reflection on diversity creates language which can draw Whites out of their enclosed spaces towards knowledge of and relationships with Black South Africans, but “fails to draw white Christians into a deeper reflection on their own identity. Consequently, it fails to develop a theology that can engage with critical issues of "'race" in a post-apartheid South Africa (2014b: 158). Common threads identified in religious talk in the DRC about diversity include “diversity as divinely ordained” (2014b: 159) through creation, “following the example of the inclusive Jesus” (2014b: 161), crossing boundaries as a missionary practice while in the process also redefining boundaries, and uncritically incorporating racial diversity under the umbrella of “theological and ecclesial diversity” (2014b: 163). However, this language does not critically engage with race and Whiteness. It rather enables Whiteness by ignoring the socially and theologically constructed nature of race and it disconnects White and Black from the historical construction of the hierarchy of power and privilege, leading to a disregard of “the reality of historic injustices and systemic inequality” (2014b: 166). As such, religious language on diversity does neither expose the privileged to alternative views about themselves, nor does it expose them to alternative views about their oppressed other.[168] Indeed, as summed up by Van Wyngaard (2020: 154): “A clear vision on how to guide congregants to draw from their Christian faith in critically disrupting their White racial and racist formation still needs to be outlined.”

A recent contributor to this debate, is DRC minister and community activist, Schalk van Heerden (2023). He writes from his own experience as a White Afrikaner male coming to terms with being White in Africa. His book is a very hands-on contribution aiming to help White Afrikaner people to be at home in Africa and South Africa. He asks the question: how can White Afrikaner people help to build a country where their children will feel welcome? How do White South Africans move from complaining and White fragility type reactions, to doing the work of home coming and reconciliation? The book therefore gives very practical advice to guide White people to examine their own Whiteness, to cross borders, to build relationships and work together with their Black others to the benefit of all South Africans.

From the foregoing discussion one can conclude that White theologians from the apartheid era focussed on solidarity with their Black others and a White response to Black theology,

[168] For further reading on diversity in South African religious communities and theological education, see Naidoo (2015; 2017; 2019), Naidoo & De Beer (2016), McEwan and Steyn (2016).

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while during the post-apartheid era the focus shifted to self-awareness, White consciousness and self-reflexivity. Conversely, Black theologians in post-apartheid South Africa highlight the continuing institutionalised nature of Whiteness and the resulting lack of Black agency. As Maluleke (2020b) so eloquently puts it: "Whatever else whiteness is, it is more than words, it can't be just a set of philosophical ideas, it is material, it is institutional, it is consequential and it is rooted in law, custom and in policy." Because of this power, Whiteness seldom operates among Whites alone. It is a system that even gets buy in among the very people who are being oppressed (Maluleke 2020a). Consequently, the contributions of Black theologians in post-apartheid South Africa "seek to challenge the limits of Eurocentric informed ideology which (are) too often disguised as true interpretation of the reality and history" (Kaunda 2017: 2).

This is especially evident in a hard-hitting paper entitled *White man you are on your own*, written by Tumi Senokoane (2011), wherein he argues that White people "benefitted politically, economically, socially, and religiously" on their own and should therefore today also be on their own when "excluded from political and economic benefit" (2011: 1). White people are in this situation because they were deserted by the God who supposedly elected them to rule over Black people; when White power and supremacy is radically confronted by Black power; because of self-isolation brought on by the isolation of Black people; and because White people cannot be trusted to represent the interests of Black people. White people created this situation themselves and it is their responsibility to take themselves out of it. They should not expect Black people to help them deal with their anger, guilt, shame and fears. They are on their own. Therefore, according to Vellum (2017), White people are in need of liberation from the bondage of racism and superiority complex. For this liberation of White people to happen, it is crucial to deal with White consciousness. That means, "(U)nderstanding whiteness and the privilege attached to it in a society set up to benefit white people at the direct expense of black people is an important starting point" (2017: 5). Regrettably, this has not yet happened in post-1994 South Africa, as it still continues globally (2017: 5).

Specifically challenging institutionalised Whiteness in the academy, Maluleke and Nadar (2004) confronts the mostly White and male agency discourse to also include Black people as framers and discussants. For this discourse to become truly liberative, Black scholars need to

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sign up and become part of the conversation. They need to engage with each other and collaboratively confront the issues thrown at them by a mostly White and male endeavour. Correspondingly, the White and male enterprise is urged to open up to Black and female voices at the table. It is imperative that the discourse should not be *about* Black people, but that Black people should take part in their own voice, i.e., "(T)he agency discourse is not really about agency until there is real talk-back engagement with all possible agents, clarifying, contesting and defining notions of agency that are being peddled by the white and male academy" (2004: 17).

Tumi Senokoane (2015: 1) goes even further by stating that "the academic institutions in South Africa are systematically and structurally white." Within these institutions Whiteness establishes itself as the standard, the norm, the only good, with all other experiences and knowledge positioned as bad and not meeting the standard. He uses the metaphor of a "white mist" that continues to blur and distort Black vision and perception (2015: 1). Senokoane (2015: 9), therefore argues "against the white structures and systems that declare to blacks that the world can only be named, defined and explained by world barometers. The black world must name, define and explain itself."

From a different perspective, Kaunda (2017: 7) specifically challenge Afrikaner scholars to "learn how to connect their minds and hearts so that they learn how to listen to the cry of black people – *what* to listen to and *why*." They must listen intently to the voices of Black scholars and find ways to make reasonable sense of such voices. Referencing Tinyiko Maluleke, Kaunda (2017: 8) argues that "white Afrikaner theologians must attempt to hear the struggles in black African scholars with their 'hearts and engage in an informed, deep, dialogical but respectful and humble lament.'"

Also, challenging the academic space, Naidoo (2019) suggests that with theological institutions becoming more diverse, reform is urgently needed in theological education. Using the insights and questions posed by post-colonial theory, Naidoo exposes the embedded racism, enabled by Whiteness and power in the sampled institutions. This inevitably informs power relationships within these institutions. Even in post-apartheid South Africa where it is officially renounced, race remains an issue in institutions. Despite this, in Christian spaces few people are talking about race. Education on anti-racism, where Whites confront their power and privilege remains limited. This inevitably leads to the reproduction of White hegemony,

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the maintaining of the status quo of racism and Whiteness and the resulting disenfranchisement of certain groups. Thus, we need to seriously engage issues of race, Whiteness, privilege, power, marginalisation and the harmful patterns of institutionalised racism.

Turning to the broader theological discourse in South Africa, Resane (2021a: 1) points out how theological dialogues on race are suppressed by the notions of “White fragility, White supremacy and White normativity”. Although it seems insurmountable, Resane goes on to propose five steps that might help to take the theological dialogue on race forward: looking back to ascertain how White supremacy coloured history and epistemology in order to move forward or to come closer; move from self-protectionist and self-preservationist reactions to interaction and engagement; moving from exclusion, fragile loyalties and protecting the status quo to participation; moving from isolation based on racial identity to integration; and, finally, promoting “self-giving and openness as the ideal theological approach” (2021a: 7).

Dube (2016) analyses race, Whiteness and transformation in the evangelical milieu of the Mighty Men Conferences (MMC) in South Africa by comparing it to the Promise Keepers in America (PKA) in the USA. While sharing evangelical roots, discussions on race and race reconciliation has a more institutional focus in the PKA, while race talk happens to a certain extent on an individual level but is absent on an institutional level at the MMC. This is problematic given the widespread discourse on race in South Africa and points to a “refusal by certain groups of ‘white men’ to give up white male privilege in the diverse post-apartheid public sphere” (2016: 1). In this way Dube bring together Whiteness and masculinity within the context of Christian men’s organisations. While it is accepted that religious organisations in South Africa have an important role to play in gender norms transformation, the important role of these organisations perpetuating the refusal to give up White male privilege, needs some further exploration. This is especially relevant in contexts, such as South Africa and the USA where Whiteness and masculine power are intertwined. Framing White masculine power as servant leadership in Christian religious language, is especially appealing in the South African context where there is a perceived sense of loss of power for Afrikaner men. This is further enhanced by the MMC’s race-blind approach which simultaneously fails to interrogate White privilege and perpetuating it by spiritualising the plight of men and reifying the specialness of Afrikaner men.

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In the context of the Gereformeerde Kerke (Reformed Churches) in South Africa, Baloyi (2018) points out that the churches removed the barriers of apartheid to become one united church, but that true reconciliation and unity is still a journey to be embarked on. It is a journey inhibited by dividing factors such as language, culture, inequality, paternalism and White members protecting their supremacy, land and wealth by refusing to engage racism and reconciliation.

6.6 Conclusion.

This chapter aims to set the scene for the next chapter where Whiteness in South African missional theological discourse will be further examined. I therefore began by situating Whiteness and its accompanying White theology within the parameters of contextual theology. By locating Whiteness studies as a contextual lens, the workings of White supremacy and power in Christianity can be unmasked, in the same way that Black theology and feminist theology unmasked oppression, toxic masculinity and patriarchy.

Thereafter the uncomfortable and troubled relationship between Whiteness and theology was unpacked as a theological problem that needs to be addressed. With the help of Black theology, one of the ways this problem is addressed, is by searching for a responsible White theology that might take us to the intimacy envisioned by Willie Jennings or the new humanity imagined by Jürgen Moltmann.

Following from this introduction the conversation on race and specifically Whiteness in the South African theological discourse was briefly examined. Especially among White South African theologians there seems to be a tendency to rather withdraw from this exposing undertaking. However, over the years, there are a few White theologians who did venture to probe their own positionality. These contributions can be divided according to the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. During the apartheid era the attention seemed to be more focussed on solidarity with the struggle against apartheid, White racism and a search for an appropriate White response to the challenges posed by Black theology and Black consciousness. In the post-apartheid era, the enduring consequences of the performativity of Whiteness on theology is acknowledged. Thus, the attention shifted to finding an appropriate White response to the ongoing effects of Whiteness on the one hand, while on the other hand, through critical self-reflexivity, also trying to make sense of the White self. In other words,

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the image in the mirror is being probed to a greater extent. In this sense, post-apartheid theological discourse is in line with the shift mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. During the apartheid years, black theologians on the other hand, tended to be more focussed on the creation of a South African Black theology as a dimension of the liberation struggle against apartheid. Whereas, in the post-apartheid era they are more dedicated to unmasking institutionalised Whiteness and the continuing lack of Black agency.

With the broader knowledge of this chapter in the background, we can now move on to the next chapter where the particularities of whiteness in South African missional theological discourse will be discussed.

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CHAPTER 7: Facing Whiteness in South African missional discourse.

7.1 Introduction.

Nadine Bowers Du Toit (2022), a practical theologian from Stellenbosch University, emphasises that theological research in South Africa “cannot be ‘colour-blind’ or post-racial in its study of the ways in which faith communities continue to be affected by both colonial and apartheid narratives and practices” (2022: 13). To ignore race, is to ignore its historical impact as well as its continued and reproduced influence in the present. Thus, the question is not *whether* race should be considered, but *how* it is considered and framed (2022: 15). In line with Bowers Du Toit’s comments, the impact of race is evident in most theological disciplines and research. There is, however a very limited amount of substantial and explicit research exploring the connection between missional theology and race in general and Whiteness in particular. A literature study of these limited endeavours will be done in the first section of this chapter. This will show that *how* Whiteness is considered and framed still needs some proper consideration in missional theology. Why is this the case? Might it be the result of unconscious bias, denial, or ignorance? Could there be some unacknowledged White fragility at play?

Whatever the reasons, it is a problematic situation. As a collective, the contributors to missional theology in South Africa denies (ignores?) the relevance of Whiteness in their contributions. In an article about mission as breaking down walls, Niemandt (2017b) writes about the flow of knowledge and formation in faculties of theology. He writes: “The real power and influence of any faculty are found in the human factor and the way in which academics shape the future through their personalities, intellect, commitment, and presence” (2017b: 3). In missional theology, like in any theological discipline, the power and influence are in the hands of the contributors thereto. This makes the limited examination of Whiteness in missional research rather troublesome, especially given the important role that missional theology could play in guiding churches to help heal the wounds of a divided, unequal South African society.

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A significant matter that might be both a *cause* of Whiteness being ignored in missional theology and a *consequence* of ignoring Whiteness, is the originating position or point of departure from which missional theology conducts research, i.e., Western, White, middleclass, postmodern, and post-Christendom. I will, therefore, in the second section of this chapter interrogate this contextual position and point out why it is problematic for an authentic South African missional imagination.

Because Whiteness is a theological problem that cannot be ignored, it is furthermore essential to explore some theological blind spots in South African missional theology. These blind spots, serving the interests of Whiteness and privilege, receives attention in the third section of this chapter.

Thereafter, the eight concepts enabling Whiteness, namely “White privilege”, “White fragility”, “White talk”, “implicit bias”, “institutional racism”, “structural racialisation”, “cultural racism” and the “ignorance contract” in post-1994 South African missional discourse will be explored. These eight issues will be held up as a mirror for missional discourse in South Africa to face its own image reflected in the mirror. The study will discuss each of these aspects associated with Whiteness, seeking to identify trends in each case, to classify and describe various approaches and to offer an assessment of the state of the debate. This will be done in the following manner: a) a brief description of each of the aspects of Whiteness will again be given; b) a survey and detailed analysis of contributions to missional discourse in South Africa will be undertaken in the light of each aspect; c) a critical assessment will be done, d) the identification and classification of trends in such discourse will be expounded; and e) constructive contributions and questions for further reflection will be attempted in the next and final chapter. Although an explicit awareness of Whiteness in missional discourse is limited, as will be outlined in the following section of this chapter, it is possible to articulate how these concepts may implicitly contribute to the perpetuation of Whiteness in South African missional discourse and provide insight into how the problem of Whiteness may be addressed.

7.2 Whiteness in South African Missional Discourse: A limited endeavour.

Race in general, and Whiteness in particular, is the proverbial elephant in the room of South African missional theology. Especially given the visibility of race in the broader South African

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theological discourse. This situation is probably exacerbated by the missional discourse being dominated predominantly by contributors from the mostly White DRC. This is noticeable in the themes covered in South African missional theology (see chapter 4) and from the names of missional scholars in the bibliography of this study. Even Nelus Niemandt, probably the most prolific South African writer on all things missional, explores race in a very muted manner. Generally, it is alluded to in passing or included as just another border to cross in an all-kinds-of-borders approach (Van Wyngaard 2014a). Such references are usually limited to implied mentions in articles about the breaking down of walls, contextualisation, local neighbourhoods, reconciliation and theological education in Africa. The implications and the influence thereof are never properly interrogated (see for example Niemandt 2014c, 2017b, 2019b, 2019c). Benade (2019: 84, 87), for example, acknowledges that Christianity will, in the future, no longer be defined from a Western, White perspective and that the DRC will have to rethink its White Afrikaans identity, but that is as far as he goes. He just names it as a challenge to leadership, but the implications and challenges for a missional ecclesiology for the DRC is not further unpacked. Some other examples include scholars who recognise the importance of African, postcolonial voices in the South African missional conversation. Incorporated in chapter 4 of this study, these include Hendriks (2012), Henry (2016), Labuschagne (2019), Marumo (2018), Nel (2014), Niemandt (2019c) and White (2022). Furthermore, race also features, albeit in an implied fashion, in discussions on reconciliation, inclusivity and diversity as important themes in missional theology. Some of these undertakings, also included in chapter 4 of this study, include Marais (2010b), Niemandt (2013b, 2014, 2017a, 2017b) and Niemandt and Pillay (2019).

It remains a concern, however, that Whiteness and its continued influence does not receive proper attention, especially given the history of White supremacy in South Africa, the Western location where missional theology originated from, and who the main South African role players are. By glossing over these factors, missional theology essentially misses the point at the core of missional theology itself: God talks both *through* and *to* God's agents of mission. The message or action is ultimately "from God", yet "through people". In any missionary endeavour, the sincere conviction that "I am an agent of God, sent by God" goes hand in hand with being "an imperfect human being". Even the best-intentioned agents of mission must sometimes become the receivers of God's mission. The self-perceived agents of mission must

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become the recipients of their own message by accepting the feedback from those who were the early recipients of such mission work. Through their eyes and by listening to their voices, the mistakes, flaws and sins of the past can be exposed, faced, forgiven and transformed by God. By facing the Whiteness problem, missional theology can also become the recipient of the *Missio Dei*. Not giving Whiteness the attention, it deserves, only serves the interests of Whiteness. It contributes to making Whiteness invisible.

I will therefore now highlight the limited contributions by scholars either self-identified as missional theologians or scholars in critical dialogue with missional theology in whose work Whiteness does feature explicitly in connection with South African missional theology.

Fourie Rossouw (2014, 2016), a local DRC minister and self-described missional theologian, points out that since the seismic socio-political shifts of the early 1990's, Afrikaners in South Africa are struggling with a "massive identity shift" (2016: 383). This identity shift forced "whites to acknowledge their white existence as a minor narrative over and against emerging new narratives of black identity" (2016: 383). Nowhere, according to Rossouw (2016), is this more evident than in the virtually homogenously White DRC which finds it difficult to reflect on its White identity. Rather than confronting this reality, the temptation is there to resist, to "close up", to retreat into a White laager. Within these dynamics, Rossouw (2014, 2016) firstly invites the church towards an interconnected or hybrid identity based on Melissa Steyn's fifth White narrative of hybridisation, while secondly arguing that missional theology, with its inclusive ethos, can play a decisive role. Rossouw states: "While South Africans struggle, creatively and painfully, to bridge the gaps between a society divided by an unjust past- and an increasingly complex present-day reality, missional theology can become an important voice guiding churches to intentionally join the reconciling conversation in a divided South African society" (2016: 389). As such, "a previously whites-only faith community can now be a place that cultivates a healthy awareness regarding racial diversity, breaks down deeply formed historical stereotypes and leads people towards a missional spirituality in which people are able to embrace a diverse range of identity markers (hybridity) and become more grounded (incarnated) human beings" (2014: 76). To enable this outcome Rossouw proposes three missional embodied practices to facilitate missional inclusivity: 1) liturgical listening and discernment – done with humility and openness, with a trialogue conversation between gospel, church, and culture as framework; 2) linguistic pilgrimages - the congregation gathers

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in different locations, listening to that community in order to be changed by said different locations; and 3) sacred meals with strangers – eating together with strangers confirms our interconnectedness.

Missional inclusivity and hybridity imply the crossing of racial borders. Cobus Van Wyngaard[169] (2014a: 191-202) thus explores how "crossing borders" as a central theme in missional theology manage to both reinforce and destabilise Whiteness. Historically, on the one hand the missional crossing of borders or reaching out to Black people affirmed White superiority and paternalism, while on the other hand also led in some instances to critical reflection on Whiteness and racist formations. Drawing from different sources within the DRC, Van Wyngaard shows how the language of "crossing borders" relates to any kind of border, from theological differences to borders of oppression to reaching out to those in need. This all-kinds-of-borders approach, he observes, "diverts attention from how relations of power and privilege impact on some of these borders, but not on others" (2014a: 196). In this way "crossing borders" perpetuates Whiteness; it is "contributing to making whiteness invisible" (2014a: 196) and guards' Whiteness against critique. In the same vein, "listening" as an important part of crossing borders can either just be about "learning about the other" or it can lead to uncomfortable transformational experiences. The point being, if White Christians remain the acting agents in control of which borders to cross and which voices to listen to, it becomes difficult to discern the border between perpetuation and transformation of Whiteness.

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As pointed out in chapter 4, a 'theology of place' is an important theme gaining traction in missional theology (see Niemandt 2018, 2019b, 2020). As confirmed by Niemandt (2020: 25): "Place and location form the basis of a missional ecclesiology." One such place where race plays a deciding role, are the urban centres in South Africa. During the apartheid years the city centres used to be White spaces where White Christianity thrived, and supremacist ideals reigned supreme. Since 1994 the cities took on a new composition, with Black political and

[169] Cobus van Wyngaard is a systematic theologian, based at the Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology at the University of South Africa (Unisa). He does not describe himself as a missional theologian per se, but as a systematic theologian in dialogue with mission (2014c). In this capacity he occasionally engages critically with different aspects of missional theology. In the past he was a regular contributor to the emerging church conversation and an erstwhile deputy general secretary of the Southern African Missiological Society and deputy editor of *Missionalia*. In this sense he is an important voice in the South African missional discourse and thus included in this section.

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economic refugees moving in and White people exiting the centres and the nearby suburbs to live in faraway economically elite suburbs; a realignment popularly known as "White flight." This inevitably affected the (White) church, with church buildings and congregations becoming redundant and the missional outlook of the church brought into question. Instead of changing their way of doing church to accommodate the new demographics, White people opt to move away and sell the church building (Resane 2019).[170] According to Resane (2019: 3), "this is indicative of the reality that racism as an ideology contributes significantly to the flight of the white people from the city centres. Racism in South Africa is now not legislative but subliminal and conscious-buried in people's perceptions." Resane concludes that "white Christianity in South Africa, in pursuit of racial and political identity, abandoned the missional responsibility and religious duty of solidarity with other races through disengagement by exodus from the city and town centres" (2019: 5). Multicultural missional endeavours are indeed hampered by supremacist and paternalistic ideals.

Also responding to a theology of place, Van Wyngaard (2021) explores the dismantling of White imaginations of place. He works from the premise that "whiteness emerges as a vision of ownership of the earth, theologically imagined, with concrete ramifications for the organisation of the world" (2021: 1). This is especially pronounced in South Africa with its history of racial segregation of space, which continues today. Underpinning this spatial vision is a theology that imagined White spaces as Christian places of purity and privilege by removing (Black) heathen bodies. As a subsection of missional theology, a theology of place recognises a Godly presence and purpose to a place and our involvement in it. It proposes practices that will sanctify place and counter hyper-mobility. So, the question is, and I quote this at length:

> What does it mean to name God as the one who placed us here, if *here* was formed by centuries of violence, socially engineered to maintain white privilege (quite literally in this case, places which sustain a life of privilege exclusively for those white), and continues to be reinscribed through logics of purity and exclusion along racial and economic lines, whether it is through the subtle interactions of community life or the brutal fortress-like walls of the gated

[170] Kelebogile T. Resane is a member of the Department of Historical and Constructive Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of the Free State, South Africa. He wrote extensively about race and theology in the (Southern) African context.

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> community? What does our words do when naming God as the one who placed us here? (2021: 4).

Van Wyngaard (2021: 4-7) therefore proposes the following practices that might help dismantle Whiteness' spatial vision and formation: naming the history which made this place and brought us here; naming the Whiteness that seeks to carve out distorted places of wholeness; developing discernment for physical location; and forming a posture of formative presence.[171]

Under the subheading, "Missional Movements" in chapter 4, the emerging church movement (ECM) as a branch within Missional Theology is briefly discussed. According to Niemandt (2008b: 147), being missional is a defining characteristic of the ECM and it can therefore be termed as an emerging missional movement. It is thus important to consider the work Rachel Schneider[172] (2018a) did on Whiteness and the ECM in South Africa. Her primary interest is in "how white, Western subjectivity has influenced the spiritual and social ideals of the ECM and what happens when the ECM intersects with contexts that are not predominantly white" (2018a: 1). She points out that although the ECM aspires to be diverse, it remains a predominantly White, middle-class, Western movement that has not interrogated the influence of Whiteness in a meaningful way. In South Africa it found traction in the aftermath of apartheid in a context of declining mainline churches and the accompanying feelings of loss and uncertainty among the White minority. A small group of mostly younger White people realised that a new multi-racial kind of church was needed, which led them to the ECM. As they explored the merits of the ECM and tried to be missional in their local contexts, they increasingly "began to engage with 1) apartheid, colonial, and Christian mission histories; 2) their relatively wealthy class positions; and 3) their racial and ethnic identities as white South Africans" (2018a: 7). During their engagements they realised that the ECM had a race problem, which led to the conversation becoming more self-reflexive and postcolonial. In the end Schneider (2018b: 27) concludes that "the assertion that the ECM appeals primarily to white people need not disqualify the ECM as a significant social and spiritual movement provided that participants and observers understand the ECM as primarily a movement in

[171] Also see Van Wyngaard (2010) for an earlier tentative exploration of the same topic.

[172] Rachel Schneider is an American scholar from the Religion and Public Life Program at Rice University in Houston, Texas. She did extensive research on the emerging missional movement in South Africa.

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response to white, Western Christianity, and they commit to interrogating how notions of white normativity and superiority might consciously and unconsciously influence ECM norms and practices."[173]

Lastly, researching missional pedagogies in the DRC, Smith (2021) highlight that missional pedagogy takes the contextual embodiment of disciples into account. Consequently, in spaces of White homogeneity, this will lead to pedagogical distortions reflecting the ideals of Whiteness. As pointed out by Smith (2021: 68), "as the DRC continues to develop pedagogies for missional discipleship contextualised patterns must be developed and these patterns cannot privilege white pedagogical patterns of privilege." During the apartheid era racial identities were deformed by segregation. This leads to Smith (2021: 238) asking, "How do we move away from identities that place Afrikaner or whiteness above a Christian and South African identity?" As such, the DRC must ask questions of identity and context in a milieu where the theological rationalisations for apartheid are embedded and normalised in the social imaginations and "language house" of congregants (2021: 238). Henceforth, a reconfiguration, recalibration, or a re-evangelisation of the White Christian community into more helpful, hybrid identities are needed. In the words of Smith (2021: 240): "(A)s a white community, we are invited to discover the personhood and bodies of "the others" which might lead to a journey of developing … a healthy white identity." This remains one of the challenges facing the missional conversation in South Africa.

From the wider literature review in chapter 4 and from the foregoing limited contributions on Whiteness, it becomes clear that explicit reflection on the historical and continuing influence of race in general and Whiteness in particular on missional theology in South Africa, is insufficient, especially if one compares it to the racial work done in other disciplines. Such an absence - or might it be an unwillingness to probe the wounds (Van Wyngaard 2019: 4)? - is not justifiable and might even result in perpetuating the problem. One of the possible reasons for this untenable situation stems from the context where missional theology originated from.

[173] Also see Schneider (2018b).

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7.3 Missional in South Africa: A White, middle-class enterprise?

From the broader developments in missional theology (see Chapter 3) and the more specific roots of the South African missional discourse (see Chapter 4) one can arguably conclude that missional research is conducted predominantly from a Western, White, middleclass, postmodern, and post-Christendom contextual position. This is both a *cause* and a *consequence* perpetuating the problem of Whiteness in missional discourse. In this section I will examine the evidence to confirm this assertion, firstly through a contextual engagement with two core documents guiding South African missional discourse and secondly by engaging with some challenges and concerns highlighting the need for different conversation partners in South African missional discourse. This will give us an idea why this missional positionality is problematic given the uniqueness of the South African context.

7.3.1 Contextual engagement with two core missional documents.

To explore the problematic contextual position of South African missional discourse, I will start with a brief contextual engagement with two of the most influential and closely connected South African contributions which aims to discern a way forward for missional theology and missional churches. These are the missional framework document guiding the missional character of the DRC, namely *The missional nature and calling of the Dutch Reformed Church* (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013) (henceforth referred to as the *Framework Document*) and the book *Cultivating Missional Change: The future of missional churches and missional theology* (Burger, C., Marais, F. & Mouton, D. eds 2017), (henceforth referred to as *Cultivating Missional Change)*.

The monograph, *Cultivating Missional Change*, edited by South African DRC scholars Coenie Burger, Frederick Marais and Danie Mouton, was published in 2017. It contains the accounts of a conference hosted by the International Consortium for Congregational Studies (ICCS) on The Future of Missional Churches and Missional Theology*,* which took place in Stellenbosch, South Africa in January 2015. It also contains some articles from other renowned missional scholars who could not attend the conference. The conference happened in the aftermath of the meaningful decision taken by the 2013 General Synod of the DRC culminating in the acceptance of the missional Framework Document, hereby declaring the intention of the DRC to become a missional church. This decision and the resulting *Framework Document* not only

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influenced the conference, but also features strongly in the background of *Cultivating Missional Change.* Inevitably, this focus gives the book a distinctly South African flavour (Burger 2017c: 10-11).

The publication, still widely used in missional studies and the training of missional leadership, is a comprehensive reflection on the history, the current state, the theology and ecclesiology, the initiatives in denominational systems and new contexts, the praxis and the future of missional churches. Although it is sensitive to both the South African and the global developments in missional theology, upon closer scrutiny, however, it is noticeable that the book is written from a mainly Western, postmodern, post-Christendom, White, male middle-class perspective. This becomes evident simply by perusing the list of contributors, the titles of their contributions and the references in their respective bibliographies. Only one of the seventeen contributors, namely Jerry Pillay, is a person of colour from South Africa, while the rest are White scholars from South Africa and Northern hemisphere countries such as the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. Inevitably, their contributions reflect missional initiatives and issues from these same contexts. Likewise, the references mentioned in their reference lists are limited to scholars from the USA, Europe and White South Africa. Confirming this point, Mouton (2017: 160) even goes so far as to group the declining South African mainline churches with mainline churches in the Western world. As if South Africa is fully part of the Western world.

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Furthermore, in the contributions specifically focussing on South Africa, the titles imply the experiences of a broad spectrum of denominations in South Africa, but then mainly reflects the experiences of the predominantly White, middle-class DRC. This confirms the DRC as the main interlocutor in the South African missional discourse. Patrick Kiefert (2017: 81), one of the contributors writing about the missional conversation in the USA, picked up on this danger when he states that "the conversation is clearly a White middleclass conversation" which "needs a more diverse set of conversation partners." Regrettably, this acknowledgement does not receive any further elaboration in any of the contributions, not even in parts V and VI of the publication, where the focus is on issues impacting the future of the missional movement. In other words, although the book has a strong South African connection, one struggle to find any mention of the uniquely African, and more particularly, postcolonial, racialised South African context.

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Meanwhile, in 2021 a follow-up on *Cultivating Missional Change,* named *Missional Ecclesiology: Participating in the mission of the Triune God* (edited by DRC scholars Coenie Burger, Frederick Marais, and Pieter van der Walt) was published after a conference on missional ecclesiology held in Stellenbosch in 2017. I will come back to this publication in the next section of this chapter, but here it will suffice to say that again only one (namely Bruce Theron) of the 20 contributors is a person of colour (and still no female contributors). The same also apply to their respective reference lists, although some Black scholars are included (only Tinyiko Maluleke, Thinandavha Mashau and Lamin Sanneh in chapter 13), it again mostly reflects scholars from the USA, Europe and White South Africa. It is, however, important to point out that other than *Cultivating Missional Change,* most of the contributors are from South Africa (only Michael Moynagh is not based in South Africa) and it includes six contributors from other denominations than the DRC as well. The publication reflects a better awareness of the particular South African context, but in my opinion still does not go far enough to explore the effects of the colonial and apartheid history and post-apartheid and postcolonial aspects of the South African context on a missional ecclesiology.

Nonetheless, this contextual shortcoming is also reflected in the *Framework Document* guiding the DRC in its missional imagination. In this document, which features strongly in the background of *Cultivating Missional Change*, it is emphasised that the church must re-evaluate its ecclesiology and missiology in view of the challenges posed by the post-Christian society that the DRC finds itself in (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013: 2). Thus, confirming that the document does not give any direct thought to the uniquely South African social, political and economic context (Botha & Foster, 2017: 7). This leads Botha and Foster (2017: 7) to conclude:

> It is the view of the authors that the Framework Document rather opted for a more systematic or global missiology which, although it is valid, cannot respond to the current contextual problems and 'signs of the times' that South Africa and South Africans face at present.

As such, both *Cultivating Missional Change* and the *Framework Document* deal with the South African context in a very one-sided manner. After all, the South Africa society cannot be regarded as fully postmodern or fully post-Christian. As pointed out by Laubscher (2020: 38), in the last decades in the South African context, we were also confronted with other

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transitions, like “post-apartheid, post-colonial, postmodern, and post-enlightenment.” As such, validating that mainline denominations in South Africa had to deal with trauma, conflict and shifting power balances that the typical Western churches did not have to deal with (Hendriks 2009: 110).

To further illustrate this one-sided contextual focus, it will suffice to give a specific example from *Cultivating Missional Change*. In an article titled, “The history and challenge of the missional movement in South Africa: Perspectives from an insider”, Frederick Marais (2017a: 73-76) lists three challenges to the missional movement in South Africa. But first, regarding the title of the article, although it suggests a broader scope, the main thrust of the article refers to the particular history and challenges of the missional movement as it progressed in the DRC. Thus, by referring to himself as an “insider”, Marais not only confirms his knowledge of the missional movement in general, but more particularly his understanding of the development of the missional imagination as it unfolded in the DRC. Put somewhat differently, “perspectives from an insider” confirm Marais writing from the vantage point of the predominantly post-Christendom, White middle-class DRC. Moreover, this confirms that the missional agenda in South Africa was and still is mainly set by the DRC. Nevertheless, with this backstory in mind, the three challenges for the missional movement in South Africa, highlighted by Marais, can be summarised and critically expounded as follows:

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1) Marais argues that the shift to the post-Christendom era, with the resulting loss of power, money, members and influence, presents “the church” with the opportunity to look deeper at what “we” should do, and who “we” are as a church. This is especially challenging to a church that went through the pain of losing its Christendom position of power in society.

Firstly, confirming his positionality, given the focus of the article, Marais’ usage of “we” and “the church” refers to the post-Christendom, mostly White, Afrikaans DRC. Secondly, with the South African context in mind, apart from the post-Christendom losses Marais refers to, how are post-apartheid losses dealt with? Post-Christendom losses and post-apartheid losses are not necessarily the same thing and brings with it different challenges. Malan Nel (2017), therefore, points to the danger of not making peace with the demise of apartheid-era Christendom. The concern is, “when the death of Christendom goes with the loss of political power for ‘us’ in Afrikaans-speaking churches, saying goodbye is even more difficult” (2017: 3). Nel therefore concludes that congregations will only develop into truly missional

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congregations when they work through the trauma of losing apartheid era benefits. It becomes even more difficult when these losses affect, for example, the language of the members. It is only through a process of mourning and letting go that a congregation can find a new identity and missional future. Indeed, as Marais (2017: 73) puts it, "there are times that things have to die in order to be born again."

And thirdly, because of the narrow post-Christendom, White middle-class focus, the plight of the Black (South) African churches is not recognised. Dames (2007: 41), Sanneh (2003: 36-37), McLaren (2007: 32), Van der Watt (2016: 239) and the World Council of Churches (2013) point out that while the West has become a post-Christian society, Christianity in Africa keeps on growing.[174] With the shift of Christianity from the North to the South, Christianity seems to be a predominantly African reality, which means their challenge is not a post-Christendom challenge but lies rather in how to transform the growing Christendom in their midst into missional communities. Dames (2007: 39) then states that the Western disengagement from Christendom is not necessarily the same for Africa; the African challenge rather lies in transforming the powers of Christendom. At best, only a portion of South African society can be regarded as post-Christian.

2) Marais acknowledges that, "the challenge of the equality of believers" (2017a: 72) remains one of the biggest stumbling blocks for predominantly White churches such as the DRC. He therefore contends that the demographic changes in post-1994 South African communities and suburbs have an immediate and profound impact on such congregations. This gives opportunities for new missional communities based on equality across racial and cultural boundaries. Marais (2017a: 74) thus correctly states, the way to "combat poverty, injustice, to heal and to restore trust, is to participate together in a new missional community." He then illustrates this transformation of inequality by using the example of a White building contractor, a Coloured bricklayer and a Black Zimbabwean labourer building a small extension to his house. During a shared lunch, the inequalities are transformed in a spontaneous manner by the way they listen to each other and share what is happening in their lives. In

[174] Sanneh (2003: 3) states: "What is at issue now is the surprising scale and depth of the worldwide Christian resurgence, a resurgence that seems to proceed without Western organisational structures, including academic recognition and is occurring amidst widespread political instability and the collapse of public institutions, part of what it means to speak of a post-Western Christianity."

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other words, by partaking in a community of the table, the shared human experience will transform the inequalities.

In my view, the challenge of the equality of believers goes back to the earliest days of missionary endeavours in South Africa, when White missionaries believed that God sent them to “bring the light to the dark African continent.” This was further entrenched by racially segregated churches and a mindset of the haves reaching out to- and serving those who do not have. Saayman (2007: 126, 129-131) confirms this by highlighting the “blatantly parochial and nationalistic” DRC mission and the racist fault-line running through the DRC mission history, preventing the church from being church with others. The mission history of the DRC was entangled with colonialism and White superiority. It is doubtful whether missional theology has really confronted this historical reality. It might even serve to enhance the racial fault-line. As R.W. Nel (2014: 273) phrases it: “The underlying colonial edifice has remained intact.” Not only did missional theology fail to properly deal with this reality, but the inability of congregants to move beyond this historical reality, is one of the factors limiting the growth of the missional imagination in congregations. For it to become a truly missional church, the DRC will have to learn from its history and find ways to properly deal with the unsavoury bits of its missionary legacy (Nell 2020: 129). Otherwise, it will struggle to form new missional communities, as is also aptly illustrated by Rachel Schneider’s (2018a, 2018b) research of the Emerging Church Movement in South Africa.

Further complicating Marais’ ideas on new missional communities, is the reality that Whites have lost political power, but they still have undue economic influence and social privilege (Southall 2022: 4), which still puts them, and by extension the predominantly White DRC, in an unwarranted position of power. Thus, although they share the community of the table, the White building contractor remains the one who gives the orders for the build and at the end of the working day, goes home to his more privileged surroundings. After working and eating together, at the end of the day each worker is again confronted by the different realities of their own stories. Social interaction should not be confused with equality (Van der Westhuizen 2018: 53). Marais is correct that missional theology, with its values of inclusivity and diversity, have the potential to create new missional communities based on equality, but it will have to deal with the remnants of the “colonial edifice” (Nel 2014: 273) and the remaining unequal power dynamics.

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A further constraint to new missional communities, as outlined by Marais, is the continued influence of apartheid era spatial planning. In South Africa, we still find racialised segregation between those living in the wealthier suburbs and those in the informal settlements. Although there is a growing Black middleclass moving into the suburbs, many of the suburbs and towns where the DRC congregations are situated, are, for the most part, still predominantly White or wilfully segregated. If these spaces of White hegemony are not actively challenged, Whiteness will only be reproduced. Therefore, the creation of new missional communities based on equality should include an interrogation and deconstruction of White spaces and White minds. In other words, spontaneous community is a good start on the road to new missional communities, but all being spontaneously equal around the table is the exception, not the norm. It might even be a form of colourblind racism, which assumes post-racialism and the elimination of inequality by seeing everybody around the table as the same.[175]

3) Marais also maintains that the missional movement is a theocentric, rather than an ecclesiocentric movement which makes discernment a vital component of missional leadership. This, however, is challenging for churches with an intellectual, content-driven, well-ordered and regulated culture, especially in decision-making processes. It is therefore difficult to "convert church questions into God-questions as a starting point in the discernment process" (Marais 2017a: 75).

In essence this movement, highlighted by Marais, reflects the well-known mantra of the missional movement as "a movement from maintenance to mission". In the *Framework Document* of the DRC, this movement from maintenance to mission is described as follows: "The church's primary focus is on the world to which God has sent it, and not in the first place on itself or its survival" (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013: 6). In my view this is mostly applicable to middleclass churches that does not have to agonise about survival. In churches where survival is an everyday struggle, church questions will be pertinent, while God-questions will be different. Kritzinger (2022c) for example, states that the poor Black churches are still in the process of moving from survival to maintenance, i.e., a move towards the middle-class ideal. Survival has been the mainstay of these churches for years. So, the discernment process and God-questions will probably focus more on survival. In other words,

[175] Boswell (2022: 40) defines colour-blind racism as an "ideology that imagines we are living in a post-racial society where skin color no longer determines the livelihood and rights of human beings."

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for congregations more focussed on survival, it might be more difficult to be missional. On the other hand, it might also be more difficult for privileged congregations to be truly missional, because it threatens the status quo. Discernment processes might also be distorted when it is done in a White privileged homogenous space. Either way, this movement from maintenance to mission and the accompanying questions of discernment might become more challenging to the White, middle-class, post-Christendom congregations as they struggle to deal with the different losses outlined by Marais.

To summarise: Referencing Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, Kruger and Van der Merwe (2017: 6) aptly suggest:

> …that in describing the history of Christianity, one ought to refrain from the idea that Christendom had lost its 'golden era'. The history of Christianity should instead be studied within Christianity's different contexts and within its different phases. Then the varied historical influences are realised.

This applies to (missional) Christianity in South Africa as well. I don't think that Christendom had lost its golden era yet, not in the fullest sense of the word at least. The shadows of Christendom are still hovering over the South African church landscape. Also, missional theology should be more cognisant of different contexts and different phases, in this case the particularities and historical influences of the South African context. Consequently, the question is whether the South African missional movement goes far enough in dealing with the complexities of the South African context. Or even more important: Does missional theology really understand its own message? Or is it subliminally reducing that message to something more easily manageable?

Moreover, whilst the mostly White Afrikaans speaking DRC congregations quickly adopted the missional developments and principles, the assumption seems to be that the missional framework and its practical implications will fit seamlessly into an African context (R.W. Nel 2013: 35). In this sense the missional agenda, as set out in both *Cultivating Missional Change* and the *Framework Document*, might be guilty of *provincialisation*, i.e., the assumption that the missional agenda, originally formulated as an answer to a Western, postmodern, post-Christendom scenario, can be seamlessly provincialised in the South African context. Simply put, missional theology, as contextualised in the West, is generalised or universalised into a one size fits all approach. After all, the tendency of Western theologies is to apply their views

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to all situations (Hendriks 2004: 27). David Bosch reiterates this danger when he warns against "universalizing one's own theological position, making it applicable to everybody and demanding that others submit to it" (1991a: 428). It is therefore imperative to explore whether missional theology in South Africa isn't perhaps reduced to a predominantly White middle-class endeavour by mainly focussing on the postmodern and post-Christendom side of things, without taking the broader South African (post-) context into account. To be missional in South Africa, one needs to engage with all the aspects of its context, otherwise missional will be restricted to the silo of a specific (White) community.

7.3.2 Different conversation partners required.

The problem of Whiteness in the South African missional discourse is further exacerbated by the sameness of those participating in the conversation. Conversation partners mostly originating from the Northern and Western contexts and the White middleclass South African context should be cause for concern. It prevents a much broader and more inclusive missional endeavour. In this section I will therefore engage with some contributors highlighting this concern.

Focussing on missional ecclesiology, Benade and Niemandt (2019: 9), highlight the following constraining factors in missional theology: 1) An inward focus caused by concerns about the financial sustainability of congregations and the high volumes of crime and corruption in South Africa; 2) an ageing membership; 3) ministers trained within and for a Christendom context; and 4) the dogged clinging to colonial and racial patterns of mission. These factors are the obvious issues complicating a missional focus in most mainline, post-Christendom congregations. It explains the temptation for congregations to pull back into (White middleclass) enclaves.

Regarding factor 4, however, the work of R.W. Nel (2013, 2014) is an important addition. Nel pleads for an African reformed missional ecclesiology to replace the persistent colonial ecclesiology that goes through as 'reformed'. South African reformed churches still suffer from ecclesial apartheid. Underlying this separateness is "the persistence of a colonial ecclesiology" that will only be resolved by discerning an appropriate African Reformed postcolonial missional ecclesiology (2014: 266). Nel therefore argues for a broader postcolonial missional conversation; a conversation that goes further than the "Northern and

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Western focus, on postmodern questions" (2014: 270). It looks beyond a particular European-based theological method and colonial ecclesiology to develop "new theologies in response to the challenges facing South Africa" (2014: 276). His interest is therefore in a postcolonial missional ecclesiology, from a Southern and African perspective, that takes "the local context of oppression, as it manifests itself in new ways" into account, i.e., missional contextualisation that does not obscure the context of the oppressed (2014: 277). This approach will help in discerning "bridge-building ecclesiologies" and confront ecclesial apartheid in South African reformed churches (2014: 278).

Botha (2015) and Botha and Foster (2017) identify a similar need for a contextualised South African missional perspective. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, while engaging with the *Framework Document* formulated by the DRC, Botha and Foster examine whether the DRC as a missional church takes the issues of reconciliation and justice seriously enough. The current South African reality is one where "aspects of reconciliation and race relations, as well as the perception of the past, are deeply negative" (2017: 2). Added to this is the important "issue of income and economic inequality" (2017: 2). Within these realities they argue for a deeply contextual understanding of missional theology that leads to "a missiological perspective on the marginalised" (2017: 6).[176] They point out that "solidarity with the marginalised in both current realities and the Gospel is the only adequate way in which a missional theology that resonates with the *Missio Dei* should be pursued" (2017: 7). If this does not happen, it will inevitably lead to a church unaware of the power difference between itself and the marginalised, and a church intent on upholding its middle-class status. Or as Botha (2015: 12) rather bluntly puts it:

> "…the theology of the Framework Document reflects that of a rich and powerful white system which does not have the capacity, but has the mandate, to relationally encounter the majority of the impoverished and disadvantaged population in South Africa."

Van der Watt's (2010: 172-173) concerns regarding missional theology in South Africa stem from the tension between the SAPMC and the Ministry of Service and Witness.[177] Whereas

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[176] This corresponds with Bosch's (1991: 420-432) view of mission as contextualisation.

[177] In October 2006, the South African family of Dutch Reformed Churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church, the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, the Reformed Church in Africa and the Uniting Reformed Church in

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the SAPMC is more focussed on the missional identity and nature of the local congregation, the Ministry of Service and Witness has a broader focus including denominational work, local congregations, partnerships with other churches, public witness, projects, programmes, evangelisation and diaconal services in the local context and further afield. Van der Watt describes this as a healthy tension between the two approaches and logs four questions to help the conversation forward. These questions can be summarised as follows:

1. In missional ecclesiology the *Missio Dei* is emphasised, but shouldn't the movement towards God be just as important as the movement from God towards the world? If mission is all that the church is about, is it then not a danger that both mission and church, as well as the Trinity, become eroded? For example, can the missional liturgy only function as "merely a preparation for the liturgy of the world" (Van der Watt 2010: 172)? As such, the distinction between the missional dimension and the missional intention remains beneficial.[178]
2. Since SAPMC operates in an African context, doesn't it therefore require more engagement with African conversation partners? In a postcolonial context that is not necessarily postmodern or even post-Christendom, is it justified and desirable to mostly lean on the work of North American theologians from postmodern Western societies?
3. Discernment is an important facet of the SAPMC, but what criteria are used to determine where and how God is working? And how are the biblical texts that are used in discernment, chosen?
4. The strong focus on local congregations is an important development in missional theology, but there are other ways of being church as well. Referencing the work of Dirkie Smit in this regard, Van der Watt (2010: 172) highlights the work of "denominations, the ecumenical church, individual believers and voluntary initiatives and activities" as alternative ways of being church. Is it therefore advisable to exclusively focus on the missional nature of the local congregation at the expense of "the whole ministry of the church" (2010: 173)?

Southern Africa, formed a united structure for service and witness. It is called the United Ministry for Service and Witness (Van der Watt 2010: 164).

[178] See Nell (2020) for a similar critique on a narrow understanding of the Trinity and the *Missio Dei*.

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Van der Watt's (2010: 172) second question needs some further elaboration. The question remains whether missional theology, as described by GOCN and implemented in South African churches through SAPMC, took enough cognisance of the uniquely South African context? Especially since missional theology emanated from a North American, Western society. In this regard, Saayman (2010) concludes that missional theology was developed in- and for "North Atlantic/Western cultural and socio-economic contexts" (2010: 12). It is meant for "cultures deeply influenced by postmodernism" and is focussed on "sending the church *in* North America *to* North America" (2010: 13). Thus, the question arises, how useful is missional theology, rooted as it is in a First World context, to "the Third World in general and Africa in particular (2010: 15)?" Or in the words of R.W. Nel (2014: 274): "this new church conversation remained a Northern affair … that address questions of church, theology and culture, especially in what is framed as the postmodern context."[179] This disparity was also pointed out in the following ways by various scholars:

Explaining the difference between the theology of the North and the South, Kirk (1997: 40) points out that in the North we find "comprehensive intellectual theological systems looking for a praxis, whereas, in the South, there is plenty of praxis, striving to find perhaps an adequate theological underpinning." In the same vein, McLaren (2007) refers to the different stories of the colonial and the postcolonial;[180] the colonisers and the colonised. He then explains how the word "postcolonial" helps the South to make sense of their reality in the same way as "postmodern" helps the North to make sense of theirs. He uses postmodernity as the key term to undermine the excessive confidence, the "confidence mania and uncertainty-phobia" (2007: 44) of the modern West. To do this, the West focuses on "the field of epistemology, which explores how we have rational confidence that what we call knowledge or truth is really, truly true" (2007: 44). Postcolonial, on the other hand, refers to "a conversation among those who had been dominated and colonised by the excessively confident" (2007: 44). They need a "restored confidence" after the effects of domination and exploitation. So, rather than focussing on epistemology, they focus on "social questions of

[179] Also see R.W. Nel (2013) in this regard.

[180] According to Van der Watt (2016: 237), "'Postcolonial' does not mean that the colonial era has been done with; it is rather the extension of colonialism, the continuous struggle to deal with and overcome the legacy of colonialism (apartheid), not only in terms of land, economy and political freedom, but also in terms of the prevailing mentalities of internalised inferiority and superiority." And in the words of Maluleke (2007: 508), "Postcolony does not mean "after colonialism" but rather "since colonialism"."

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justice" (2007: 45). Ideally, it will be beneficial for both the colonisers and the colonised if the issues of truth and justice can come together. Maluleke (2007: 508) resolutely dispenses with the alliance between postcolonial and postmodern theories by highlighting the Eurocentric thrust of postmodernism[181], while Steyn (2001: 182) points out that postcolonialism draws from the same philosophical roots as postmodernism but attempts to de-center Western narratives and postmodern theories by also drawing on neo-Marxist tradition. Ferreira (2017: 7) points out that the Western church "needs the Southern Church in order to rediscover Christianity without the Christendom framework" and the Southern Church "also needs the Western Church in order for them to be very cautious not to be enslaved by the new popular culture (again)." Regarding the unique situation in South Africa, Van Niekerk (2014: 5) concludes that "postmodern culture provides a correction to modern Western culture, and traditional African culture provides an alternative to both. But in the South African context we find them in different, ever-changing combinations."[182] Benade (2019: 51) stresses that most Western people are influenced by postmodernism in one way or another, but in South Africa only a portion of society can be regarded as postmodern. Whereas Guillaume Smit (2015b) in an article on missional pastoral care, acknowledges different approaches for the so-called Third World societies and the homogenous, highly skilled, middleclass, suburban congregation with its uniformity towards Western culture and sociology that he finds himself in.

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These views are contrary to Nelus Niemandt's (2007: 26) view on this subject. Niemandt acknowledges the mixture of premodern, modern and postmodern influences in South Africa, but then goes on to argue that South Africa mostly shows characteristics of postmodernism, with the mixture the result of postmodernism being comfortable with paradox. This is confirmed by the subtitle of his publication (2007) on new dreams for a new reality: "geloofsgemeenskappe in pas met 'n postmoderne wêreld" (faith communities in line with a

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[181] Maluleke (2007: 508) uses the views of Sugirtharajah to make the point that both postcolonialism and postmodernism are "offshoots of the crumbling Western political and cultural hegemony and its imperialistic tendencies. Sadly, it is here that the alliance ends. Postmodernism is still seen as Eurocentric in its conceptual and aesthetic thrust. It is found wanting from a third world perspective on several fronts: its lack of theory of resistance; its failure to cultivate a transformative agenda due to its detached attitudes; its revalidation of the local and its celebration of difference, which are liable to lead to further alienation of subalterns…"

[182] Referencing Kiefert (2006: 26), Dames (2007: 40) also declares "that the change in Africa is not so much to post-modernity; it is rather a question of many diverse traditional African cultures emerging forcefully into the contemporary global realities, shaped by European-American modernity."

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postmodern world). In this book he also connects postmodernism and postcolonialism as two sides of the same coin (2007: 50). However, the postcolonial era already started during the modern era, especially if one takes the South African mission history into account. I therefore find it problematic to make this connection. It only succeeds in rendering the postcolonial influence invisible. It is meaningful in this regard to again emphasise R.W. Nel's (2014) appeal for a broader conversation that not only includes Northern and Western postmodern questions, but also include a particular (Southern) African postcolonial context.

In sum, with all these impressions in mind, Van Niekerk (2014: 2) recognises a much broader and more inclusive understanding of the term missional to be used in the South African context. He writes:

> Missional here refers to the local context as such; it is not limited to any culture, group or class. It relates to both the postmodern and the postcolonial/post-apartheid contexts because it refers to the local context of the local congregation, which in South Africa usually includes, if local is not defined very narrowly, a spectrum of communities or residential areas. It stretches from communities or residential areas on a continuum between very rich and very poor, from modern and/or postmodern to ones that are characterised by some or other combination of Western and traditional African culture, and even, in some areas, Eastern and Muslim culture. The term missional relates to all of these.

Evidently there is a danger in uncritically favouring North American missional theology from a postmodern, post-Christian Western context to interpret the South African context, which is not necessarily fully postmodern or fully post-Christian. Context, after all, "is not passive but comes preloaded with its own biases, ready to contest whatever claims it encounters" (Sanneh 2003: 5). It is therefore vital to involve African interlocuters in the South African missional discourse (Van der Watt 2010: 172). We need to listen and honour each other's histories and narratives that disconnects us and hopefully together discern God's missional future (Fitch 2013). Otherwise, instead of transforming the missional conversation, one would be perpetuating the phenomenon of the North setting the agenda for Southern (postcolonial) mission and inevitably run the risk of restricting missional theology to a post-Christendom, postmodern, White middle-class enterprise. An unawareness of this danger might even lead to new expressions of what Paas (2017: 237) calls the *Ur* model of European ecclesiology, the

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Volkskirche (folk church) where there is a strong link between church and (in this case White, middleclass) identity. As pointed out in chapter 3 of this study, a church beholden to a specific culture or identity, loses its ability to critique the powers and privileges of such a culture. It is easy for such a church to become an enclave or a ghetto where upholding the status quo prevents an inclusive missional focus. Indeed, the South African church should be God's witness and servant in its specific context, if not, the church is not serving God's intention and will not have a prophetic voice in South Africa (Baron & Maponya 2020: 1).

While this second segment had a more contextual focus, the next section will deal with aspects of the theology underlying the South African missional imagination.

7.4 Theological blind spots in South African missional discourse.

In the *Framework Document* it is acknowledged that the ecclesiology and missiology of the DRC, shaped during the Christendom era, is being challenged by a constantly changing post-Christendom context. The document therefore states:

> But the church today has to function and thrive in a post-Christian society, where the church has little to no influence and where Christians live surrounded by non-Christians (even post-Christians). This massive change in context demands that we re-examine the church's ecclesiology and missiology, finding new and creative ways of thinking and being as Christians (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013: 2).

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This re-examining of the church's ecclesiology and missiology in the light of a changing post-Christian society has been recognised and unpacked by various South African scholars (see chapter 4 in this regard). It will suffice to say that these scholars concur that a missional church participates in the life of the Trinity and that a missional ecclesiology is determined by the *Missio Dei*. The *Missio Dei* reminds us that mission belongs to God, it is God's initiative in which the church is called/allowed to participate (Niemandt 2015a: 86). This missional ecclesiological orientation informs everything that the church is and does, i.e., "its nature, its purpose, its hopes, its structure and practices" (Niemandt 2012: 1). It helps the church to recognise that mission is not just one activity of many, but that the church is part of God's mission and is therefore missional by its very nature (Conradie 2022a: 352). In other words,

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mission does not follow ecclesiology, ecclesiology follows mission (Bosch 1991a: 372; Niemandt 2019a: 39).

To my mind, however, there are some theological blind spots exacerbating Whiteness in South African missional theology. Two of these blind spots are reflected in the quote from the *Framework Document*. The one relates to the strong focus on a missional ecclesiology in South African missional theology, while the other has to do with the emphasis on a post-Christendom society. But first, it is important to explain why Whiteness is a missional theological problem informing South African missional discourse.

7.4.1 Embedding a White habitus.

As pointed out in chapter 6, Whiteness is deeply tied to Christianity. Whiteness is in everything that White Christians do and say. It is in the way they read the Bible, the way they form their theology, the way they teach, the way they carry out their Christian lives (Jennings 2021). In short, Whiteness is a theological problem. This is especially true in South Africa where Whiteness, intertwined with theology, thoroughly distorted the South African societal and ecclesial landscape. Yet, as the following example will illustrate, this problem seems to go largely unnoticed (or unacknowledged) in South African missional theology,

According to Meiring (2022: 114-115), when a missional congregation decides to join God's mission in its community, it must realise that everything it does or doesn't do must have a *missional dimension*. Its teaching and preaching, how it serves the community in different ways, every decision it takes, every act by its leaders and members, every worship service and every sermon must reflect its missional commitment. Furthermore, the congregation also needs a *missional intention* directing all its programmes, projects and activities, its budget allocations, even the daily schedules of its pastors and leaders. All its priorities and functions must show and drive the missional intention of the congregation. In order to convert its missional dimension and intention into practice, the missional congregation must be enabled to develop flexible and adaptable *missional structures* that communicates the congregation's missional existence in very practical ways to everybody in the community.

To help congregations with their missional dimension, intention and structures, a missional culture needs to be cultivated. Currently, the most influential workbook helping congregations with this process is: *In Pas met die Lewende God: Ritmes en gewoontes vir*

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roepingsgetroue gemeentes (In step with the Living God: Rhythms and habits for congregations faithful to their calling) (Cordier, G., ed. 2020). In this workbook congregations are guided to discover God's journey with them in order to discern God's preferred future for the congregation and its community. In other words, it is a practical workbook, guiding congregations to discover their missional dimension, intention and structures. In a nutshell, the aim of this practical workbook is to help congregations move from a maintenance culture to a missional culture. This requires a new congregational culture culminating in new missional language and practices. To achieve this new missional culture certain rhythms, habits and exercises, or best practices that had the biggest impact on congregational culture were identified. The assumption is that by journeying with and through these best practices, congregations will learn new missional habits and eventually move to a new missional culture and future. As such five main rhythms were identified, with three habits underlying each and with certain practices supporting the habits and rhythms. It will suffice just to name and briefly explain the five rhythms.

Rhythm 1: Discover and celebrate. This rhythm answers the question: Where is God actively busy? On the journey with God, each other and the surrounding community, the congregation discovers and celebrates their God-given uniqueness, strong points and potential through practices like storytelling, devotions, listening exercises and networks.

Rhythm 2: Listen and discern. This rhythm is a journey of discernment to discover what God is doing and how the congregation can partake in God's work. One must let go of all preconceived notions and assumptions and join in practices like quite time, journaling, dwelling in The Word, asking God questions, listening to the Spirit, illuminating conversations and listening.

Rhythm 3: Taking risks and experiment. In this rhythm the congregation follows and embodies God's movement to the people and the world of their surrounding community. This is done through dwelling in the world, hospitality, listening to the community, and building relationships and partnerships.

Rhythm 4: Clarify and focus. In this rhythm the congregation discerns what God has given them, where God is working in their community, what God is calling them to do in the place and the community where they are called to serve, and how they are supposed to do it.

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Rhythm 5: Implement and practice. The congregation implement and live the calling they received from God. They implement the calling through the empowerment and formation of leaders and members, concrete actions, aligning of congregational activities, handling conflict, crossing borders and the development of faithful habits, skills and practices.

The danger or blind spot, however, especially in congregations where the dominant culture is White, is that through this all-encompassing missional process of discernment and praxis, the missional congregation might inadvertently be embedding a White habitus. Marais (2017b: 384) declares that "(C)lusters of habits constitute a habitus or habitual social space in which our social imagination is shaped." Given the premiss that Whiteness is a theological problem, White identity will be constantly at work, constituting a White missional theological habitus. Through its discernment processes, habits, rhythms and practices missional theology might then be feeding a "habitual social space" (2017b: 384) in which a White social imagination is continuously shaped.

Subsequently, in *rhythm one* it will be difficult to discover where God is busy, without also acknowledging how Whiteness is busy in the background. White biases will colour God's work. White privilege is easily legitimised as blessings and gifts from God to be celebrated. In *rhythm two*, Whiteness is probably the main preconceived notion and assumption that needs to be let go. When God's movement to people and environments are embodied in *rhythm three*, Whiteness will likely determine where White people will go. Whiteness will be incarnated. After all, White people represent Whiteness wherever they go. To get clarity and focus about the community where God calls the congregation to in *rhythm four*, clarity is surely first needed about the role Whiteness played in that community, i.e., clarity on how the community was racialised. Lastly, when implementing God's calling through *rhythm five*, Whiteness will likely influence the choices to whom, how and where it will be implemented, how congregational activities will be aligned and which borders will be crossed, while the development of faithful habits, skills and practices might be deformed in favour of Whiteness.

By not engaging Whiteness as a theological problem, missional theology is therefore in danger of perpetuating a White habitus which "promotes a sense of group belonging (a White culture of solidarity)" (Boswell 2022: 19). The tragic consequences of this are succinctly pointed out by Boswell (2022: 19):

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> White individuals and churches are often blissfully unaware of this "white habitus" and how it shapes their own identities, languages, spaces, spiritual practices, and congregational life, as well as their social and ethical relations with the community at large.

Besides the above-mentioned workbook, this underlying danger of a White habitus is also evident in the two missional documents discussed earlier in this chapter (see 7.3.1) and in the contributions examined in the next section of this chapter. All these documents ignore how the White habitus or Whiteness as a theological problem informs theological reflection, congregational spaces, liturgical spaces, as well as pedagogical and formational endeavours. It is blind to the fact that it is produced from a White centre. What it thus comes down to is: If Whiteness is not confronted as a missional theological problem, the White habitus in predominantly White churches will be further embedded, and God's preferred missional future will most probably remain White.

7.4.2 An ecclesiological blind spot.

David Bosch (1991a: 391) stresses that "the church stands in the service of God's turning to the world." The church is an instrument in the service of the *Missio Dei*. In the aftermath of apartheid, the DRC, as the main exponent of missional theology in South Africa, welcomed this emerging ecclesiological position situated in the *Missio Dei*. Compared to the missional movement in the Northern hemisphere, it seems therefore that the South African missional movement has a particularly strong focus on what Burger (2017b: 280) calls "a deeply Christian ecclesiology ... that is nimble and contextually adaptable." This emphasis is understandable, given the DRC's troubled history with church- and state theology during the apartheid years on the one hand, as well as its colonialist missionary history on the other. In a fast changing and challenging post-1994 context where the DRC lost its powerful societal position and suffered an identity crisis, the newfound emphasis on a missional ecclesiology, based in the *Missio Dei,* gave the church a new focus, a new sense of purpose. By rethinking and reforming the church in this way, they confirmed that being missional is "at the heart of the life of the church" (Burger 2017b: 287). This is evident from the following quotations by prominent exponents of South African missional theology:

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> "The church *is* mission and *participates in* God's mission" and therefore, "Mission is the way the church lives." (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013: 5)
>
> 'n Verskuiwing van 'n kerkgesentreerde sending na 'n sendinggefokusde kerk (Niemandt 2010a: 95) (A shift from a church-centred mission to a mission-focussed church).
>
> Dit is God wat stuur. Die kerk se wesenlike roeping is dus om self gestuurde te wees (Niemandt 2010a: 95, citing a report from the General Synod of the DRC 2004) (It is God who sends. The core calling of the church is therefore to be the one who is sent).
>
> Sending is nie iets wat die kerk doen nie, maar wat die kerk is. Die kerk word deur God in die wêreld gestuur om deel te neem aan God se sending. Wanneer die kerk dit nie doen nie, hou die kerk eintlik op bestaan (Niemandt 2010a: 98) (Mission is not something done by the church, it is the church. The church gets send into the world to participate in God's mission. When this is not done by the church, it ceases to be church).
>
> The goal of the church is to fulfil God's missionary purpose and to be God's missionary church (Niemandt 2012: 3).
>
> This argument can be concluded by stating that mission is the life of the church and the church is central to mission (Niemandt 2012: 3).
>
> Mission cannot be something attached to the church; it must be the function of the church with the realisation that the church is the function of mission (Pillay 2017: 38-39).
>
> The congregation as a called and sent community participating in the *missio Dei* is the missionary in the first place … (and) … should reflect God's intent and purposes in Christ for this world in its corporate culture and ministry (Cordier 2021: 316-317).

Thus, as illustrated by these examples, as well as the themes covered in the literature review in chapter 4 of this study, the church is missional through-and-through. However, this

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everything-about-the-church-is-missional ecclesiological approach also makes the church vulnerable for the critique against church theology. To explore this danger, the Kairos Document[183] and its critique of church theology might be useful. Especially since missional theology aims to move away from a church theology. In short, the Kairos Document asks, where is God at work? and concludes that God is mainly at work in society (Leonard 2010). Following in the footsteps of Karl Barth it emphasised a turn to the world. Therefore, the church is important, but not at the centre, or "central to mission" as Niemandt (2012: 3) frames it. After all, the *Missio Dei* is larger than the church (Bosch 1991a: 392). God can also build God's kingdom through other institutions, individuals, servants and instruments (Niemandt 2010a: 99). Nonetheless, Bosch resolved this problem of pan-missional thought by accentuating that the church is both "missionary" and "missionising". He writes:

> The missionary dimension of a local church's life manifests itself, among other ways, when it is truly a worshipping community; it is able to welcome outsiders and make them feel at home; it is a church in which the pastor does not have the monopoly and the members are not merely objects of pastoral care; its members are equipped for their calling in society; it is structurally pliable and innovative; and it does not defend the privileges of a select group. However, the church's missionary dimension evokes intentional, that is direct involvement in society; it actually moves beyond the walls of the church and engages in missionary "points of concentration" such as evangelism and work for justice and peace (1991a: 373).

The main danger, however, lies in South African missional theology bringing everything under the banner of the church. As highlighted in the introduction of this section, the *Missio Dei* was originally set up to emphasise that mission is essentially the work of God, with the church

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[183] The Kairos Document was formulated in the mid 1980's during a very turbulent time in South Africa's history. The country was locked in a total, national state of emergency with news blackouts, international sanctions and thousands of people either in detention, restricted, deported or missing. The apartheid regime went all out to demonstrate its power and maintain apartheid and white supremacy in the face of rising discontent and uprisings against the state and its oppressive policies. After extensive discussions, the Kairos theologians, representing numerous groups and churches, formulated the Kairos Document as an empowering instrument and statement of faith and commitment to the struggle for justice and peace in South Africa. As such it is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa on the one hand, as well as a critique of the theological models that determined the activities of the church at the time. After thorough analyses, the Kairos theologians identified three significant theologies, namely "State Theology", "Church Theology" and "Prophetic Theology". In critiquing the first two, they did not mince their words. Intrinsically, the Kairos Document is a powerful example of a contextual theological document whose methodology is used by many Christians to reflect on their own situations (Leonard 2010: 41-48).

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being called to participate in God's mission. This was done to counter the earlier narrow understanding of mission as an action of missionary societies and congregations. The implications of the shift towards the *Missio Dei* inevitably led to a debate on the question whether God works mainly outside the church, or inside the church or largely through the church in the world. In line with Bosch, I would argue for a creative tension in this regard.

Nonetheless, if the church is understood as God's main instrument or vehicle of mission, the means through which God works, it might well lead to a more dynamic understanding of the church, but it might also lead to an ecclesiastical attenuation of mission. As such, it diverts the focus away from the relationship between church and culture, church and society, church and other religions, church and race, etc. Put differently, the church is more dynamic in what it does, but less self-critically inclined in terms of these relationships. When this happens, a blind spot is created for something like Whiteness, especially if the church itself is homogenously White and if a White understanding of the world is taken for granted. In other words, if the church understands itself as the main instrument of God's mission, it is easy to be blind for fault lines in terms of class, culture or race in its midst. In an environment of White homogeneity, it is not easy to be critical of the norm.

The recent publication, *Missional Ecclesiology: Participating in the mission of the Triune God* (Burger, C., Marais, F., Van der Walt, P. eds. 2021) on missional ecclesiology confirms this assertion. In the aftermath of the 2013 decision by the General Synod of the DRC to become a dedicated missional church, it became apparent that the transition to become missional is more difficult than expected. It became clear that at least part of the problem stems from the ecclesiology with which the church operates. The church seems to be stuck in the tension between imaginative missional ecclesiological visions and a prescribed ecclesiological model designed for a time gone by. The book therefore attempts to find a more relevant and fluid missional ecclesiology by investigating ecclesiology rooted in Scripture and the history of the church; shapes of the church in the South African context; ecclesial practices such as church offices, theological education, missional capacities, change processes, leadership etc; the theological tradition underlying the church; and some issues that need further reflection emanating from lessons learned (Burger 2021a: 8-11). Progressing from its sister publication (*Cultivating Missional Change*) discussed earlier in the chapter, this book does reflect more on the troubled history of the DRC, displays an awareness of the history of racial separation,

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the racial and cultural powers at work in South Africa, and the need for introspection about the boundaries, prejudices and attitudes complicating congregational culture and the building of bridges.

However, despite Burger's (2021: 9) declaration that they want to distinguish "between mere symptoms and deeper fault lines" in their analysis, to my mind the book still does not go far or deep enough. Notwithstanding the sensitivities mentioned above, it still does not expose the White habitus underlying the ecclesiology of predominantly White churches, such as the DRC. In a contribution on decision-making processes, Marais (2021a: 272) highlights the "internal institutional hermeneutics" regulating and complicating the outcomes of decision-making processes in an institution. I would argue that the White habitus probably qualifies as the main "internal institutional hermeneutic" that needs to be confronted. Furthermore, in the chapter on the way forward for missional ecclesiology, Marais (2021b: 410) points out:

> In the missional attempt to cross cultural and economic boundaries, we need to understand historic privilege and injustice in society. When a missional community crosses these boundaries without an awareness of the history that separates cultural groups, and the influence of privilege and trauma on the different sides of the divide, they will almost certainly be programmed to continue privilege and trauma.

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Such an awareness is indeed important for a missional ecclesiology in the South African context. But the question remains: Why does this not receive more in-depth attention when missional ecclesiology is explored? And why is Whiteness, which lies at the root of such historical privilege, injustice, separation and trauma not properly dealt with? Put differently, from an ecclesiological standpoint, the book comprehensively deals with the questions: "where are we?"; "to whom do we belong?" and "what is God doing?" (Nell 2021: 330) but it fails to properly interrogate the question at the heart of a missional congregation as the original hermeneutic of the gospel: "who are we?"

The importance of this undertaking is further emphasised by Van der Borght's (2009) question: why is Sunday morning still the most segregated hour in South Africa? Notwithstanding, the increased exposure its members have to other racial groups in schools, places of work, sports events, musical events and political parties, Van der Borght points out that the White church remains the Whitest of them all. In a multicultural context, the failure

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of the church is to remain monocultural. The internalisation of racism, apartheid, White supremacy and White culture are indeed unfinished ecclesial and ecclesiological business for predominantly White churches in South Africa. If missional theology does not attend to this problem in its midst, "(O)ne can fear that Sunday morning will continue to be the most segregated hour in South Africa … for a long time coming" (2009: 13).

There should be a critical tension between the church and the societal patterns influencing it, in this case Whiteness. God does indeed work *via* the church, but God also works *in* the church. God's mission, often presumed to be exclusively "from above", is also conceived to be God's mission "from below" (Pachuau 2000: 544). In the end, the congregation remains "the first hermeneutic of the gospel" (Burger 2021b: 389; Newbigin 1989: 222). A continuous self-reflective awareness of this tension is therefore of critical importance in missional ecclesiology, especially where Whiteness is concerned.

7.4.3 A compromised theology.

Burger (1999: 64) points out that the DRC allowed secondary issues such as colour and race to infiltrate its identity. Besides Christ, there were other relationships, loyalties and matters that directed the church. I would argue that the primary driving force behind these relationships, loyalties and matters is Whiteness: the elephant in the room; the dominant force directing the church during the apartheid years and thereafter. Even to the point where, in post-apartheid South Africa, theological compromises were made in favour of the dominant, White, post-Christendom culture. One can therefore argue that missional theology in South Africa, especially as it is practiced in the DRC, is not contextually and culturally aware and self-critical enough. This is the case, despite its roots in the contextual and cultural critique highlighted by Lesslie Newbigin and the GOCN.

Newbigin and the GOCN critically engaged their own dominant context and how the church accommodated Christendom patterns. They recognised how the church in the UK and the USA misunderstood their own message because they didn't take the critique of the gospel in their midst seriously. During Christendom the cultural influence of the church was taken for granted, but conversely the dominant cultural patterns in society also influenced the church in multiple ways, e.g., middle class assumptions, consumerism, White hegemony, patriarchy and heteronormativity. Consequently, the recognition that societies such as the UK moved

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into a post-Christendom context helped people to recognise their weddedness to Christendom patterns. It helped the church not to take the cultural influence for granted, which helped to break through civil religion.

However, what if only some aspects are recognised in such Christendom accommodation, e.g., political influence is recognised, but not consumerism, or sexual morality can no longer be enforced but what about heteronormativity, or gender is recognised but not race? Thus, the important question is whether Christendom patterns are continuing despite the move to a post-Christendom society? In other words, in post-Christendom, the residue of Christendom is still present in the same way that the residue of apartheid is still present in the post-apartheid era. Christendom did not die overnight, as stated by Mouton (2017: 161). The shadow of Christendom remains. Moreover, with Christianity spreading in the Global South, African churches are still coming to grips with Christendom. The ecclesiology and missiology of the church, shaped during the Christendom era, is indeed being challenged by a constantly changing post-Christendom context, but not all aspects accommodated during Christendom is recognised yet. The fallacy here is that, unlike Newbigin and the GOCN, South African missional theologians weren't critical enough of all the dominant contextual- and cultural patterns, in this case White hegemony, accommodated during Christendom, thereby perpetuating White homogeneity during post-Christendom.

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In essence, South African missional theology took over Newbigin and the GOCN's emphasis on cultural critique but neglected to fully take over the counter-cultural and self-critical aspects highlighted by them. There should always be this creative tension: while engaging in- and with culture, one also needs to be counter-cultural. The process of applying Newbigin's (1989: 152) concept of "challenging relevance", God's "yes" and "no", God's grace and judgment to aspects of the culture inside and outside the church. As such, South African missional theology missed the point recognised by Newbigin, namely that the church is not only the messenger of the gospel or an instrument in the service of the *Missio Dei*, but also the recipient challenged by the gospel. This point is eloquently explained by Conradie (2022: 353):

> The point is that the church (e.g., in England, but also in the USA and in South Africa) has become the recipient (not only the agent or instrument) of its own missionary message so that the church's accommodation of the dominant cultural

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> patterns under conditions of Christendom in such countries (shaped by power, privilege, and nowadays, consumerism) is challenged by the gospel. The self-critique of consumerism and of the prosperity gospel is certainly highly appropriate in order to resist ecclesial self-legitimising.

The same would apply to the tacit legitimation of Whiteness and privilege. As with cultural patterns such as secularisation and consumerism, it should be obvious that the power of Whiteness is one of the continuing dominant patterns challenged by the gospel. Why is there this blind spot? Why is it that South African missional theology harbours the oppressive force of Whiteness within its ranks, while it is supposed to be a counter-cultural community refusing and resisting its influence (World Council of Churches 2013: 19)? To paraphrase Conradie (2022: 353): The self-critique of Whiteness is certainly highly appropriate in order to resist ecclesial self-legitimising. The messengers are challenged (or should be challenged) by their own message. The image in the mirror needs to be confronted. Addressing this will be crucial if missional theology truly wants to embody an alternative story, especially in the (South) African context.

7.5 South African missional discourse: Gatekeeper of Whiteness?

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the absence of substantial reflections on Whiteness in missional theology does not mean that the influence of Whiteness on missional theology is in fact absent. Therefore, this section will move on to the next step in the research problem being addressed in this study. It will focus on the way that the eight key concepts enabling Whiteness, implicitly serves to perpetuate Whiteness in South African missional discourse. Subsequently, in the rest of this section an analysis conducted of contributions to missional discourse in South Africa in the light of each aspect, will be described. By "reading between the lines", as it were, certain implicit trends showing how missional theology serves as a gateway or gatekeeper of Whiteness and privilege can be identified and expounded. Not all aspects feature in equal measure but together they work to uphold White privilege, which is always hovering in the background, fighting for survival. Identifying them or finding their presence will help missional theology to face the image of Whiteness and hopefully stop it from being an agent in service of White privilege. However, before detailing the presence of

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the eight aspects in missional theology, one needs to understand the interaction between the eight aspects maintaining Whiteness.

Steyn (2012: 1) describes the continuing influence of Whiteness from the apartheid era and thereafter in the following way:

> It has become a standing joke that since democracy in South Africa one cannot find anyone who supported apartheid. Increasingly some white South Africans claim that they did not know what was happening during apartheid; that it was not their generation that was responsible for apartheid, but that of their parents; and even that it was not as bad for black people during apartheid as it is for white South Africans in postapartheid South Africa. Yet the system of racial apartheid could not have been functional or sustained for over four decades without the active and passive cooperation of the white population – using separate entrances, enjoying whites only transport, beaches, restaurants and cinemas, paying subminimum wages to black employees employed only for menial labour, educating only white children in the schools their children also attended, enjoying the security of curfews, serving in the army and, of course, participating in discourses that justified the status quo.

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On the one hand Steyn confirms that White supremacy was systematically and systemically engineered and entrenched during the apartheid years. The architects of apartheid institutionalised racial biases in every aspect of society: structurally, institutionally and culturally. *Structural racialisation* engineered segregation. The best geographical areas and resources were given to Whites, while people of colour were removed and placed in inferior geographical areas, far away from Whites, with limited resources. Racial biases formed part of the fibre of every institution that was established – every school, church, library, university, college, corporate business, state department – creating *institutional racism*. The structures and institutions worked together to create a culture of White supremacy (*cultural racism*) and all the biases and prejudices of White superiority were at work everywhere; unchecked, unintended, automatic, and unconscious (*unconscious bias*). For decades all these powerful forces worked together to create firmly established *White privilege* and systematically institutionalised White supremacy.

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On the other hand, Steyn accentuates the post-apartheid staying power of Whiteness and how it is protected and maintained in many ways. After the formal demise of apartheid, White privilege was firmly established and is, to this day, being maintained by the *ignorance contract*, which, when confronted, has two main responses: defensiveness *(White fragility*) and re-making (*White talk*). Both responses, by their nature, maintain White privilege. Additionally, the ignorance contract is very powerful, as it also helps to sustain structural racialisation, institutional racism, cultural racism and unconscious bias, keeping White privilege firmly in place.

The following diagram with the accompanying explanation thereof, further clarify the interplay between the eight aspects working together to establish and maintain Whiteness and privilege.

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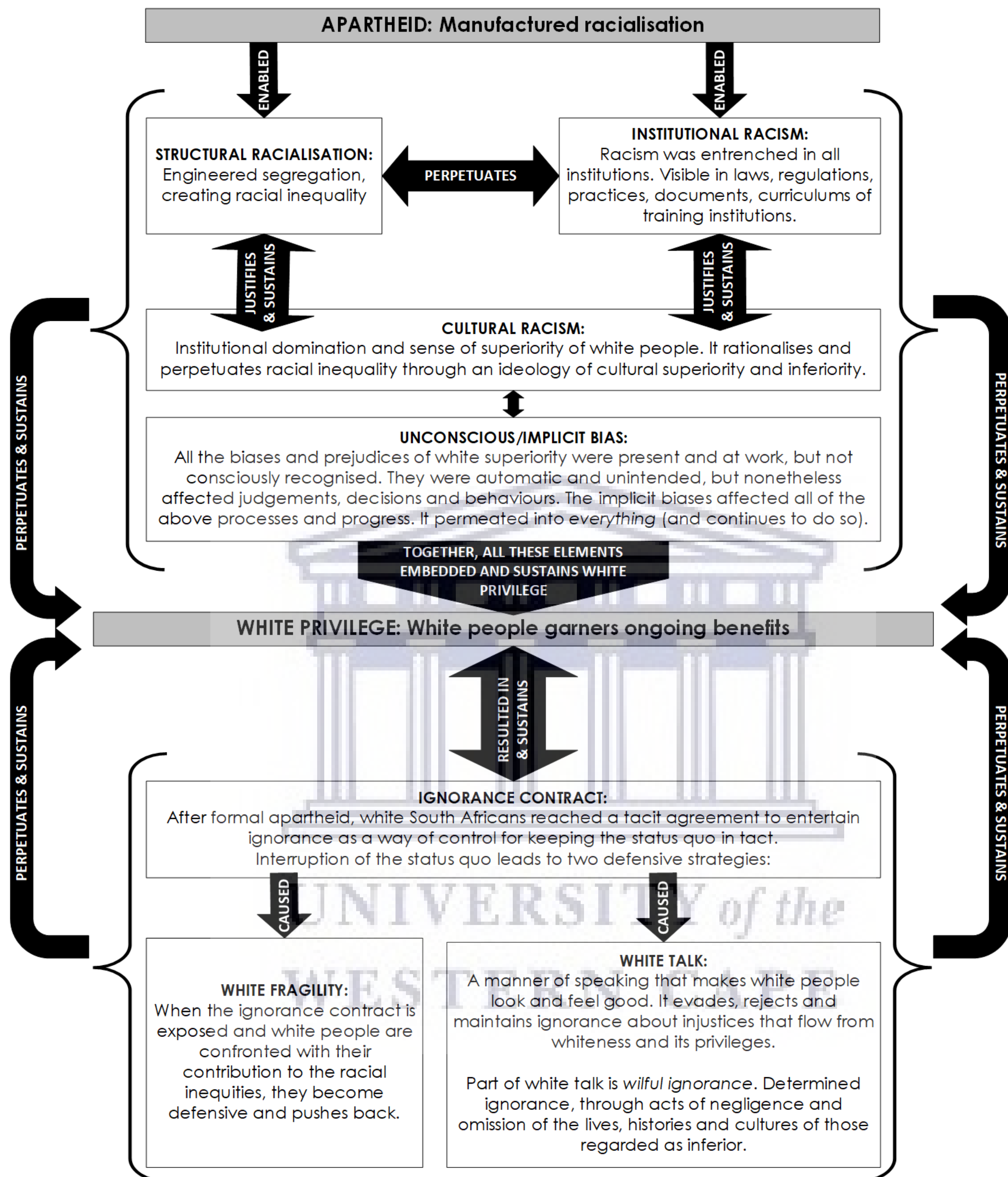

Diagram 1: Eight aspects working together to sustain White privilege.

Apartheid *enabled structural racialisation* and *institutional racism*, which justified *cultural racism*. From then onwards, these elements sustained and perpetuated one another, cultivating *unconscious/implicit bias*, which continued to permeate into everything. Together, these four elements embedded *White privilege* into every fibre of South African society, and

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they continue to work together to protect and sustain White privilege. When Apartheid formally came to an end in 1994, White South Africans reached an undeclared, tacit agreement to proclaim ignorance of all the wrongs done to the racial others during Apartheid. This *ignorance contract* is continuously challenged, as White people are confronted with the role, they played in creating the racial inequalities in South Africa. There are two main defence mechanisms: *White fragility*, an angry, defensive, push-back reaction where the source of the criticism is attacked; and *White talk*, a manner of speaking that makes White people look and feel good, as they try to defend themselves against the accusations of benefitting from White privilege. White talk tells the narratives in such a way that White people are not the villains. In doing so, it rejects the grounds for the accusations, evades the inequalities, maintains ignorance, and simply omits disturbing sections of history from its thinking. All these post-apartheid elements join forces with what was established during apartheid, and they continue to sustain and protect White privilege.

This interplay between the eight aspects corroborates that Whiteness is a powerful force, it is a “way of being in the world” (Jennings 2020), a “master narrative” (Steyn 2001), a “habitus” (Schneider 2017), kept in place by a racial framework, or “knowledge in the blood” (Jansen 2009). It creates a world shaped by the needs, interests and values of White people. A world that is socially constructed to favour White people, frequently without them even realising it. In such a world, even where Whiteness is in the minority, being White is normalised and universalised, while ways are found to continuously embed and sustain White advantage and privilege. I will now look at how each of the eight concepts are individually at work, bolstering Whiteness within and through the South African missional discourse.

7.5.1 White privilege.

From the preceding overview, one can conclude that the main aim is always to protect White privilege. White privilege refers to an unseen and unconscious advantage that confers unearned entitlements, strength, power and dominance to Whites that manifests systemically and is protected by denials (McIntosh 1989: 5). Consequently, it is in the interest of Whites not to acknowledge, expose or even consciously reflect on their privilege. Even in South Africa, where Whites are in the minority, through both conscious actions and unconscious habitual means, ways are found to keep White privilege in place. Whether intended or unintended, missional theology’s lack of engagement with race in general and

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Whiteness in particular, serves the interests of Whites. For instance, the fact that contributions to missional theology are mostly authored by White, male scholars from a privileged position, surely serves the interests of White privilege. As Nagassar (2021) so adequately puts it: “Homogeneity lacks foresight to build a way forward for all.” The following examples from missional contributions illustrates how White privilege are enhanced.

By simply highlighting the titles of some of the contributions to the South African missional discourse, the position of White privilege and unintentional protection of privilege shines through:

- *Van Instandhouding na Gestuurdheid – Die Buitelyne van ’n Missionale Teologie* (From maintenance to mission – the perimeters of a missional theology) (Niemandt and Claassen 2012). Being able to move from maintenance to mission suggest a movement form a privileged position. Maintenance reflects the middle-class ideal (Kritzinger 2022c). Some congregations, especially poorer congregations, are still striving to be in a position of maintenance.
- *Artisanal cheeses or artisanal Jesus – loving your postal code enough to reflect it in the life and theology of the church* (Niemandt 2014a) – speaks of a privileged world of deli’s, artisan bread and artisan cheeses.
- *A network society, social media, migration and mission* (Niemandt 2013b) – refers to a first world, privileged culture characterised by globalisation, hyper-diversity, internet access, Google culture and postmodern tribalism.
- *The History and Challenge of the Missional Movement in South Africa: Perspectives from an Insider* (Marais 2017a). Marais writes from within the fold of the mostly White, privileged DRC, while the history and challenges he outlines are those faced by the DRC. Thus, by referring to himself as an “insider”, Marais (unknowingly) confirms his and the DRC’s privileged position.

White privilege is also kept in place by the way some contributors engage (or fail to engage) with missional concepts such as reconciliation, inclusivity, diversity and crossing borders. The lack of proper engagement with reconciliation as a missional paradigm in the fractured South African context is a good example. As pointed out by Smith (2021: 68), reconciliation is absent in the founding work of the SAPMC and consequently, also in the *Framework Document* of

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the DRC. The same shortcoming applies to *Cultivating Missional Change* (Burger, Marais, Mouton et al. 2017). Reconciliation and healing in communities do get mentioned in some contributions (see Niemandt 2015c), but reconciliation accompanied by justice and restitution not so much. Niemandt (2020), for example mentions reconciliation and justice to allow for a flourishing life for all. Niemandt and Pillay (2019) also wrote an article on reconciliation as a missional paradigm for post-1994 South Africa. But reconciliation accompanied by justice and restitution does not receive particular attention. It seems that the term reconciliation might sometimes be used to disguise or prevent uncomfortable discussions on justice and restitution. In other words, the beneficiaries of apartheid[184] gets off the hook, again. After all, reconciliation requires a commitment from those who benefitted from apartheid and continue to do so, i.e., a commitment to the transformation of inequality and poverty (Verwoerd 2000: 1). Not actively attending to the difficult, but necessary work of reconciliation, justice and restitution as themes in missional theology, enables the missional church to protect its privilege.

Where inclusivity, diversity and crossing of borders are discussed, White privilege is often kept intact by language confirming Whites as the acting agents controlling who to include, which borders to cross and which voices to listen to (Van Wyngaard 2014a). This is confirmed by phrases such as, "reaching out to", "attending to a ministry that provides for diversity" (Niemandt 2017a: 200); "reach out to the 'other'", "welcome strangers", "we have to cross boundaries" (Niemandt 2017b: 3,4); "welcomes the stranger into the community and makes space for the 'other'" (Sheridan & Hendriks 2013: 5). At first glance, there is nothing wrong with these phrases, but since the power situated in Whiteness is not acknowledged and adequately addressed, the White centre is kept intact and the White agent is portrayed as the "good White" enabling diversity, inclusivity and crossing borders (see Hendriks 2007b as a good example of this).

Moreover, Malan Nel (2017: 6) writes about the local missional congregation being a "fellowship of differents". Nel then lists all the different groupings present in such a congregation but does not include different races. Similarly, Niemandt (2015c: 3) names ecological, gender and economical justice bringing about a just society, but excludes racial

[184] I have white South Africans in mind when I use the term "beneficiaries of apartheid."

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justice. While Marais (2010b) in a paper on inclusivity, lists different aspects of difference to be included, but ignores racial categories. Most of these contributions also fail to recognise the White centre from which the call for inclusion is made (Van Wyngaard 2014b: 161). Put differently, one can in principle agree that reconciliation, diversity and inclusivity are important values, but in practice continue without doing anything to realise it (Chalklen 2015). Subsequently, White privilege ends up being protected under the guise of reconciliation, diversity and inclusivity. This phenomenon is perhaps best articulated by Jennings (2021) when he said, "Too many Christians talk about reconciliation while imagining themselves as centered hosts." The same sentiment applies to many Christians talking about inclusivity, diversity and crossing borders as missional concepts.

The position of privilege and power is also entrenched by the way apartheid is dealt with in missional discourse. In most articles the end of apartheid is mentioned as a defining moment, or a historical event necessitating a new (missional) way of being and doing church. Apartheid is being referred to in the past tense with phrases like "the demise of apartheid" (Dreyer 2020, Hendriks 2007b), "the end" and "the fall of apartheid" (Benade 2019). Niemandt (2017b) writes of apartheid being deconstructed and describes it as a wall that was broken down. Hendriks (2007b: 86) enthused about the "real excitement since we were moving away from the apartheid legacy", while Mouton (2017: 160) opines that "(A) new way forward had to be discerned", after "the folly of apartheid."

Of course, 1994 spelled the end of legalised apartheid, but the moment didn't erase its troubling history and it certainly didn't prevent the ongoing consequences of apartheid. We are not yet living in a post-apartheid, non-racial and equal society. The conversation about apartheid is not completed yet. By treating the end of apartheid as the advent of a new post-racial society is furthermore a denial of the problem of race and gives rise to "the myth of color-blind racism" (Boswell 2022: 13). The shadow of apartheid is still following us. After-apartheid can therefore not be embraced without unpacking the historical implications of apartheid, its ongoing effects and the "response-ability" (Verwoerd 2000: 5) of the beneficiaries of apartheid. Hence, the relevancy of Vosloo's (2015) critique of "new" continuously being used as a hermeneutical key to define the missional imagination. It seems that the White church was looking for a way to move on from apartheid, to put apartheid

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behind them, to find something “new” without having to deal with the consequences, continuing influences and responsibilities flowing from it.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of apartheid, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established as a platform to deal with the atrocities committed during apartheid. Mamdani (2002: 33) summarises the aims of the TRC as “individual amnesty for the perpetrator, truth for the society, and acknowledgement and reparations for the victim – this was the pact built into the legislation that set up the TRC.” Hence, it was a compromise to neither practise impunity, nor vengeance. This was done by addressing both the victims and the perpetrators. However, by individualising the victims and the perpetrators of apartheid, the TRC failed to deal with the beneficiaries of apartheid as a group, while also obscuring the victimisation of whole communities (2002: 34). After all, *some* Whites actively perpetrated apartheid, “but *all* Whites benefitted from it”. The focus was more on individual victims and perpetrators than on “society as a whole” and “the systems of injustice” (Boesak 2008: 641). In the end, the TRC mainly focussed on human rights violations, but never deals with the issue of apartheid era benefits. By making these choices and compromises, the TRC not only failed the victims of apartheid (Boesak 2008: 648) but was complicit in protecting the beneficiaries of apartheid. This awareness is underscored by Vellum (2017: 5) when he proposes that “the democratic dispensation in South Africa is a ‘sympathetic’ pact in response to black pain in the light of the decolonial turn. It is sympathetic because the core values of racism still exist.” In a reflection on his experiences as a former TRC researcher and the continuing effects of White privilege in the aftermath of the TRC, Wilhelm Verwoerd (2000: 3) strikingly concludes:

> It appears therefore that we are faced with a difficult problem: on the one hand the benefits of apartheid are clearly not past, but, on the other hand, the silence of apartheid beneficiaries are deafening; the ongoing suffering of the systematically disadvantaged are undeniable, but many whites continue to deny their responsibility arising from systematic past privileging. And this denial rubs salt into the wounds of the disadvantaged!

Indeed, the ongoing effects of apartheid era benefits and privileges are prevalent to this day. Furthermore, restorative justice and reparations remain largely overdue. The conversation initiated by the TRC is not completed yet.

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Could it be that South African missional theology followed in the footsteps of the TRC? Was missional theology so readily adopted, because it enabled the church to simply move on from its unsavoury history and avoid its restitutional responsibility? Nell (2020) does acknowledge the amnesia of the troublesome apartheid history, while Van Niekerk (2019: 44) confirms that the "theology of apartheid is a more recent example (and misconception) of a similar justification of God siding with the Afrikaners, which resulted in acts of extreme systemic injustice and oppression against the majority of South Africans." The emphasis, however, is more on the victims of apartheid and less so on apartheid era beneficiaries. Did missional theology, therefore, allow the church to hold on to its benefits and privileges after it lost its political position of power in society? Might that be the reasons why themes like White privilege, reconciliation, social justice and restitution not feature strongly in missional discourse? Thus, protecting the beneficiaries of apartheid; allowing them to go on as usual?

These are pertinent questions given the few references in missional contributions to the TRC and especially the DRC's role in apartheid. Mouton (2017: 160-161) depicts the revelations at the TRC as a humbling and traumatic experience for the DRC, because of the DRC's compromised ecclesiological identity and its historical involvement in Afrikaner nationalist interests. The DRC's historical role in upholding apartheid led to some representatives of the DRC confessing and disclosing its support and complicity before the TRC (Benade 2019; Campbell 2013; Hendriks 2007b; M. Nel 2017). Malan Nel (2011, 2017) also mentions unprocessed White trauma, resulting from the demise of apartheid, complicating a missional outlook.

I would be very circumspect when speaking about White trauma in the aftermath of apartheid, as done by Mouton and Nel. White people did experience the loss of political power, shame, guilt and the fear of losing their privilege, but to describe those feelings as trauma, might only serve to re-centre Whiteness and deflect the attention away from the trauma experienced by the real victims of apartheid. Furthermore, the DRC, specifically, had representatives who apologised for their contribution to apartheid, but then, gratefully, they did what they had to do to move on, and it seems that missional theology was very helpful in this process.

Equally, inequality and poverty do not receive much attention in missional writings, except when it is highlighted as challenges facing the church and its mission. Where it does get

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mentioned, it is largely to confirm that missional theology enables faith communities to cross "racial and cultural boundaries" and break "the (colonial) missionary code of inequality" (Marais 2017: 72). Although it is sometimes acknowledged (see Van der Watt 2019), the structural causes and the continuing influence of inequality and poverty and how it impacts the missional calling, are not properly interrogated. Since post-1994, White people in South Africa went in search of a different White identity. As such, the South African society at large is engaging in critical reflections on themes such as White privilege (Rossouw 2016: 383). Such reflections are, however conspicuously missing from South African missional discourse. Why, for example, in the many contributions on missional leadership, does one not find any guidance on how missional leaders might help their congregants to understand how much of what they have is built on systemic privileging, to clarify the burden of privilege and to find missional ways of "(T)ranslating apartheid benefits into triggers for transformation" (Verwoerd 2000: 4).

7.5.2 Institutional racism.

Institutional racism was entrenched in all institutions that were founded during apartheid. It created and keeps creating advantages for Whites through institutional policies and practices, sustained and bolstered in places of work and by such institutions as schools, clubs, churches and cultural organisations (DiAngelo 2018; Bergh & Hoobler 2018). It was, and still is, visible in laws, regulations, practices, documents and curriculums of training institutions. This has an impact on missional theological education. Smith (2021: 68) warns against a contextual missional pedagogy in spaces of White homogeneity that perpetuates "white pedagogical patterns of privilege". Likewise, Labuschagne (2019) cautions against the building of theological ivory towers and tunnel vision where "our" traditions and beliefs are overemphasised.

Yet, this is what Niemandt (2019c) fails to recognise in an article on the transformation of theological education in Africa. Without acknowledging and taking seriously any of the abovementioned dangers, he writes that "authentic theology must be 'contextual', 'local', at home in and relevant to the particular setting within which a Christian community confesses and witnesses to its faith" (2019c: 2). Statements like this become problematic if the local Christian community is a White homogenous space. Some local communities are sheltered from the "real", multicultural South Africa, and these statements enable them to remain

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sheltered. The same applies to an article exploring a more holistic theological education by D. Niemandt and N.C. Niemandt (2021: 7), wherein they argue that theological education "has to be context-driven, 'the focus from the first moment of training being on equipping and enabling the local Christian community in mission.'"

Niemandt (2019c: 3) also writes that discourses on coloniality helps us to understand that "Western knowledge and cosmologies" are privileged over "non-Western knowledge and cosmologies". Yet, this is not considered. South African contributions to missional theology mostly favours writers and contributions from the West or White privileged scholars from South Africa. There seems to be a distinct lack of non-Western knowledge in South African missional discourse. Niemandt (2019c: 4) further confirms that "(T)he postcolonial discourse and decolonial turn represent an important critique of and correction to the colonial framework and approach." Indeed, but how is it then that discourses on race and postcoloniality are so absent in South African missional discourse? And yes, decoloniality leads to a new awareness of the agency of African theologians, marginalised Africans, "African Christians and the African poor" (2019c: 3). But shouldn't it also include the unmasking of the power of Whiteness and Whiteness as a theological problem? Somehow, Niemandt and other South African contributors succeed in justifying the exclusion of the self-reflexive postcolonial critique of Whiteness, in their research. This reality is, in all probability, driven by the ignorance contract and it successfully maintains the existing institutional racism.

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7.5.3 Structural racialisation.

Structural racialisation refers to the structural inequalities in education, family wealth, medical care, resources, etc., created in favour of Whites by different historical- and enduring opportunity structures and racialised segregation of space (Osta & Vasques 2020; Southall 2022). During apartheid, the South African society had been structurally racialised. There was a manufactured/engineered segregation of space and resources, which created and enhanced racial inequality, favouring Whiteness. This means that most churches had been placed where they are by apartheid era spatial planning. Consequently, the missional focus on local context, incarnation, a theology of place and a faithful presence (see for example Hancke & Verster 2013; Niemandt 2010c, 2012, 2019b, 2020; Kok & Niemandt 2009) maintain the apartheid-engineered structural racialisation, because *where the churches are* (their local contexts) allows them (especially some in the DRC) to avoid the challenges faced by other

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communities and allows them to hold on to their privilege. People of colour are in many cases still far removed from the predominantly White, middle-class neighbourhoods where these congregations are situated.

For example, explaining the incarnation, Niemandt (2012: 4) writes about the church becoming a part of the fabric of the community the church inhabits and that "suffering alongside" is at the heart of the incarnation. Regarding a faithful presence in communities, Niemandt (2019b: 4) writes, "(I)t is a presence that serves places, people and looks after the interests of the others." In an article on missional-diaconal practices, Van der Watt (2019: 156) asks what the church's (referring to the DRC) response should be in a context of poverty and inequality. He points out that its credibility depends on the way it exists among suffering communities and its empathy for, and solidarity with "our" neighbours. What does it mean, then, to "suffer alongside" and to serve others in a context where the people who are suffering the most, are not there, due to segregation? A context where they can be kept at an arm's length since they are geographically far away? A context where "our" neighbours mostly look the same as ourselves? In 2018, Niemandt wrote a book with the title *Hartsplek: Egte lewe waar jy is* (Place of the heart: authentic life where you are). But can an authentic life be claimed when the places "where you are" had been designated and deformed by apartheid era spatial planning, a fact that remains unacknowledged and dealt with? Similarly, Malan Nel, (2011: 1) declares, "(A) basic assumption is that every local church is a gift of God to a specifically and even geographically defined context." The *Framework Document* of the DRC also asserts that the church "is God's gift to the world" (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013: 2). Can a local church be deemed "a gift of God" to a specific context when it was placed there by (sinful) apartheid era spatial planning? Especially when such historical placements are not acknowledged and named.

Structural racialisation is also maintained by the idea that Christian witnesses are witnesses for Christ in their "own" environments (Hancke & Verster 2013: 278; Niemandt 2010a: 98) and that the Kingdom of God is a place where outsiders are invited into "our" faith communities (Niemandt 2007a: 92, 2008b; 150). Since these communities still reap the benefits of apartheid era spatial planning (White privilege) and are mostly far removed from the "outsiders", this notion of "our" community maintains structural racialisation and

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protects White privilege. It also embeds Whites as the acting agents *allowing* outsiders into their White spaces. As such, Whiteness holds on to its power and White spaces are protected.

Also confirming privilege through structural racialisation are the choice of venues used in the teaching and equipping of missional leadership. At the start of the SAPMC, there was some linkage with poorer, non-white URCSA congregations who was part of the process (Dames 2007; Hendriks 2009). But in my experience, despite this connection, most of the missional pedagogy still happened either in the privileged surroundings of the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch University or at the venues of White middle-class congregations. More recently, the tranquil but very privileged surroundings of the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality in Wellington in the Western Cape Province, are mostly used for the training of missional leaders. Some of these venues are not only financially inaccessible for poorer congregations (e.g., the Andrew Murray Centre), they also represent the history and legacy of apartheid era segregation. As such, something as simple as the choice of venues, keep certain people in and push other people out.

There seems to be a distinct lack of discernment in how missional theology was incorporated into the uniquely South African context. The structural and geographical racial separation and the effect thereof has never been properly acknowledged. The existing (apartheid era constructed) communities and church locations were uncritically accepted and used as starting point for missional discernment. Again, in the words of Van Wyngaard (2021: 4): "What does it mean to name God as the one who placed us here, if *here* was formed by centuries of violence, socially engineered to maintain white privilege…" Furthermore, as pointed out by Resane (2019), with the change in demographics, White people tend to exit city centres and neighbourhoods in favour of more elite and mostly White suburbs. Thus, although structural racism is not legislatively regulated anymore, it is still maintained by biases, fragility and the pursuit of White spaces, which of course brings both the multicultural missional ideals and the missional focus on locality into question.

7.5.4. Cultural racism.

The protection of White privilege through institutional racism and structural racialisation are further enhanced by cultural racism. This refers to the institutional domination and sense of superiority of White people by drawing racial boundaries under the pretext of a shared

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culture, language and interests. This phenomenon sustains Whiteness or so-called White culture by ringfencing it through institutions and spaces based on the culture and language of a people. Put differently, it rationalises and perpetuates racial inequality through an ideology of cultural separateness. This is especially prevalent in the DRC, which positions itself as an Afrikaans language church.

Furthermore, adding to the explanation earlier in this chapter, in South African missional discourse, cultural racism is also visible in its alignment with the mostly White, Western churches and their postmodern, post-Christendom contexts. Western participants, thinkers and leaders are after all mostly White (Fitch 2013). Nagassar (2021) tersely states the following about the Western origins of missional theology:

> This reality in formation of the movement is not a surprise when you consider the voices behind how "missional" came to be. Early theologians who shifted missiology like Barth and Newbigin; missiologists like David Bosch and Christopher Wright; theologians and GOCN (Gospel in our Culture Network) members like Darrell Guder, Craig van Gelder, Alan Roxburgh; and the early popular thinkers like Ed Stetzer, Mike Frost, Neil Cole, Dave Fitch, Alan Hirsch (although he's Jewish), Lance Ford, Hugh Halter, Reggie McNeal. Note the theme?

The profile of South African missional participants, thinkers and leaders doesn't differ much from those mentioned in this quote. These origins allow the South African training curriculums and scholarly content to be mostly "Western" in nature (see for example Burger, Marais, Mouton, et al. 2017). In other words, missional theory and praxis, as applied in South Africa, are noteworthy, but it lacks cultural awareness, because it doesn't take enough cognisance of the uniquely South African multicultural dynamics. It enables writing from a position of privilege, which maintains the agenda of Whiteness. Niemandt (2017b: 3) "warns against a response to this fast-changing world in which the church tries to create a safe ghetto space..." Ironically, in this fast-changing world, this might be what South African missional discourse succeeds in doing, by aligning itself too closely and uncritically with mostly White, Western churches and scholars. As summed up by Nagassar (2021), "The formation in whiteness subtly designs a worldview meant to protect a way of life."

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7.5.4 Unconscious bias.

Additionally, White privilege is propped up by unconscious bias that often rely on stereotypes and are exacerbated by homogeneity. These biases unconsciously shape White perceptions, understanding, decisions and ultimately real-life actions, behaviour and responses (Staats et al. 2013). The biases and prejudices of White superiority were already present and at work during the apartheid era, but not consciously recognised. They were automatic and unintended, but nonetheless affected judgements, decisions and behaviours. These implicit biases also affected institutional racism, structural racialisation and cultural racism. It permeates into *everything.* Missional theology is no exception.

Again, we see it in the way that missional theology, originating from a Western, postmodern and post-Christendom world, was uncritically brought into South Africa without really considering the broader South African context. Among others, this starting point is uncritically confirmed by Benade and Niemandt (2019), Burger, Marais, Mouton et al. (2017), Niemandt (2007a), Sheridan and Hendriks (2013) and the missional *Framework Document* of the DRC, (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013). Smit (2015a), however, does take note of the Western and so-called third world differences in the South African context, but only scratches the surface. By bringing the missional movement to South Africa in this way, the socially constructed nature of the South African society was not properly considered. Therefore, the power and privilege of White people can be upheld, because "we" are biased towards Western culture.

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Unconscious bias also reveals itself when White, privileged scholars use words and phrases such as "we", "our", "our world", "our culture", "our context" and "the church". Explaining the missional ethics and ethos, Kok & Niemandt (2009: 2, 3) define ethos "as the practical way in which *we* live out *our* ethics *in a given socio-historical and cultural context …* the moral vision and principles, the practices, the choices and *the way of living of particular communities*" (italics added). Finding the basis for "our" ethics and ethos in the gospel of John, they write, "something of the reality of *our world* resonates with John's world-view…" (italics added). Then the authors conclude, "*(W)e* are fundamentally called to become agents of healing and restoration in *the world*, to live the way of Jesus" (italics added). But if missional ethics and ethos is described as "our" ethics and ethos and "the world" is described as "a given (local) socio-historical and cultural context" and as "our world", then "the world" might

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easily become our protected, privileged world. The same applies when D. Niemandt and N.C. Niemandt (2021) explores a missional spirituality. They write, "(T)he hostility to spiritual formation is entrenched in *our culture*. *We* are accustomed to comfort and resist anything that threatens *our* solace" (italics added). Indeed, in "our culture", "we" are writing from a position of privilege and comfort. Most South Africans are not accustomed to the same privilege and comfort. Likewise, in an article about missional ecclesiology, Niemandt (2012) writes about the incarnation as an important aspect of missional ecclesiology. He writes, "(A)n incarnational approach requires that *we* will be willing to share the Gospel story with those within *our world*" (2012: 4) (italics added). Since Niemandt writes from a White, middle-class perspective, who are the "we" and what does "our world" entail in a context where apartheid distorted who is "in" and "out" in "our world?"

Exploring the book of Acts for today's missional church, Niemandt (2010c: 2), mentions that "…*the church* faces many changes – many of which are global in nature. *We* live in a global, interconnected biosphere – economically, genetically, politically, biologically and culturally. *We* have become a multi-everything global community" (italics added). To whom is Niemandt referring when he writes about "we" and "the church" facing many global changes? Does it include the poor, the disenfranchised and tech deprived communities and churches in South African townships? One also finds references to "our context", "our world" and "the church" in the missional *Framework Document* of the DRC (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013). When these contributors refer to "the church", they mean a Westernised Christianity.

A rather obvious example of unconscious bias is found in an article by Charles Peter Watt (2021) on The Assemblies of God (AOG) as a missional church in Africa. Watt makes the point that previously White AOG congregations found the transition to multiculturism after 1994 easier than Black congregations. However, after a good friend commented that "the way you run your church is white" (2021: 155), Watt conceded that the church is run according to White culture, but that Black, Coloured and Indian people freely choose to be there, because "the style and ethos is their preference" (2021: 155). Firstly, this confirms that White people didn't move to Black congregations, thus, obviously finding the transition to multiculturalism easier, while also protecting their privilege. Secondly, the assumption that Black, Coloured and Indian people prefer the style and ethos of the White congregation, only confirms the

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convening power of Whiteness, serves White interests and keeps Whiteness in the centre. After all, the White congregants and their White habitus just carried on as usual.

Moreover, if White privilege is aggravated by biases which unconsciously shape White perceptions, understanding and responses, the process of missional discernment might be in danger of being distorted towards Whiteness. According to Hendriks (2007a: 1013), discernment takes place in a faith community. This is all good but becomes problematic if such a community is a space of White homogeneity. The criteria used in the discernment process to determine where God is at work and who the active agents in control of the process are, will determine its outcomes and who benefits from it. Marais (2010a) emphasises the importance of listening to each other as part of the discernment process. But who gets invited to sit around the table? Are such listening practices open for transformational experiences or is it just confirming the biases?

The same can be said of the process of discernment outlined in the missional workbook, *In Pas met die Lewende God: Ritmes en gewoontes vir roepingsgetroue gemeentes* (In step with the Living God: Rhythms and habits for congregations faithful to their calling) (Cordier, G. (ed.): 2020). In this workbook congregations are guided to discover God's journey with them in order to discern God's preferred future for the congregation and its community. God's preferred future is one where the congregation as a hermeneutic of the gospel, contextually embodies the Kingdom of God in the specific community in which it finds itself. A future where the dominant culture in the congregation and the community is transformed to reflect the values of the Kingdom. To help the congregation on this journey of discernment, it must first come to terms with its own culture. As stated on page 43 of the workbook:

> Voordat ons as gemeente 'n idee kan begin vorm van God se belooofde en voorkeurtoekoms vir ons en ons gemeenskap, is dit van die grootste belang dat ons allereers 'n eerlike en duidelike prentjie sal kry van die eie en unieke kultuur wat oor tyd heen in ons gemeente gevorm is. Hoe sien ons onsself? Hoe dink ons oor God? Hoe hanteer ons konflik en verandering? Wat is vir ons belangrik?

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> Watter houdiinge, praktyke, gewoontes en patrone is oor tyd heen in die lewe van ons gemeente gevestig?[185]

According to the workbook, to determine God's journey with the congregation, their congregational culture is examined through a "leesverslag" (reading report) resulting from interviews conducted by a group of "luisterleiers" (listening leaders) in the congregation. These results are then interpreted by an independent panel using the method of applied ethnography. They then report back to the congregation with a summary of the congregation's culture as well as some probing questions guiding the congregation towards its missional purpose. A "storiemuur" (story wall) is also utilised to help the congregation understand God's story with the congregation and its surrounding community as it unfolded over time. It helps them to know how God brought them to where they are, how God is present in the here-and-now and it helps them to "hear" God's alternative story for the future (2020: 43-52). Speaking from experience in my own (DRC) congregation, these are very helpful instruments, but they also fail to unmask the dominant White culture in predominantly White congregations because of at least two blind spots that in my view needs to be addressed:

1. It lacks an intentional focus on the racialised story of the congregation. The racialised story needs to be separated from God's story with the congregation, otherwise the dominant White culture might inadvertently be legitimised as part of God's story. Congregations whose story reflect being placed in their particular community by apartheid era spatial planning is a case in point. In other words, the racial story should be included in the "leesverslag" and the "storiemuur".
2. Where Whiteness is the cultural norm, it is problematic if the "luisterleiers", as well as the participants in the interviews and the "storiemuur" are all White. The same shortcoming applies to the independent panel interpreting the results of the listening exercise conducted by the "luisterleiers." After all, in a homogenous environment it is not easy to be critical of the norm.

[185] Translated as: Before we as a congregation can form an idea about God's promised and preferred future for us and our community, it is of paramount importance that we first form an honest and clear picture of our own unique culture shaped over time in our congregation. How do we see ourselves? How do we think about God? How do we handle conflict and change? What is important to us? Which attitudes, practices, habits and patterns was established over time in the life of our congregation?

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Discernment brings the church, culture and biblical narrative together (Niemandt 2019d), but if this happens in spaces of White homogeneity, the process of discernment becomes distorted to reflect the ideals of Whiteness (Smith 2021). Undeniably, unconscious bias permeates into everything…

7.5.5 Ignorance contract.

After 1994, the challenge for Whites in post-apartheid, postcolonial South Africa is to intentionally face their privilege and the ways it is buttressed and then find wilful ways to use it for transformation and restitution. That, however, seems to be easier said than done. Whiteness always finds ways to protect and assert itself when its privilege, interests and dominance are challenged. When the comfort of the status quo is interrupted by racial dialogue, defensive, evasive and denialist strategies are often elicited. Most common among these are *White fragility, White talk* and the *ignorance contract*.

In post-1994 South Africa, when everything supposedly fell apart for White people, White South Africans reached a tacit agreement to entertain ignorance. The ignorance contract or the epistemology of ignorance is an (unacknowledged) agreement and (manufactured) ignorance to safeguard White privilege, maintain racial boundaries and to protect White people from alternative ways of knowing (Applebaum 2016: 12-13; Bailey 2015: 13-14). To blame everything on ignorance was understood by all, without it being stated as such. As Steyn (2012: 1) puts it in the quote at the beginning of this section:

> It has become a standing joke that since democracy in South Africa one cannot find anyone who supported apartheid. Increasingly some white South Africans claim that they did not know what was happening during apartheid…

This unwillingness to acknowledge the history that led to the present structural inequities as well as the contemporary issues, is acting in bad faith. The management of ignorance, which infuses knowledge, is a technique of control since it keeps the status quo in place.

In South African missional discourse this is especially prevalent in the missional *Framework Document* of the DRC (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013). Firstly, regarding historical ignorance, Robert Vosloo (2015: 3) in a critical reflection on the *Framework Document*, concludes that, “(T)he current challenges for the DRC are certainly new challenges, but I think a theological sound and sustainable missional theology is not possible without a

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greater explicit historical consciousness as that found in the framework document" and he goes on to state that, "(T)he focus is more on some kind of "ideal" and "abstract" church, rather than on a concrete church with a particular history and social location." Vosloo further clarifies this point by highlighting how the word "'new' functions as a type of hermeneutical key in the document" (2015: 4), for example, "New insights on our understanding of God", "New insights into the church", "New insights into the Kingdom of God", "New insights on Incarnation", etc. (General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church 2013). Vosloo states that he is not against "new thinking" or "innovation", but he does challenge discourses of newness "that don't place itself within the messiness of history" (2015: 5). This thought is also confirmed by Smith (2021: 68): "Missional engagement needs to acknowledge the role of the DRC in Apartheid if the DRC wants to engage missionally and not forget its own complicity in an inhumane society." Indeed, as Burger (2017a: 32) rightly points out, "a preoccupation with being missional" can easily lead to the DRC "not facing up to and dealing responsibly" with the failings of the past. Can it be, as Van Wyngaard (2022) asserts, that missional theology was imported by the DRC as an attempt to find an alternative to its apartheid past, without really having to work through the theological critique of apartheid?

Secondly, Smith (2021: 66-68) points out the absence of reconciliation as a missional pattern in the founding work of SAPMC and the *Framework Document* of the DRC. In a country such as South Africa, with its history of racial inequality and oppression, and given the role of the DRC in this history, one would think that reconciliation would be an important missional pattern. In a later article on reconciliation as a missional paradigm in post-1994 South Africa, Niemandt and Pillay (2019) does include race, racial tension and culture as areas in need of reconciliation. They conclude by naming eight core values for developing a praxis of faith-based reconciliation for the church. Among these values are pluralism, inclusion, social justice and healing. However, after years of missional theory and praxis, the DRC are still predominantly White, people are excluded because of the Afrikaans language and culture, social justice and healing remains a struggle because of the focus on "my local community", and ignorance about privilege, land, economics and historical trauma still remains prevalent.

And thirdly, as already indicated, ignorance about contemporary issues in the *Framework Document* are pointed out by Botha and Foster (2017). They found that the document does

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not take issues of reconciliation, justice, race relations and solidarity with the marginalised seriously enough.

The ignorance contract also features in a contribution by Malan Nel, (2017) where he acknowledges that, for Afrikaans-speaking churches to become fully missional congregations, they must work through the trauma of losing apartheid era benefits, otherwise “we are held captive to and by what we have lost” (2017: 3). It is a profound recognition, but it ignores the fact that apartheid era benefits are not lost. Afrikaans-speaking churches are to this day still benefitting from the fruits of apartheid. The question should rather be how these benefits can be used for the greater good.

A last example of the ignorance contract at work, is found in an article by Piet Meiring (2021) on the missional tradition in the DRC. Meiring highlights how Afrikaners identified with South Africa and Africa, often by referring to God calling them to do God’s work in this continent. He then asks: “have we lost this commitment?” (2021: 145). Meiring then gives possible reasons for this apparent loss of commitment which led to congregations opting for safer and less demanding mission fields. However, the possible loss of their privilege is omitted from this list. One would think that this might be an obvious reason.

When the ignorance contract is exposed and White people are confronted with their contribution to the racial inequities, they become defensive and pushes back. This is usually done through *White fragility* and *White talk*.

7.5.6 White fragility.

White fragility is not detectable, as such, in the missional contributions. It is a form of pushback characterised by outward emotions such as anger, fear and guilt and responses such as argumentation, lament, bullying and distortions of reality (DiAngelo 2018). White fragility might, however, manifest when White missional participants are confronted with the exposing work done during the White work process. It might also implicitly show its face in the unwillingness by South African missional participants and thinkers to engage more thoroughly with critical voices, especially those critical of the absence of race in missional discourse.

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7.5.7 White talk.

White talk, on the other hand, is detectable in South African missional discourse. As pointed out by various scholars (see 5.5.3) White talk is a rhetorical strategy, a manner of speaking that makes White people look and feel good, especially where Whiteness is confronted with feelings of disempowerment, dissonance, irrelevance and guilt about their role in racism and racial injustice. It evades, rejects and seek to remain ignorant about the injustices that flow from Whiteness and its privilege. Part of White talk is *wilful ignorance*. This refers to a determined and wilful ignorance about the lives, histories and cultures of those regarded as “other”. It is the complex result of endless acts of negligence and omission (Bailey 2015). In other words, White people position themselves as “good Whites” by giving themselves permission to put apartheid in the past, to move on, to claim colour-blindness and to dismiss ongoing racial injustices and challenges.

In South African missional theological discourse, White talk becomes noticeable in how contributors say “all the right things” theologically. They sound good, using words like reconciliation, inclusivity, diversity and crossing borders, but they limit the application thereof with their emphasis on local context and local communities (see Nel, M. 2011 and Niemandt 2010b, 2014a, 2014c, 2015c, 2017b in this regard). Emphasising locality in this way might be a way of saying, “we leave the past behind and rather focus on the present, the local and the future.” It allows the church to avoid interrogating its role in apartheid, the effects of apartheid, the benefits of apartheid and the socially engineered geographic locations. Also, by narrowly interpreting the *Missio Dei* as, we-are-called-to-participate-in-God’s-mission-where-we-are, insulates White people from examining the past, the broken systems, themselves, their privilege and their role in racism and racial injustice.

Moreover, South African missional theological discourse might be guilty of wilful ignorance, by not taking critical voices seriously enough. These voices include Willem Saayman (2010) questioning the uncritical use of the term “missional”, as well as the usefulness of missional theology emanating from a first world context to the so-called third world and Africa in particular; Van der Watt’s (2010) four questions emanating from the tension between the work of the SAPMC and the Ministry of Service and Witness; Kruger’s (2013) critique of the *Missio Dei* and the relationship between the missional church and secularised culture; Van Niekerk (2014) calling for a broader and more inclusive understanding of the term missional;

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Robert Vosloo's (2015) critique of the *Framework Document* of the DRC not taking its own historical situatedness seriously and using "new" as a hermeneutical key. Also, Botha (2015) and Botha and Foster's (2017) critique of the *Framework Document* not giving enough thought to the South African social, political and economic context, reconciliation, justice and the plight of the marginalised; Van Wyngaard's critique on the missional crossing of borders (2014a) and a theology of place (2010, 2021); Resane's (2019) warning that multicultural missional endeavours are hampered by White supremacist and paternalistic ideals; Reggie Nel (2014) pleading for a broader African Reformed missional ecclesiology amid the persistence of a colonial, Western ecclesiology; Labuschagne (2019) asking for the Africanisation of theology and missional ecclesiology; Nell (2020) highlighting potential dangers in understanding the missional movement as a movement from maintenance to mission; and Smith's (2021) more recent caution against spaces of White homogeneity leading to missional pedagogical distortions reflecting the ideals of Whiteness.

7.6 Conclusion.

The chapter began with a literature study of the limited contributions explicitly discussing Whiteness in South African missional discourse. Considering the attention that race and specifically Whiteness receives in theological disciplines, coupled with the history of White supremacy in South Africa and bearing in mind where missional theology originated from, the absence of substantial and explicit reflection on Whiteness is problematic.

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Nonetheless, this shortage of substantial and explicit research into the connection between missional theology and Whiteness does not mean that the continuing influence of Whiteness in South African missional discourse, is absent. It is possible to ascertain how the influence of Whiteness plays an implicit role affecting South African missional discourse. Therefore, the contextual origins and resulting conversation partners of South African missional theology were discussed. The Western, White, middleclass, postmodern, and post-Christendom context that missional theology originated from is both a *cause* of Whiteness being ignored and a *consequence* of ignoring Whiteness. Uncritically aligning itself with this context, while downplaying the postcolonial, post-apartheid, (South) African context, leads to a very one-sided contextual focus in South African missional discourse. If the broader South African (post) context is not sufficiently considered and if the scope of its conversation partners is not

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expanded to include African voices, missional theology might be reduced to a White middle-class endeavour.

Thereafter, three theological blind spots in South African missional discourse were discussed. The first blind spot, informing most (if not all) of the discussions in this chapter, relates to Whiteness being a theological problem. Despite this problem being widely acknowledged in different theological disciplines, Whiteness as a missional theological problem is not yet acknowledged and confronted. Inevitably, this blind spot might then lead to a White habitus being inadvertently embedded through the processes and practices of missional theology.

The second blind spot relates to the ecclesiological focus in missional theology. By positioning the church as missional through-and-through, makes the church vulnerable for the critique of church theology. After all, the *Missio Dei* is larger than the church (Bosch 1991: 392). There exists a creative tension between God's work inside, outside and via the church in the world. A potential problem arises when everything is brought under the banner of the church. It does make the church more dynamic, but also less self-reflective. More dynamic in doing God's work outside and via the church, but less so regarding God's work inside the church. The focus is then on what the church does and not so much on the church's relationship with culture, society, race etc. This will create a blind spot for something like Whiteness if Whiteness is the norm in the church. There must always be a critical tension between the church and the patterns influencing it. God does not only work *through* the church; God also works *in* the church.

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The third theological blind spot refers to South African missional theology not taking Newbigin and the GOCN's counter-cultural and self-critical observations seriously enough. Newbigin and the GOCN pointed out that the church is not only the messenger of the gospel but has also become the recipient of the critique offered by the gospel. Therefore, Whiteness, as the elephant in the missional theological room, needs to be confronted and addressed if missional theology aims to tell an alternative story.

Finally, the research question of this study, which specifically inquires how the concept of Whiteness, including the eight aspects of "White privilege", "White fragility", "White talk", "implicit bias", "institutional racism", "structural racialization", "cultural racism" and the "ignorance contract" is addressed in discourse on missional theology within the South African context, was detailed. By analysing the contributions to the South African missional discourse

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in the light of these eight aspects, several implicit trends perpetuating Whiteness can be identified. These trends, marking Whiteness in South African missional discourse will be named and discussed in the next and final chapter. Flowing from these insights, some constructive contributions and questions for further reflection will also be attempted.

Deriving from the analysis in this chapter, South African missional discourse might indeed be a White middle-class endeavour and serve as a gateway or gatekeeper of Whiteness and privilege. It confirms the statement by Bowers Du Toit (2022: 13) that the absence of race in theological research, in this case Whiteness in missional theological research, not only ignores the historical impact thereof, but also the continuing influence in the present.

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CHAPTER 8: Concluding reflections.

8.1 Overview.

What should be clear from the preceding chapters is that missional theology and Whiteness are two interconnected areas of study that have significant implications for how the church engages in God's mission in the world. This means that missional theology must grapple with the ways in which Whiteness has shaped societies and the missional church itself. The words of Van Wyngaard (2019: 248) rings true in this regard: "We must allow ourselves to face the full horror of where colonial and white Christianity took us during modernity."

Understanding Whiteness is crucial for the missional church to effectively engage with its context. Moreover, the missional church must be guided by a critical reflection of the ways in which Whiteness has shaped the church's understanding of its missional ecclesiology and its engagement with the world. Therefore, in chapter one I declared that the purpose of this study is to explore how the concept of Whiteness is addressed in discourse on missional theology within the South African context since the transition to a democratic dispensation in 1994.

For that reason, the study started with a broader explanation of missional theology, its precursors and the ecclesiology underlying it. The influence of Karl Barth and Lesslie Newbigin on the broader missional conversation is undeniable in this regard. Flowing from their contribution a renewed appreciation for mission emanating from the Triune God and as a product of the *Missio Dei* was (re)discovered. Although not without reservations the concept of *Missio Dei* became the guiding principle for the development of missional theology in the church in the global North and eventually also in South Africa. On this basis, the development and roots of missional theology in the church in North America and beyond was expounded in chapter three. Since missional theology aims to move away from mission as an ecclesiocentric activity, the importance of a missional ecclesiology and the concepts underlying it is highlighted. The five main tenets informing a missional ecclesiology are the *Missio Dei*, the centrality of the Trinity, the Kingdom of God, the church as hermeneutic of the gospel and the church as an alternative community.

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Because of the dramatic cultural and political changes in South Africa during the late 1980's and early 1990's, the church in South Africa provided fertile ground for the missional imagination originating from the church in North America and Europe. South African churches, specifically the mainline churches, were looking for a way forward, a new way to be faithful witnesses in the new South Africa. It seems that missional theology gave it the impetus it needed. This development and the roots of missional discourse as it played out in the South African post-apartheid context was thus clarified in chapter four.

Since missional theology followed a particular trajectory in the South African context, a literature review of the main themes as it developed in South African missional theology was subsequently conducted. This enabled me to form a picture of what is addressed and what is not. From this picture it became clear that missional theology is evolving as it becomes more entrenched in the South African church landscape and that the missional church is missional through-and-through. Yet, the picture also shows that race in general and Whiteness in particular has not received the attention it requires, especially considering the historical and the continuing racialised South African context, as well as the work done in other theological disciplines and research in this regard. As such, the first part of the research problem was addressed.

In the next phase of the study, the theme of Whiteness and the field of Whiteness studies was addressed in chapter five by first presenting and conceptualising Whiteness as an ideological framework or "master narrative" (Steyn 2001) guiding, directing, benefitting and perpetuating White identity. Thereafter, the specific nuances of Whiteness or Whitenesess as it manifests in the South African context were unpacked. Within secular discourse on Whiteness, particularly the academic field of Whiteness studies, certain aspects playing a significant role in maintaining Whiteness was identified and explained. These include, "White privilege", "White fragility", "White talk", "implicit bias", "institutional racism", "structural racialisation", "cultural racism" and the "ignorance contract". In chapter seven these eight aspects were eventually held up as a mirror for missional discourse in South Africa to face its own image reflected in the mirror. In order to achieve this third aspect of the research problem, I offered a review and critical analysis of some of the main contributions to missional theology in South Africa. Chapter seven also deals with Whiteness being a limited endeavour in South African missional discourse. By further highlighting some contextual problems and

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theological blind spots, certain trends exposing missional theology as a conduit of Whiteness and middle-class privilege are identified.

Underlying the above is Whiteness as a theological problem. Thus, in chapter six, Whiteness is explored as a contextual partner in theology with the aim of exposing its inherent power and influence. Thereafter, with the help of Willie Jennings and James Perkinson, Whiteness is situated as a theological problem disrupting true humanity and intimacy. These reflections led me to the search for a responsible White theology. With the help of Black theology informed by James Cone, as well as contributions by Jürgen Moltmann and again James Perkinson, the contours of a responsible White theology are identified. In short: a responsible White theology is self-reflexive, vulnerable, self-giving and other-oriented. It seeks a rebirth or a reconversion of Whiteness, while searching for a return to intimacy and true humanity.

With Whiteness as a theological problem in the background, Whiteness in South African theology was probed by examining the contributions of both White and Black theologians in this regard. During the apartheid years the focus among White theologians was more on solidarity with the struggle against apartheid, liberating Whiteness and the search for an appropriate White response to the challenges posed by Black theology and Black consciousness. Whereas Black theologians during this era focussed more on the introduction of Black theology as a helpful component in the struggle against apartheid. After 1994 the focus among White scholars shifted to examining the continuing performativity of Whiteness, as well as critical self-reflection and confronting and sensemaking of the White self. Black scholars on the other hand are more dedicated to exposing continuing systemic Whiteness and lack of Black agency. As such, this study is positioned within this post-1994 focus on Whiteness in theology.

What I intend to do in the rest of this protracted conclusion is to unpack the trends identified in chapter seven. I will do this to assist in naming the problem of Whiteness in South African missional theology. I will venture to formulate probing questions and make some tentative contributions to take the conversation forward. These contributions and questions will hopefully lead to further discussion and reflection. In this way I aim to conclude this study and add my voice to the growing literature on missional theology, while hopefully making a constructive contribution to dislodge the power of Whiteness.

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8.2 Reflecting from the mirror.

Throughout this study, I have tried to show how the concept of Whiteness is addressed in discourse on missional theology within the South African context since the transition to a democratic dispensation in 1994. I have investigated in detail whether Whiteness is explicitly or implicitly addressed in missional theology. Subsequently, I have discovered that there is a lack of substantial and explicit reflection on Whiteness. It was, however, possible to ascertain how Whiteness is influencing South African missional discourse implicitly. Conversely, it was also possible to determine how missional theology is inadvertently advancing the ideals of Whiteness.

Furthermore, as I pointed out in chapters six and seven, Whiteness is a theological problem. None more so than in South Africa where the intersection between Whiteness and theology aided the distortion of reality. Whiteness therefore is also a South African missional theological problem. Despite this intertwined existence, when it comes to reflections on race in general, and Whiteness in particular, there seems to be an overwhelming silence among missional theologians. It seems as if there is no concrete awareness of the influence of Whiteness on missional theology. This led me to the question: why is such reflections on Whiteness absent within missional theology? Especially, when compared to the work done on Whiteness in other theological disciplines. After all, in a time where discussions on decolonisation are at the forefront, all academic disciplines should "critically reflect on its content, curriculum and pedagogies" (Baron 2020: 1).

Therefore, why is there an apparent lack of awareness about the continuing influence of Whiteness on both missional theology and missional congregations? Might it be the result of (wilful) ignorance or an unwillingness to probe the problem of Whiteness in missional theology? Or might it be that missional theologians do not have to engage with Whiteness because they have the economic, social, cultural, intellectual and religious power and that they are not prepared to let go of such privilege and structures of power (Cone 2004)? Can it be that something went wrong at the start when missional theology was first introduced to South Africa? Does it have something to do with South Africa's contextual complexities or maybe an uncritical embracing of the missional contours as it originally developed in the Northern hemisphere? Can it be that South African missional theology became disconnected

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from the essential elements at the root of the missional movement? Height and breadth without depth is dangerous. A tall tree needs deep roots. South African missional theology has height and breadth, e.g., ecclesiological knowhow and practical experience, lots of books and articles on different aspects of missional theology are published regularly, research is done at theological institutions and in congregations, lots of congregations are on the missional journey, but is missional theology still deeply rooted in what lies at the heart of the missional movement? That is, the foundational influences of Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbigin, the GOCN and David Bosch. So, I guess the question is: did proponents of missional discourse in South Africa perhaps misunderstood the early rhetoric on missional theology, even though they claim to articulate such rhetoric anew? In which case, if true, can a missional theology disconnected from these roots even be called missional?

To clarify these questions, one needs to go back to the roots of the missional movement as discussed in the early chapters of this study. During the early years of Karl Barth's ministry in the Safenwil congregation (1911-1921), he became aware of the way the managers and industrialists exploited the industrial workers. His disillusionment was aggravated by the failure of liberal theology's close relationship with the German state and its inability to speak against the political and economic challenges of the time. Barth then concluded that the church is more focussed on its own interests and on the interests of the powerful. God was no longer at the centre of theology. Put differently, Barth concluded that the church lost sight of its *excentric* character. In essence Barth recognised that the theology and the church of his time had become so domesticated by the cultural and social values of the time that it lost its critical, counter-cultural voice. Therefore, Barth reminded the church that it belongs to the Triune God and is sent by God to take responsibility for the world.

Likewise, Lesslie Newbigin and the GOCN recognised that the church in their respective contexts had been domesticated by the reigning culture. On his return to the UK from India, Newbigin found a church drawn into the culture of its day. Newbigin's critique thus focussed on the British church snugly fitting into the Western culture, while they were critical of the mission in India being too intertwined with the indigenous culture. The church didn't adhere to its own message. Newbigin therefore highlights the danger of the true nature of the church as a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom being determined by the prevailing cultural, political or social narratives. Thus, Newbigin's ecclesiology stems from his aim at

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getting the church to extract itself from the dominant Western mindset and back to its missionary roots and identity in order to adhere to its missionary calling in a post-Christendom environment. In other words, back to the vocation God had in mind for it. In this sense, Newbigin can be deemed as counter-cultural, i.e., engaging *in* and *with* the prevailing culture, without being domesticated *by* the prevailing culture. If the church fails to balance this tension, it will either become guardians of the culture, failing to challenge it or it will alienate itself from the culture to the point of ghettoising itself.

In the same vein, the GOCN realised that the church in North America misunderstood their own message by not adhering to the sharp edge of the gospel. They fitted too cosily into Christendom values, such as consumerism and the American way (more recently, All Lives Matter instead of Black Lives Matter), in the process taming the gospel and losing its claim to be distinctive communities in a post-Christendom context. Along with that, within the shift from a Christendom to a post-Christendom society, the North American church lost its position of dominance and influence in society, mainly because of their cosy connection with the values of the prevailing culture. Put somewhat differently, GOCN recognised that the church in the USA misunderstood their own message (as it was communicated during missionary endeavours), because they didn't apply the sharp edge of the gospel to themselves. Therefore, the GOCN emphasised the gospel urging the church to self-critique in the face of cultural assimilation on the one hand and the church's role as an alternative community living contrary to the prevailing culture on the other. "Our culture" in the Gospel and Our Culture Network, not only refers to a critical awareness of the dominant local culture, but it also refers to a critical awareness of the prevailing culture within the faith community itself.

The point being, Barth, Newbigin and the GOCN emphasised that the messengers misunderstood their own message. The church lost its ability to critique and to transform the reigning culture of the time, because they were domesticated by the same culture. The agents of the gospel misunderstood that they are also the recipients of the transforming edge of the gospel. In essence, they missed David Bosch's cautionary remarks made in the 1970's in his reflections on the church as an alternative community. Bosch pointed out that culture and context are the *servants* of the gospel, but when it changes from being the gospel's *servant* to the gospel's *partner* or even the gospel's *rival*, then it is on its way to being the gospel's

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undoing. Gospel *plus* cultural identity will eventually lead to the gospel being usurped by such cultural identity. The way the White Afrikaans cultural identity was appropriated by the Afrikaans Reformed Churches in South Africa is a case in point (Bosch 1982).

So, yes, the church is a product of the Triune God, it is sustained by the power of Jesus Christ to transform the prevailing culture, but it is also in need of the grace of God. It needs to be freed from the control of the reigning cultural imagination. In this scenario David Bosch's remarks ring true. He reminds the church of transforming mission being a double-edged sword, i.e., mission both "understood as an activity that transforms reality" and in "constant need for mission itself to be transformed" (Bosch 1991a: 511). Contextual and cultural powers are both internally and externally at work. It is thus not only the task of the missional church, as an instrument of the *Missio Dei*, to discern, unmask and transform the powers in its surrounding context, but also to unhook itself from the powers at work in its midst. Indeed, the "true Church" are built up by the power of Jesus Christ while also dealing with its own sinful tendencies (Barth 1958: 618).

I would argue that missional theology, as practiced in South Africa, missed this point, or maybe it wasn't taken seriously enough. The theological blind spots discussed in chapter seven attests to this assertion. By doing so, it became disconnected from the very roots of what it means to be missional. Yes, the church did embrace missional theology to deal with it losing its powerful and privileged position in the South African post-1994 society. Missional theology did give the church a new identity and purpose. But unlike Newbigin and the GOCN, South African missional theologians, especially those in the predominantly White churches, weren't critical enough of the dominant contextual and cultural patterns and powers in their midst. The cosiness of White missional theologians with Whiteness created a blind spot for the prevailing influence of Whiteness and instead of calling it into question, they are perpetuating it in God's name. Like the church of Barth, Newbigin, the GOCN and Bosch's eras, they don't fully apply the "critical edge" (Conradie 2011: 88) of the gospel to themselves. The messengers do not adhere to their own message. The result is that they address all the main aspects of missional theology, without fully accomplishing what being missional set out to do.

Can it be that South African missional discourse proclaimed a specific theology, without understanding (or maybe without believing) their own message? How do we know this?

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Because Whiteness, and its protection of White privilege, the elephant in the room, is absent from the endeavour. In a church where Whiteness is the reigning cultural imagination or the "internal institutional hermeneutic" (Marais 2021a: 272), self-critique of Whiteness, motivated by the gospel message, is highly appropriate. One must be self-reflexive about the effects of Whiteness on one's research and academic pursuits (Steyn 2001: xxxiv). The shift to self-awareness, White consciousness and self-reflexivity reflected in the work of some White post-apartheid theologians (see chapter 6) seems decidedly relevant. Asking "who are we?" is more important than what we do, and it seems at least as important as "Whose are we?" This is the point made by Newbigin (1989: 227) when he wrote about the congregation being the first hermeneutic of the gospel. A point later also confirmed by Hunsberger (1996: 296) when he states that the gospel meets the culture inside of us before we become the hermeneutic of the gospel in the culture around us. In other words, as witnesses, we have to let go before we can speak out (Bevans & Schroeder 2004). If you miss this point, can you still call it missional?

Why exactly did missional theology in South Africa miss this point? Why are these theologians disconnected from the roots? Why are reflections on Whiteness, and its protection of White privilege, absent? There is no simple answer. To my mind, the matters that did play a role, might be the following:

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8.2.1 A provincialised theological framework.

During the colonial and apartheid eras, a very strong connection was forged between the DRC, White Afrikaans culture and the apartheid state. To such an extent that Bosch (1991b: 88) asked whether the "Afrikaner church" in its religion are not just worshipping itself? The connection between the DRC and White Afrikaans culture is still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa with the DRC calmly maintaining separate churches for different racial groups in the Dutch Reformed church family. Thus, remaining a church mostly of- and for White Afrikaans-speaking South Africans (Van der Merwe 2009: 123-129). Although this study is not only about missional theology in the DRC per se, it is important to highlight this connection because the DRC was and probably still is, the main exponent of missional theology in South Africa. It is also the church from where most South African academic contributions on missional theology originate. They feed both *from* and *into* the DRC. The nature and culture of the DRC, and thus by implication Afrikaner Whiteness, probably deeply informs and

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influences these theologians, and they, in turn, have a determining influence on what happens within the DRC and the broader missional discourse in South Africa. The DRC, therefore, deserves special mention.

Nonetheless, because of its history as the “apartheid church”, it follows, then, that the DRC was probably one of the least trusted and most alienated organisations after the 1994 transition. I believe that this alienation from both the broader South African society and the ecumenical church, informed the DRC’s uncritical alignment with the missional church in the Northern hemisphere. The DRC needed to redeem itself from its checkered past and perhaps missional theology was a great way to correct the mistakes of the past, without dealing with its inherent White habitus and the theological critique of its past (Van Wyngaard 2022a). Might it be that missional theology enabled the DRC to simply move on from apartheid, by claiming that the time of transition was a time ripe for a renewed missional ecclesiology (as claimed by Mouton 2017: 160)? I don’t think God was pleased with apartheid and the way South Africa was deliberately racialised. I don’t think God was satisfied with some people gathering privilege at the expense of others. Then how is it possible for a church to simply move on, without considering the history and continuing effects of such a system and the subsequent responsibility to right the systemic wrongs? During the colonial and apartheid eras the church and its mission served the interests of a specific community. I wonder whether, in the post-apartheid era, it might be more of the same, disguised in a different shape?

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Even so, the missional discourse as it was originally implemented in South Africa in the aftermath of formal apartheid, was informed by missional theologians and churches in different contexts, i.e., churches from a Western, post-Christendom and postmodern context (this uncritical alignment was probably due to unconscious bias). The difference being that mainline churches in South Africa not only lost their privileged position because of shifts to post-Christendom and postmodernism like in the Northern hemisphere, but also because of the unique post-apartheid and postcolonial transitions. By treating these as the same, renders the intricacies of the South African context invisible. In fact, it reflects a global missional framework provincialised into the South African context, which might lead to a reductionist view of mission. It also protects Whiteness from scrutiny. It might again function as the embodiment of the West and its ecclesiastical tradition, bringing the theme of a *White*

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ecclesiology to the fore (Pretorius 1981: 19). It furthermore gives White missional theologians the scope to claim objectivity regarding their theological discourse (Cone 2010: 16).

I would thus conclude that South African missional theologians implemented missional theology as best they could, and it did give the church new energy, but because of these problematic roots, it was flawed from the very start. Therefore, everything that followed probably retained these flaws.

8.2.2 Echoing White interests.

The homogeneity of the South African missional theological space, most contributors are White, middleclass male scholars, might "foster distorted pedagogical practices of insulation and exclusion" (Vosloo 2021: 1029) or "a diseased institutional unconscious" (Jennings 2020: 99). The power at work in such spaces, is Whiteness that informs all translation, interpretation and missional contributions, thus rendering Whiteness invisible. Theology is not neutral or objective (Vellem 2017: 4), especially in the face of Whiteness. In fact, a theology that is understood as neutral or universal, i.e., without a marked context, is often White, male, European or North American (Van Wyngaard 2016b: 5). Neutrality is a middle-class privilege. In predominantly White spaces the illusion of neutrality is created. In such White homogenous spaces, a mainly White missional church like the DRC, will find it difficult to reflect on its White identity (Rossouw 2016: 384). Without the help of other voices, the echo of White interests and ideals will continue.

Furthermore, not including more African voices in the missional conversation, might lead to a reductionist understanding of the *Missio Dei*. Flett (2014: 76) reminds us that the *Missio Dei* "…does not allow for communities of homogenous packets..." As pointed out in chapters 2 and 3, performing the *Missio Dei* always takes centre-stage in the missional church as a hermeneutic of the gospel. In this performance the *Missio Dei* should be performed together with others and their different perspectives (M.J. Nel 2017: 302). In essence, the *Missio Dei* must be performed in an "epistemologically open-minded" way (Brunsdon 2019: 7). Otherwise, the messengers will continue to misunderstand their own message.

However, it is necessary to point out that this is a dialogical journey. Although they need the help of others, White people cannot expect the racial others to do this exposing work for them. White people need to recognise, only they can find the solution to the White problem

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(Nettleton 1972). White people need others to sometimes hold up the mirror, but only they can find appropriate ways to deal with the White image reflecting from the mirror. Kritzinger (2022b) refers to this dialogical journey as covenanting together to build a deracialised home. This is done by reflecting on- and unmasking one's own White agency and tradition, while also seeking to understand where others are coming from. In this dialogical sense, the silo of Whiteness is exposed through the eyes of others.[186]

Conversely, given "the convening power of whiteness" (Jennings 2020: 19), Whiteness also informs the behaviour and habits of people of colour. This might inevitably lead to missional theologians of colour inadvertently advancing White interests. Although not in the scope of this study, it would thus be fair to ask whether missional theology produces a fundamentally White missional theological paradigm even when it is done by theologians of colour?

8.2.3 Protecting the status quo.

The economic and security realities during and after the 1994 transition played a significant role in how the South African post-apartheid society evolved. Inevitably, it also influenced the church and the missional discourse. The new Black government inherited an economy in dire straits. Therefore, they did not want to do anything to disrupt "big business", which was mostly in the hands of White men. Yes, measures were put in place to empower Black people in business going forward, but White people mostly retained their economic power. Despite these measures there remains a significant discrepancy between the economic power in the hands of White men, in comparison with woman and people of colour. In terms of security, the new Black leaders did everything possible to prevent Black people from revolting against White supremacy. They called on them "to be better than White people". The eyes of the world were on South Africa and the new leaders were keen to succeed in the eyes of the world (De Beer, Keyser, Van der Merwe 2015; Fairbanks 2023: 116-119; Shandler 1991: 6-7, 200-202).

The result thereof was that nothing really changed for White people. For the most part, their lives remained the same as before; their income didn't drop; their kids kept going to the same

[186] See Langerman (2021) and Theron (2021) for examples of South African ecumenical stories where spaces are created for different denominations to journey together. Whereas Resane (2021a) proposes five steps that might help to take the theological dialogue on race forward. Also, that is why reunification between the DRC and URCSA is so important.

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schools; their churches stayed the same. There are implicit fears, but the peaceful transition mostly kept the lives of White people intact. Whiteness hides behind economic security and safety. In the words of Tranby and Hartmann (2008: 347): "The maintenance of the status quo not only guarantees economic advantage for white(s) … but it also ensures the normative nature of white identity and experience." Protecting the status quo is therefore paramount.

In the church this often manifests when the status quo is kept in place by Whiteness hiding behind concepts such as reconciliation, diversity, inclusivity, crossing borders and equality. Agreeing on these values is one thing, doing something about it is quite another. Doing it from a White centre and without an awareness of power differences and privilege, maintains Whiteness. Doing it without an openness to be transformed, keeps Whiteness intact. In the words of Metha, Schneider and Howard (2021: 14), "…these frames inform conceptions of racism that center whiteness. Framed as goals to be pursued in service of white social and spiritual enrichment rather than to redress racial inequity, religious frames of diversity and inclusion mystify systemic racism." The status quo is therefore often protected under the guise of these values. By not taking the self-critique highlighted by Barth, Newbigin, Bosch and the GOCN seriously enough, or perhaps by misunderstanding it, missional theology helps to keep the status quo intact.

8.2.4 Entrenching privilege through locality.

The focus of a missional ecclesiology is on local congregations (Niemandt 2015c: 96). The local congregation is the most important role-player appointed by God in a local community (Niemandt 2010a: 100). Missional theology argues that the local community itself becomes a mission field. It is the context where God is working to shape the community towards the Kingdom of God. To achieve this the local missional congregation must restructure or re-imagine itself not to be a maintenance church or an inward-looking church. It must move from maintenance to mission. Although well intentioned and important, this emphasis on "local church" and "local community" in missional theology, might also allow congregations to ignore their historical situatedness, their current situatedness, as well as the problems of poverty, inequality and privilege in the wider community, thus further entrenching privilege. It might also influence the theology of these churches. According to Wallis (2016: 109), theology must change sociology. But in many White churches the opposite happens - the sociology of white communities shapes their theology. They are conforming to the world

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around them. They become “sociologically predictable, based on their race and geography” (2016: 109).

The way White suburbs were spatially shielded from Black people and poverty during the apartheid era shaped local communities. People and cultures were estranged through separate geographical areas of habitation. In the congregation where I serve, we recently converted our church-hall into a place of safety for displaced youth. To do this, however, we first needed to confirm the zoning requirements for the church property with our local municipality. To our astonishment, in the title deed which was issued in the early 1980’s, we discovered that our property was designated for use by White people only. Of course, this is not a stipulation we would adhere to today, but it does mean that we were not placed here by God, we were placed here by apartheid era spatial planning to the benefit of Whiteness. The local congregation was as such, legitimised by White supremacy. In other words, Christianity in this local community was legitimised by and for White supremacy and vice versa. The White origins of the local congregation were baptised as a blessing from God. It is a place where meaning is determined by Whiteness. As such, “(T)he theological significance of specific geographic locations” does indeed matter (Niemandt 2019b: 1). In this sense, maybe the DRC is a victim of their own making, namely congregations with a clear demographic profile as a product of apartheid era special planning. Writing about the enduring human condition that causes a hindrance to the gospel, Marius Nel (2023: 17) writes, “even if a congregation is an ideal bridge to a particular community, but it does not also address the human condition and sin that caused it, it will be unable to participate faithfully in the *missio Dei*.” Acknowledging and reframing the sinful racialised story of a place is therefore important for the faithful participation in the *Missio Dei*.

The apartheid government did spatial planning in such a way that White people would experience the world as White (Fairbanks 2023). Today, the racial others, informal settlements and poverty remain largely “invisible” to many people living in those suburbs. When that is where you live your life, your exposure to racial others, poverty, need, etc. might be very limited. Today some of these spaces do get interrupted by different bodies. Regrettably, often, this creates anxieties among White people. Instead of embracing such diversity, many White South Africans will then rather immigrate into ghettos or enclaves where they feel physically, economically, and emotionally safe. With the help of schools,

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medical centres, shopping centres, churches and neighbourhood watch systems these ghettos create the illusion of a White world (Benade 2019: 104; Shandler 1991: 229) and allows them to disengage from problems such as poverty, inequality and injustice. Consequently, “the ultimate comfort zones” (Ballard 2004: 54), accompanied by the “process of othering” (2004: 63) are established. In this sense two living spaces are created, i.e. a private living space on the one hand and a broader inter-subjective space shared by all the residents of South Africa on the other (Van der Merwe 2009: 48). Again, this is Whiteness and privilege hiding behind physical, economic and emotional safety. It is easy to believe that the challenges facing these ghettoised communities are the most important. These communities and the continued congregational segregation help to reinforce White views of race (Tranby and Hartmann: 2008: 344). The social isolation of Whites “allows them to minimize and individualize the racial problem” and “accept and maintain racial inequality” (2008: 344).

Maybe this is a case of Whiteness hiding behind the history and interests of the local congregation and the challenges of the local community? Perhaps a case of Whiteness protected under the guise of contextualisation, inculturation and incarnation? Missional theology’s strong focus on the local church and local community may well then inadvertently reinforce apartheid era spatial planning. Might this also be a reason why the issues of race, racism, poverty and social justice are recognised very superficially in South African missional theology?

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Ours is a history of separation, discrimination and separate development. This has impoverished the church and society, while also manufacturing certain biases in us. Because of this history and the continuing influence thereof, people will inevitably drift towards the most common denominator (Theron 2021: 445). It is for this reason that the missional church must take its counter-cultural roots, found in the work of Newbigin and the GOCN, very seriously. As a foretaste of the Kingdom (Newbigin 1977, 1978) the church must represent that which is to come. It requires a radical presence which necessitates that the church proclaims the full scope of the gospel undoing the effects of sin, while embodying the cruciform nature of the gospel in a specific place (Nel 2023: 165). The idolatries of a place (and culture) must be confronted by the truths of the gospel (Bevans 1999: 151) In this sense a radical missional presence might entail the congregation being at odds with place. It is a presence where one test one’s witness, one’s discernment of the movement of the Spirit in a

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particular place, together with others, in relation to other places and other congregations and ecumenical partners. One must also be conscious of the story of a place, it's history and the contested stories that shaped it. Indeed, an awareness of the delicate interplay between the "*place of story"* and the "*story of place"* is required (Conradie 2022c).[187]

8.2.5 Embedding Whiteness through culture and language.

In South Africa, language is an unavoidable cultural and racial marker. Although Afrikaans is not primarily a White language, it was appropriated by White people as an Afrikaner cultural marker. Before 1994 it was thus granted special protection, along with English. After 1994 Afrikaans lost its privileged position and became one of twelve official languages, with English still being the universal language. In time, Afrikaans institutions (especially training institutions, such as schools and universities) were under pressure to be more inclusive of language. Many White Afrikaans people therefore started believing that Afrikaans was under threat, so the efforts to "protect" the language increased. It is in this context that the predominantly White DRC, as the main exponent of missional theology, still positions itself as an Afrikaans church. Inevitably this will influence the church's ability to cross cultural and racial boundaries. Conversely, because of English' status as universal language in South Africa, it is easier for English-speaking churches to cross cultural and racial boundaries. Although, of course, it also makes it easier for English-speaking Whites to protect their privilege under the guise of universalism.

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Nonetheless, many predominantly Afrikaans churches remain mostly White. Some URCSA congregations, Volkskerk van Afrika (Peoples Church of Africa), Apostolic Faith Mission and the Calvyn Protestant Church of South Africa, of course being the exceptions, especially in the

[187] Conradie's (2009) insights, although not specifically from a missional perspective, is a helpful contribution to the theme of a theology of place within missional discourse in South Africa. Conradie confirms that a theology of place is not about the "generic concept of space" (2009: 5), but about God being present in a specific location and time. The core insight is that the Triune God is not a distant God but a God who is present in creation. The central themes within a theology of place are therefore "creation, continuing creation and history, human culture and sin, God's providence, redemption in history, church and mission and eschatological fulfilment "(2009: 4). Regarding a theology of place in the South African context with its colonial, imperialist and apartheid history the following themes are highlighted: the occupation, ownership, distribution, re-distribution and stewardship of land; the issues of race, class and ethnicity; justice and the art of cohabitation; the need for reflection on contested sacred places; access to land, housing, urban planning and sustainability; reflection on the issues of health, healing and regeneration; issues related to social control over spaces through crime and gangsterism; issues of mobility and transport; and issues of a gendered nature.

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Western Cape. However, the point is that Whiteness is often maintained through language because language is regarded as ideology-less. There is global power inherent in the English language, for example (Salusbury & Foster 2004). But in South Africa White supremacy also hides behind Afrikaans and so-called Afrikaans culture, music, commercial interests, and institutions. Afrikaans churches are often seen as the last institution where White Afrikaans people can be themselves. Language is often regarded as an anchor in a changing world. The Afrikaans language, especially in predominantly White churches, effectively keeps these churches monocultural and serves White interests.[188] Hence, the question: can a church positioning itself as an Afrikaans church (or even a mainly Afrikaans church) in a multicultural and multilingual society be regarded as a truly missional church? Especially in the South African context where Afrikaans-speakers are in the minority.

At this point it is important to differentiate between *multiracial*, *multicultural* and *intercultural* churches. A church can be multiracial without being multicultural because it exudes a certain understanding of one dominant culture in its midst. In the case of a predominantly White church, the non-white members are then expected to leave their cultural assumptions at the door, which inevitably leads to a mono-racial church. It is not a multicultural church if there is room for only one dominant culture (Kim 2004: 10). Inevitably, a church will not become multicultural if its congregational and structural functions, rituals and spaces continues to feed the dominant culture. The culture of spaces and institutions is determined by those who embodies it. Where the dominant culture is White, being superficially multiracial only confirms the convening power of Whiteness. Others are integrated only if they adhere to the interests of the dominant culture. As such multiculturism is misused to conceal biases. From multicultural experiences, which refers to spaces where different cultures are accommodated and where they can collectively participate from time to time, churches must move to an *intercultural* understanding. This is a movement away from merely sharing spaces and the superficial acknowledgment of "differences and similarities" to shared experiences where a sense of belonging is created, and a common

[188] For a good example of Afrikaans inadvertently being used to protect White interests, see an opinion piece on the use of Afrikaans in the DRC, written by Nelis Janse van Rensburg (then moderator of the General Synod of the DRC) in *Kerkbode* (Official newsletter of the DRC):
https://kerkbode.christians.co.za/2023/07/21/nelis-janse-van-rensburg-skryf-afrikaans-as-geloofstaal/ (accessed 21 July 2023).

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identity is developed (Nell 2021: 331-332). A common identity that does not force sameness but rather celebrates and embrace otherness, while fostering creative, meaningful, and transformative encounters and connections. This means that the missional church must be true to its *excentric* character. It does not exist for itself, its own interests and the status quo, but for God and God's whole multicultural community.[189]

Flowing from the above assertions, as explained in chapter 7.4.2, in a multicultural context such as South Africa, it constitutes a failure if a missional church remains monocultural. Whiteness hides behind the sameness of culture and language. Ultimately, multiculturalism invites Christians to embrace a broader vision of God's mission that transcends cultural and racial boundaries. As Labuschagne (2019a: 214) rightly puts it: "Encountering other horizons always disturbs the comfort of the status quo." Understood as such, multiculturalism then functions as disruption, resistance and opposition to the tacit acceptance of the status quo. A multicultural and ultimately an intercultural understanding offers a powerful framework for Christian engagement in a pluralistic world. It encourages believers to move beyond a monocultural worldview and embrace cultural diversity as an integral part of the *Missio Dei*. In a monocultural church, missional theology might lead to a more dynamic understanding of the church, but it might also divert the focus away from conversations about church and culture or church and race. Thus, creating a blind spot for something like Whiteness, especially where Whiteness is the norm, which might then lead to an ecclesial reduction of mission; or even to the congregation being the guardian of the culture, instead of being counter cultural. In other words, multiculturalism is an important first counter-cultural step, but moving to an intercultural understanding, which includes a sense of anti-racism, ultimately has the potential to unmask White culture, transform communities, promote unity, and bear witness to the inclusive and transformative love of God.[190]

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[189] Kritzinger's (2002, 2008b) work on *encounterology* and Naidoo's (2021) explanation of *critical multi culturalism* are especially valuable in this regard. *Encounterology* implies intentional, reciprocal and transformational encounters with others, while *critical multi culturalism* refers to inter-cultural engagement that focuses on relationship building (not survival), deep connections, interactions, respect, and learning from one another. Also see Nell (2021) for an exposition of the challenge of cross-cultural and multicultural experiences to the missional church. Whereas Wallis (2016: 97-126) gives practical guidelines to foster multiracial congregations. He highlights intentionality, diversity as a path to a larger goal, a spirit of inclusion, empowered leadership and adaptability as key ingredients.

[190] Marais' (2010b, 2017b) ideas on the notion of *kenosis* as a missional attribute is an important addition in this regard. The church characterised by *kenosis* is called to be an inclusive community of self-giving, hospitality,

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8.2.6 Unacknowledged privilege.

Unacknowledged institutional Whiteness and White privilege remains a problem in South Africa. Although strides had been made since 1994, White South Africans still enjoy the fruits of unearned privileges, cultivated during more than 300 years of history systemically favouring Whites (Chalklen 2015). Difficult conversations about this does occur in different spheres of society, except it seems in the predominantly White churches. Might this be one of the reasons why reunification between the DRC and URCSA remains unfinished business?

In my view, South African missional discourse lacks proper critical engagement with the historical and theological impact and consequences of colonialism and apartheid and the subsequent ongoing effects of systemic Whiteness and apartheid era benefits and privileges. In some instances, these benefits and privileges might even be baptised as blessings from God. Thus, Whiteness and privilege hide behind God's providence. This was further exacerbated by the outcomes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As discussed in chapter seven, the TRC did not properly address the problem and the responsibilities of the beneficiaries of apartheid. Many conversations, therefore, still tend to focus more on the victims of apartheid and not on systemic Whiteness and the responsibilities of the beneficiaries thereof. In which case Whiteness deflects the attention by hiding behind discourses about the victims and behind outreaches and charity to the poor and the needy. When restitution and social justice gets mentioned in conversations on reconciliation, some apartheid era beneficiaries will even claim victimhood. The mostly White churches, as the main beneficiaries of apartheid, have done very little, if anything to facilitate acts of restitution. It is in the interest of Whiteness and privilege to deflect such conversations.

This of course also influence how congregations engage with people on the margins in their communities. They usually do so from an altruistic motivation, but the marginalised are often still seen as objects of mission and not as agents of mission. Such a position fails to challenge economic, social, cultural and political systems which marginalise some people, while keeping privilege intact for others (World Council of Churches 2013). Institutions, like the church, tend "to use their resources to examine and fix" others, "but not usually themselves" (Major 2005: 73). Too often, for example, missional congregations will "reach out" to the people living in

sensitivity for the conscious and unconscious walls excluding others and it transcends the prevailing culture. Also see the contribution of Marius Nel (2023: 125-137) in this regard.

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the adjacent Black townships, thus "othering" them, while also sanctioning the missional framework as mission from the privileged to the marginalised (Schoeman & Wessels 2021) and in the process validating the borders delineating Whiteness. Additionally, by often blanketly depicting the racial others as "marginalised", White churches are speaking the language of the dominant classes and thus affirming their racial dominance (Kritzinger 1988: 345).

Moreover, the White church remains the controlling agent determining whom to reach out to, when to do it and for how long. In addition, by remaining the controlling agents, choices are made about which others are worthy of proper engagement, e.g., it seems the DRC, spend a lot of time and energy engaging gender and LGBTQIA+ concerns, but less so on engaging racism and the racial others. Although gender and LGBTQIA+ concerns are obviously very important, might it be that, while indeed threatening to patriarchal authority, it is less threatening to White privilege? Indeed, "white privilege allows one to pick and choose issues" (Major 2005: 73). The same principle would apply to the church's social involvement. The DRC, for example, prides itself on its missionally inspired social involvement in many communities, but this might also be a way to avoid the difficult conversations about true reconciliation, justice and restitution. Social involvement, without true reconciliatory community is a one-way street, and thus becomes a way of protecting one's own interests.[191]

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Since Whiteness is a systemic problem cultivated over many years, systemic interventions might inevitably be necessary. This starts with acknowledging "the messiness of history" (Vosloo 2015:5) in the light of the suffering, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Such a challenging but meaningful encounter with history will lead to a new understanding of the present and new creative possibilities for the future (Vosloo 2008). In this regard Marius Nel (2023: 135) refers to a "cruciform ethic" in which believers are not called to hold on to or deny their privilege for their own advantage, but as imitators of Jesus who emptied and humbled Himself for the benefit of others, rather ask how to use their privilege for the benefit of others. In South Africa, we need to "engage in the reconstruction and development of the country … the wounds of the past have to be healed too" (Conradie 2011: 96). In the words

[191] A helpful resource in this regard is: Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., Bivens, D. & Major, B. 2005. *Flipping the Script: White Privilege and Community Building*, Silver Spring: MP Associates, Inc. https://www.aecf.org/resources/flipping-the-script-white-privilege-and-community-building/. (Accessed 3 October 2020).

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of Wallis (2016: 126), "(T)he church must be at the forefront of racial reconciliation and justice and healing in this country. It is nothing less than our calling." I would think that the issues of restitution, justice, reconstruction and development might need some further reflection as part of conversations on reconciliation as a missional attribute. After all, as Flett (2014: 75) warns: "Any failure on behalf of the church to be active in reconciliation is, foremost, a failure to participate in the history of Jesus Christ."

8.2.7 A reductionist view of the *Missio Dei.*

In a recent publication Coenie Burger (2021b: 392) writes:

> If we understand *missio Dei* as a broad, comprehensive concept that includes the whole revelation and activity of the triune God in history, it could well serve as the definitive theological basis and framework of a missional ecclesiology.

This corresponds with the holistic understanding of the *Missio Dei* agreed upon at the conference on mission held at the University of the Western Cape in 1986. As explained in chapter 4.2.1, at this conference David Bosch emphasised the Kingdom perspective in mission, by which he meant God's involvement with the whole of creation, working towards a comprehensive peace (*shalom*). The church's calling to a holistic witness (*marturia*), that includes proclaiming the Word (*kerugma*), acts/services of love (*diakonia*), the forming of a new community of love and unity (*koinonia*), the zeal for a just society *(dikaioma*) and worship (*leitourgia*), flows from this realisation (Van der Watt: 2010: 167). These more traditional missionary dimensions (also pointed out by Bosch 1991a: 511), describe the mission of the church as an alternative or new community. Explaining how these dimensions relate to one another does not fall in the scope of this study, except to say that there is a creative tension between them. But it is important to note that God's mission is also more than these traditional dimensions and activities. Bosch (1991a: 512) warns in this regard:

> …we are tempted to incarcerate the m*issio Dei* in the narrow confines of our own predilections, thereby of necessity reverting to one-sidedness and reductionism.

Another way to enhance God's mission, especially in the South African context, is to describe it in terms of *liberation*, *reconciliation*, and *reconstruction and development*. Again, the relationship between these concepts is not straightforward. There is at best a creative tension between them, especially in post-apartheid South Africa. In South Africa we needed liberation

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from apartheid, but in post-apartheid South Africa, liberation was not enough, we also need reconciliation, and reconstruction and development. All three concepts have a certain validity, but we also need to maintain a creative tension between them to prevent the one from being prioritised over the other (Conradie 2011).

Indeed, God's mission is a multifaceted and multidimensional enterprise, and one should be careful not to reduce it or delineate it too sharply (Bosch 1991a: 512). The missional church needs such a comprehensive understanding of the *Missio Dei*, especially given the complexities of the South African context and history. After all, for mission to be "credible and faithful to its origins and character", it must be multidimensional (Bosch 1991a: 512).

However, to my mind South African missional theology, especially as it is practiced in the DRC, has yet to fully embrace this comprehensive understanding of God's mission. Or maybe it is a case of prioritising some aspects over others? Why do I say this? Because Whiteness and its continuing influence does not get the attention it deserves, thereby reverting to a reductionist view of the *Missio Dei*. Maybe, missional discourse is so focused on the sent-ness of the church, that it allowed the White church to escape the critical edge of the *Missio Dei*, thus perpetuating Whiteness and privilege. It might also explain why liberation from Christendom issues like heteronormativity, paternalism, patriarchy or consumerism receives more attention than liberation from inequality, systemic Whiteness and privilege. Such a narrower understanding of the *Missio Dei* might allow the church to structure its own agenda in God's name.

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Moreover, one must wonder whether the focus on the *Missio Dei* might inadvertently contribute to the Whiteness question in South Africa. Poitras (1999: 41-42) alludes to this danger in the following citation:

> "Although the emergence of Missio Dei thinking helped to correct the Eurocentrism of western mission thought and activity, the stress on God's mission reinforced the existing western tendency to ground theological reflection in scripture and tradition. This could only further retrench western missiology in a methodology that tended to undervalue or ignore local cultures, world social issues, and indigenous thought forms. The rediscovery of the Missio Dei was, therefore, a blessing that brought many positive results, but a mixed blessing that

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also may have helped perpetuate certain problematic tendencies in western missional understandings."

I believe that this citation summarises what went wrong in the rediscovery of the *Missio Dei* in the complex South African context. As I pointed out earlier, there are underlying dangers when applying the *Missio Dei*. Bosch (1991a: 512) warns against a too narrow and one-sided view of the *Missio Dei*. In the same vein, Flett (2014: 70) points out how easily susceptible the *Missio Dei* is "to the political or social *zeitgeist.*" I believe the way that South African missional theology emphasises the *Missio Dei,* reinforces "the western tendency to ground theological reflection in scripture and tradition" (Poitras 1999: 41), thereby preserving Western perspectives. The point of departure is not God's mission in the multidimensional South African context and experience, but Western theological understandings of the *Missio Dei*, i.e. a theology *from above* instead of a theology *from below* (Bosch 1991: 421-423). Said differently, the South African missional discourse entrenches the Western "social *zeitgeist*", to paraphrase Flett's observation. Its application of the *Missio Dei* is not wide and broad enough, as Bosch pleaded. It fails to break open the provinsialised and homogenous nature and perspectives of the South African missional discourse, thus doing exactly what Poitras (1999: 41), warns against: It "undervalues local cultures, world social issues, and indigenous thought forms", in the process perpetuating "certain problematic tendencies" (1999: 42), such as Whiteness and privilege. This again confirms that "…we must listen to God first, if only for a deeper understanding of our own contexts, however privileged or miserable they may be" (Poitras 1999: 44).

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The church needs to be constantly "renewed and re-conceived" (Bosch 1991a: 519). The agents of the *Missio Dei* are also the recipients of the *Missio Dei*. In sum: yes, the church is a participating community in God's mission, but as Bosch (1991a: 519) reminds us, the *Missio Dei* also "purifies the church". In the context of this study, it is therefore important to ask whether the missional church lives with a missional consciousness (informed by the *Missio Dei*) that transcends White interests.

8.2.8 Upholding White identity.

Marais (2017b: 378) highlights that those who chose to follow Jesus Christ do not live in a vacuum. They have already been shaped by the dominant culture. Whether it is consumer

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culture or White culture in its different forms, they are shaped by the desires of that particular culture. It is embodied through knowledge, actions, practices and dispositions. Miroslav Volf (1996: 35) calls this the "power of normalisation", where "normal" knowledge, values and practices are shaped by a specific culture and its institutions. It is inherent to an individual's identity, and it is inherent to the identity of churches and congregations.

Seeing that a missional ecclesiology is more about the *being* than the *doing* of the church (Niemandt 2014c: 5), i.e., more about its identity (Who/Whose it is), it becomes necessary to intentionally address the underlying White identity and culture shaping the congregational culture in many congregations. White identity and culture determine everything in White congregations. Institutions are shaped by the bodies inhabiting such institutional spaces. White identity and privilege are constantly at work at institutional levels — "personnel, policy and practice, constituency relationship, structure, mission and purpose" (Major 2005: 71). For example, liturgical spaces are racialised as White by the language we speak, the songs we sing and the rituals we perform in our worship services. Habits and practices upholding White identity are instilled through formation (discipleship). Decisions by church councils on the use of the congregation's buildings, how it allocates its money and when staff is appointed are influenced by White identity. The recent meeting of the regional synod of the DRC in the Western Cape (8-12 May 2023) comes to mind in this regard. How we met, how the meeting was structured, how decisions were taken, the topics we covered, the demographics of the delegates and the speakers, the songs we sang, the language we spoke, the food we ate, the coffee and the wine we drank, everything confirmed a White privileged world. Even the few Black delegates and speakers confirmed the White space, because they conformed to the ideals of the White space. All these examples confirm "the taken-for-granted nature of the white identity" (Tranby and Hartman 2008: 342). This corresponds with Marius Nel's (2023: 3) depiction of a "conceptual framework" that "guides the understanding of a particular institution, practice, or conviction of the church" (2023: 181).

These underlying biases will remain if it is not intentionally confronted and deconstructed, i.e., it will remain if the "power of normalisation" is not unmasked (Volf 1996: 36). The transformation of the "conceptual framework" (Nel 2023: 3), under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is of utmost importance, otherwise believers will remain captives of their White mindset. It requires "thinking in a new manner", aided by "programmes, habits, liturgies and

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practices" (Nel 2023: 121) that not only leads to "inner transformation", but also to "transformed communities" (2023: 116). Nonetheless, if one is unaware of how White identity is operating and what it is doing, one will not even realise how it is constantly confirmed by one's actions, practises and biases. In other words, if White people don't know that they don't know, they will not even realise how White identity is confirmed and embedded by their biases and vice versa. In the church, institutionalising of a certain similarity will continue unabated. The underlying White identity remains unfinished ecclesiological business for predominantly White missional churches in South Africa. In fact, I would argue that mainly White churches cannot be fully missional without facing and deconstructing their White identity.

8.3 Missional theology as inverse hermeneutic.

Throughout this study I have hopefully shown that Whiteness studies can bring depth to South African missional discourse. It can help missional theology to be more contextually and theologically aware and self-reflective and assist missional theology to unmask- and confront the White habitus underlying the culture in predominantly White congregations. The opposite may also be true, however. Just as missional theology is enriched by Whiteness studies, so Whiteness studies can be enriched by missional theology. Such inverse hermeneutics may be possible.

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Roman Catholic theologian David Tracy helps in this endeavour with his contribution on a correlational model for theology. Tracy (1984) distinguishes between two sources for theology, namely *Christian tradition* and *contemporary experience*. The task of theology is to establish mutually critical correlations between these two sources. Such a correlational model attempts "to establish, in both theory and practice, mutually critical correlations between two sets of interpretation: an interpretation of the Christian tradition and an interpretation of contemporary experience" (1984: 235). In other words, Christian tradition (text, theology, the church) and contemporary experience (society or public life) are in a hermeneutical and transformational dialogue. Indeed, "(I)t is not by chance that both theology and public life find themselves needing one another" (1984: 238).

Tracy (1981), therefore, points out that "theologians must pay more attention to the primary social realities (the actual "publics") informing every particular theology." With Tracy's

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mutually critical correlations in mind, I would suggest that Whiteness is a primary social reality informing missional theology and therefore missional theology needs the attention placed on it in this study. I am, however, aware that such an undertaking “harbours the danger of weakening the core content of a Christian understanding” (Conradie 2017: 153). One should always be cautious not to (uncritically) import secular connotations into ecclesial spaces when conversing with secular concepts (2017: 153). Nonetheless, the close historical correlation between Whiteness and theology in general and missional theology in particular justifies such a critical conversation.

Conversely, Whiteness, as a primary social reality could also benefit from the attention of missional theology (and other theological disciplines), precisely because it is a primary social reality informing, well, almost everything. After all, “(T)heology is a science that engages many other sciences” (Hartjes 2021). Missional theology is probably not a discipline that Whiteness studies would typically be in conversation with, but it might be shortsighted not to do so. Theology (in this case missional theology) can play a role in Whiteness studies “because theology helps us all to ask the kind of questions which all reflective human beings ask” (Tracy 1984: 232). Moreover, contrary to the assumptions of White privilege and supremacy, the Biblical narrative, from Genesis to Revelation, reflects a drive toward racial inclusion (Wallis 2016: 107). This acknowledgement will certainly help Whiteness studies in its quest to break the power of Whiteness.[192] So, how can missional theology engage with Whiteness studies in a mutually beneficial way? How can our racialised society, historically manufactured and still influenced by the ideals and interests of Whiteness, be helped by missional theology? These are open questions that will need further reflection, but maybe I can tentatively offer some suggestions.

At the heart of missional theology, we find the stories of Jesus and the early church. Jesus’ story is one of radical inclusion, based on conversion. His ministry personified equality through the way that He included people intent on mutually excluding others. For example, the sick, the lame and the blind welcomed Jesus’ intervention in their lives but not necessarily the inclusion of women and prostitutes. The prostitutes might welcome their social inclusion but would have been disgusted by Jesus’ contact with the lepers. Likewise, the Zealots among

[192] For an explanation of the Biblical narrative about race as a movement towards inclusion, see Wallis (2016: 103-108)

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the group of disciples would have frowned upon Jesus' fellowship with the tax collectors, while the Jews were probably unhappy with Jesus heroising the "good" Samaritan. These examples confirm that the paradox between inclusion and exclusion is indeed a complex one, further exacerbated by the temptation to claim God's favour for your group. Apparently, it is one thing to accept God's acceptance for oneself, but quite another to accept the inclusion of other groups. Consequently, on the way to radical inclusivity, a call for conversion on the basis of repentance is required (Conradie 2017: 154-155).

Maybe this is something that Whiteness studies can take from Jesus' ministry, i.e., the movement towards radical inclusivity based on (re-)conversion and repentance. Given its history, Whiteness can certainly do with conversion and repentance in the search for true humanity and intimacy. Although, to paraphrase Conradie (2017: 159), Whiteness will have to discover that it is not the powerful that are called to include others on their terms, but that they themselves are being included by the grace of God (and by the grace of their Black counterparts?). As we learn from Jesus' encounter with the rich young man (Mark 10), "the conversion of the powerful has always been even more complex than the conversion of the marginalised" (2017: 159). As such the messengers should adhere to the message they claim for themselves and proclaim to others.

Regarding the early church, from the beginning they understood their role as instruments of the *Missio Dei*. Initially, therefore, the gospel spread very quickly because it was the most inclusive and hospitable form of religion imaginable. During the apostolic ministries of Peter and Paul, race, nationality, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status and culture played a less significant role. After the inclusive ministry and resurrection of Jesus, especially Paul realised that the gentiles should also be included in the household of God (Conradie 2017: 156). At least to some extent, they succeeded in bringing strong polarised groups, e.g., rich and poor, slave and free, men and women, Jew and gentile, together in one church. The basis of the unity in the early church were not a common ethnic, economic or linguistic identity, but the reconciliation accomplished by Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ "overcomes all cultural diversity and relativises the value of culture" (M.J. Nel 2021: 61). However, this was not without difficulty. In Paul's writings, there are numerous examples of problems with the inclusion of women as equal members, the inclusion of gentiles, the poor and the slaves. Again and again, Paul had to call the Christians to conversion and spell out house rules for the

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communities that now included the previously excluded. Furthermore, the privileged (those with political, economic and ecclesial power) in these communities, who didn't hesitate to compromise the gospel to protect their status and wealth, had to realise that they had to use their talents and privilege for the sake of the community and society as a whole (Conradie 2017: 156). Indeed, the early Christians at least strived not to discriminate between people on the grounds of gender, race, culture or nationality.

Thus, the question: Might a look at the concepts, values, principles and conduct of the early Christians aid Whiteness studies to address the influence of Whiteness in society? The people of the early church strived to overcome long-established polarising borders between people. It might therefore be worthwhile for Whiteness studies to revisit the inclusive motivations and conduct of the early church in the endeavour to unmask Whiteness and how it keeps on protecting its own interests to the detriment of others. The call by Peter and Paul for the early Christians to effectively be counter-cultural in a culture that constantly differentiated between people, can serve as a marker for Whiteness to rather be counter-cultural when it constantly aims to protect the status quo. It is much easier for White people to self-isolate and self-exclude than to go against the boundaries they erected to protect their privilege. The people of Galilee rejected Jesus' message, because it was easier to locate the problem on the outside, i.e., the Roman occupation, than within themselves and their group (Conradie 2017: 160). Paul needed to call the people in the early church to conversion and invoke house rules because it was probably easier to locate the problem on the outside, i.e., the gentiles, women, slaves, than within themselves and their group. Likewise, it is easier for White people to locate and legitimise the problem outside themselves (threats to their way of live, their safety, culture, minority status etc.) "than on the inside, in their own hearts and minds" (2017: 160).

Flowing from this recognition, unselfish and self-giving Biblical concepts like incarnation and *kenosis* might also have some value for Whiteness studies, particularly in its struggle to motivate White people to use their privilege to transform injustice, inequality and poverty. Just like the privileged in the early church were called (from the inside to the outside) to use their privilege for the sake of the whole community, White people are called to use their privilege to benefit the greater good. In other words, after locating the problem in their own hearts and minds, White people might just be able to break the self-isolating and self-excluding ties that binds them.

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In sum: I believe that missional theology can indeed function as an inverse hermeneutic to Whiteness studies. Whiteness studies can benefit from missional theology, just like missional theology can benefit from Whiteness studies. Put differently, re-evangelisation of both Whiteness and missional theology is possible through mutual critical correlation. As David Tracy (1981) puts it: “If we converse, we shall both be changed.”

8.4 Conclusion.

In an article on re-evangelising the White church, Kritzinger (1991: 109) states that to develop a proper Christian faith and praxis, Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am?” (Mark 8: 29) and the question, “who am I?”, must be held in dialectical tension. The latter question can only be answered by examining one’s own history and culture. If White theologians try to evade this question, they will in effect be jumping over their own shadow. In the process they will develop a theology and ministry alien from African realities. A theology that will simply repeat the answers to questions asked in the Northern hemisphere.

In this study I’ve documented how the different aspects of missional theology were investigated, unpacked and extrapolated in great detail. In this endeavour, I have discovered that Whiteness is glaringly absent in such reflections. It seems as if White missional theologians mostly succeeded in answering Jesus’ question but failed to properly examine: “who am I?”, or in the case of the mostly White church: “who are we?”. If this question was taken more seriously, the scrutiny of Whiteness and its influence might not be absent from their contributions.

The bottom line is that missional theology in South Africa became disconnected from its missional roots because of unexamined contextual and theological issues, creating a blind spot for something like Whiteness. Whether they misunderstood or misconstrued the critique offered by Barth, Newbigin, GOCN and Bosch, it inadvertently resulted in White missional theologians jumping over their own shadow.

Overall, it seems the main question for mainline churches in post-1994 South Africa was: How do we keep going as churches in the context of post-Christendom? Yes, some energy was then found in being missional, but what kind of theology does that yield? Especially in South Africa with its contextual complexities? There seems to be a double issue present in South African missional discourse. Firstly, missional theology is not contextually and culturally self-critical

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enough, resulting in compromises in favour of White middleclass privilege. Secondly, despite its own emphasis on missional as something dynamic and a way to resist a purely church-centred approach, missional theology ends up being a form of maintenance theology. How did that come about? By inadvertently protecting White interests and by not confronting Whiteness and its ongoing privilege, missional theology is moving from mission to maintenance. It is in effect maintaining and protecting the interests of Whiteness. Therefore, given these compromises that South African missional theology makes with South African White middleclass privilege, one must wonder: Can it even be called missional?

At this point, it is perhaps appropriate to end with a thought by Klippies Kritzinger (1991: 109), as translated by myself from the original Afrikaans. With the White church and White theologians in mind, he writes:

> Only when thinking theologically about the dimensions of sin and grace as it emerges from a critical reinterpretation of our past and our culture, can we begin to re-evangelise ourselves.

8.5 Personal reflections.

At the end of this PhD thesis, I had the opportunity to reflect on my personal journey throughout the research process. I realised that embarking on this journey was a transformative experience that not only expanded my knowledge and skills but also shaped me as an individual. Referencing Mary Hobgood, Van Wyngaard (2014b: 8) writes about the ethical task facing those privileged as both exposing ourselves to alternatives about those oppressed as well as exposing ourselves to new views about ourselves. Being on this journey has certainly given me insight into the world of those at the receiving end of Whiteness and exposed me to new views about myself. I became acutely aware of my Whiteness and how it shapes everything I do and say and how it influences the world around me. Moreover, I realised there is only one way to confront my Whiteness. There are no shortcuts or detours, one must look in the mirror and confront it. One cannot merely speak about Whiteness; one must work directly through it (Hunter and Van der Westhuizen 2022: 19).

But I also grief for the church of which I am a member my whole life. During this study I realised that the DRC is still trying to find shortcuts and detours. We are still struggling with the power of Whiteness in our midst, even protecting the status quo and privilege, afraid to

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face the image in the mirror. Hopefully this study and others like it, will contribute to the DRC facing the image in the mirror and finding its way directly through Whiteness. If we really want to be a credible and faithful witness in South Africa, we will have to confront the power of Whiteness in our midst in order to become a truly (South) African church.

Furthermore, I realised that without more intentional ecumenical interaction, we will probably remain in our silo of Whiteness. We will remain a church struggling to really be at home in Africa. We need to humbly hear the voices of our Black compatriots. I therefore lament the fact that the reunification with URCSA remains unfinished business. Cobus van Wyngaard's reminder rings true in this regard: "While whiteness cannot be shed like an outdated skin, who we are can be expanded in ongoing community" (2019: 110).

Overall, completing a PhD has been an extraordinary and transformative experience. It has not only enriched my personal and professional life but also shaped my character, equipping me with invaluable skills and resilience. I look forward to applying the knowledge and experiences gained throughout this journey to make meaningful contributions in the DRC, in the field of missional theology, Whiteness and beyond.

Finally, while facing the White image in the mirror, like I attempted to do in this study, the words of David Bosch (1975: 11) remain true:

> There can be no cheap answer here, no easy triumphalism. Without thorns and pain and nails there can be no new life … it is only when we lose ourselves that we find ourselves … only when we die that we live.

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