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# **The Transformational, Intersectional and Transcendental Agenda of Mission**

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## **Quest for a Spirituality of the Road**

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### **About the Author:**

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Kgatla has lived and worked in South Africa and he has published articles in accredited journals in Missiology and religious Studies. He has served in executive committees of several ecumenical bodies and moderator of his Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. He received his MTh, DTh (Missiology) and DLitt et Phil (Religious Studies) at the University of South Africa.

## **Abstract**

Even the inspiring assumptions of a Rainbow Nation, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the miracle of a peaceful transition from apartheid to a democratic order in South Africa could not create the new society that the world had hoped for. Since 1994, the social problems and conflict that had evolved in South African communities for decades before the demise of apartheid have acquired new faces. This paper suggests new ways of analysis and the introduction of a spirituality for life and affirmation guided by Ubuntu, an 'I-Thou' spirituality that seeks new ways of healing broken relationships, through authentic transformation, intersectionality and transcendence. A transformational, intersectional approach with internal recognition of socially interwoven relatedness and the complexity of oppression and exclusion can set the stage for coexistence in a society with a history of conflict and bitterness and open up exclusive and oppressive relations for a new spirituality in South Africa.

## **Introduction**

In South Africa, we envisaged forging the social bonds required to help a racially divided society and heal the victims of the previous oppressive system of apartheid to find meaning in coexistence as a Rainbow Nation, uniting individuals into civic communities beyond closed families and groups; but this has remained an empty dream. Racial inequality, intolerance and abject poverty continue to be evident in various institutions where different groups compete for high stakes. The level of social unrest, accompanied by violence between those who previously fought as 'comrades' in the Struggle against apartheid, is on the increase. The ills of the apartheid era have mutated and continue to haunt the very fabric of society. Even the church, endowed with the responsibility of bringing good news to the communities is divided by human greed, inequality, poverty and ideology has become dumbfounded if not totally ineffective.

A recent study by scholars at the University of the Witwatersrand, entitled *The Smoke that Calls: Insurgent citizenship, collective violence and the struggle for a place in the new South Africa: Eight case studies of community protest and xenophobic violence*, led by Karl von Holdt and Adèle Kirsten, reveals the social crisis that society has with regard to social cohesion (Kirsten and Von Holdt 2011:2). The centre cannot hold. The violent responses to the failure of elected officials to fulfil their promises are, in part fuelled by high levels of unemployment, poverty and asymmetrical power relations. There is a high level of anger in communities against the apparent self-enrichment of those in power and the neglect of the marginalised and the poor. The perception of the poor is that they will never get out of the vicious circle in which they exist and attain the virtuous one envisaged by the National Development Plan Commission<sup>1</sup> (Terreblanche 2012:121). The present government policies on development and transformation seem as unproductive as the apartheid measures. It has also become common practice for those who seek public office to exploit communities' vulnerability and discontent and unseat those in leadership to take their positions<sup>2</sup> (Langa 2011:62).

South Africa is economically better off than many other African states, and it is theoretically capable of feeding its entire people, but every night, many still go to bed on an empty stomach. South Africa has one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world. The inequality gap between the very rich and the very poor is so

large that there is no sign that it could ever be reversed. According to Terreblanche (2012:80) in 2008 the income distribution of the total population in South Africa the top 20 per cent (10million individuals) received 74,7 per cent of total income, while 50 per cent (25 million individuals) received only 7,8 per cent. According to Terreblanche 83 per cent of this 20 per cent were whites (3,7 million individuals) and 11 per cent (4.4 million individuals) were Africans while Coloureds and Indians formed 25 percent and 60 per cent respectively. There is certainly something seriously wrong that politicians cannot get it right to lead the country out of the morass of apartheid.

According to Terreblanche (2012:124) the old immoral and inhumane system of apartheid has been replaced with another immoral and inhumane system adopted by the African National Congress leadership in early 1990s. The country's wealth is still in the hands of a minority, which now includes the few members of the black community who have become members of a black elite and who are now co-owners of the country's wealth with their white counterparts. Not enough has changed from the apartheid era (prior to 1994) to the present dispensation – in fact, many people in the country perceive the situation as worse than it was in the apartheid past<sup>3</sup>.

Terreblanche (2012:124-129) lists eight fundamental wrongs that the ANC government could not put right. These include failure to address the apartheid legacy of abject poverty; a white elite have been allowed to transfer their wealth from the apartheid time into the new South Africa while the black elite was created with lucrative opportunities (undeservedly accumulated) at the expense of the black majority; the new black elite with an extravagant get-rich-quick mentality who are prepared to use devious methods of getting rich ushered in with revolutionary implications. The country did not succeed in creating Mandela's 'people-centred-society' and Bishop Tutu's "Rainbow Nation". There has been an elite compromise and conspiracy that leaves the country as divided as it was during the apartheid time with new kinds of cleavages within and between different racial population groups, according to Terreblanche (2012:126).

Given the situation above, one would expect that the majority poor black would use their vote to get a caring political party. But because of abject poverty and a high level of illiteracy the only choice they have is to stay alive (Terreblanche 2012:83). By being

poor and desperate, with apartheid experiences still harbouring in their memories, and with no political party that seems capable of addressing their plight, the only tangible exercise they can engage in is to participate actively in service delivery protests.

The situation calls for a radical process of transformation which will challenge all the assumptions of a Rainbow Nation and Madiba's miracle complacency. There is a risk that, without a meaningful transformative agenda that could usher in an ethos of openness, coexistence, relatedness, justice and shared values as a nation with a common destiny, the current culture of violence<sup>4</sup> will become entrenched. Collective violence, which will ultimately undermine all government efforts to uplift the poor and marginalised, can be avoided only if the deep anguish of those who are oppressed is alleviated and if those who are living in a ghetto are brought to the centre and can participate in a common agenda (Mogapi 2011:123).

The assumptions that underpin the construct of the Rainbow Nation and "people-centred-society" are predicated on a stable environment, certainty, justice and rationality. Such assumptions are invalid and fail to address the crisis of frustration caused by self-serving political agendas and shrewd capital ownership. The increasing anarchy caused by the failure to transform South African society from an apartheid paradigm to one with an authentic spirituality of life is gradually engendering a culture of 'invade and grab' or 'loot and set on fire'. This paper calls for a new meaning and understanding based on an authentic spirituality of life that can bring fresh hope of empowerment and peace to a divided nation. This call is based on a transformational epistemology and is influenced by the need for ongoing spirituality that stretches beyond the limits imposed by past poverty, unemployment and inequality. The paper employs intersectionality as an analytical tool.

## **Defining Transformation**

Daszko and Sheinberg (2011:1) and Ravindran (2012:1) warn that transformation has become a buzzword that is both overused and misunderstood in today's world. Thousands of people hear the slogans of transformation in their communities, but they see no change in their lives. Political, religious, and other community leaders

'talk the language' and may even try to take action in pursuit of what they understand to be transformation, but can often show no tangible benefits in what they are aspiring to (Daszko and Sheinberg 2011:2). In some circles, 'transformation talk' has become a catchphrase used to lull the general public and especially the impoverished majority, into contentment while the powerful extract the economic benefits to themselves (Terreblanche 2012:122). On the other hand the phrase may be used to replace those in power. An accusation that a leader is 'untransformed' can become the basis and grounds for replacing such a leader without due process to prove his or her incompetence (Dlamini, Langa and Von Holdt 2011:46-47). Transformation should also not be turned into a talk-show by the leaders to remain intransigent. Authentic transformation should be about giving people on the margin of power more space, confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to act on their own judgement (Ciulla 2005:59).

Transformation is a missional agenda of the church. At the 9<sup>th</sup> WCC General Assembly held in Port Alegre, Brazil, the assembly gathered around the theme: "God, in your grace transform the world". The theme of the assembly epitomised the prophetic mission of the church based on the Lord's Prayer in Mat. 6. The mission of the church to the world involves transformation that brings new hope, life and prosperity for all. In South Africa a spirituality of transformation is urgently needed lest the whole of society disintegrates into civil war (Mail & Guardian 6/10/2012). The violence presently engulfing society will eventually undermine the democratic order and the gains of the last two decades if left unattended.

Transformation should not be confused with just any kind of change – it should involve 'moving from one state or position to another' for the benefit of all (Daszko and Sheinberg 2011:1). According to Daszko and Sheinberg (2011:2), transformation requires the creation or change of a whole form or structure for the benefit of the whole. It implies a change that brings an incremental benefit. Kgatla (1988:177) relates transformation to the Greek word *metanoia*, a change of people's mind-set, a radical and profound revision, a stretching beyond the limits. As Einstein put it, 'No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it' (cited in Parameshwar 2005:1). Transformation occurs when a new vision is continually created to interrogate existing assumptions, beliefs, patterns, and habits to bring about incremental change which will

benefit the whole of society. Transformation happens when people 'manage a system focus' to create a new inclusive future that is empowering to all (Daszko and Sheinberg 2011:2).

Williams (2000:168), referring to the legacy of apartheid in South Africa, defines transformation as making a direct impact on the extent to which there is a structural shift from dominant, exclusive relations of power and privileges to a more equitable, inclusive dispensation within a new order. He cautions that the term transformation can be variously interpreted because of its myriad contexts (Williams 2000:169). In the South African context, with regard to past imbalances, transformation often concerns itself with reconfiguring and reconstituting existing bodies of perceptions, deconstructing dominant Western-centred perceptions and low self-esteem among Africans (Williams 2000:169) or even a culture of entitlement. The goal of transformation is not necessarily to replace one notion of social change with another, but, rather, to attempt to emphasise the good values that can be taken from any group and to form inclusive, empowering values (Williams 2000:169). Its objective is to reconstitute and empower life-giving relations of co-existence.

As Williams (2000:169) suggests, the term transformation in the South African context has a political and social content. For Bosch (1991:3) transformation has to do with giving account of the hope Christians have. It requires an intentional agenda of de-racialisation and a reconstruction of 'damaged' self-esteem that has deteriorated into black self-hatred and self-destruction. Transformation has to do with relationships that, when improved, can strengthen the bonds of spirituality and togetherness. In this context, spirituality refers to the quality of a person's sensitivity to the things that matter most to community coexistence and relationship-bonding (Whitfield 1987:127). A spirituality of life has a direct bearing on love, justice, peace and the well-being of the other. According to Whitfield (1987:127), spirituality is a healing and growth-inducing process that is ultimately fulfilling. Spirituality involves a journey of discovery and restoration that transcends previous levels of consciousness, awareness and a unity of being, as it meets new challenges in a life of community (Whitfield 1987:128).

For many black South Africans, the government's failure to transform society from one which was differentiated and structured to benefit a few, which leaves the majority perceiving themselves



as being left to their own devices, calls for collective social revolt. If people feel that the peaceful means they can use to call on their government to resolve their problems do not work, they will resort to violence (Mogapi 2011:123). The society harbouring such perceptions is a society which is heading for total collapse; hence many people are calling government for service delivery because they think the only effective way of getting the attention of the government to their plight is through barricading streets, setting tyres on fire, looting and burning property. The 'smoke' that comes out will draw the attention of the government to their plight.

Social inequalities, poverty, high levels of unemployment and a lack of radical government programmes to address the plight of the poor remain key issues, reminiscent of apartheid, to many black people. According to Mogapi (2011:123), the South African government is trapped in self-defensive tactics of denial when it diverts money to security agents instead of using funds to address social inequalities that give rise to security concerns. Even the promises of the National Development Plan that promise to break the vicious cycle of poverty and enter a more virtuous one of rising confidence, investment, employment and incomes, and falling levels of inequality in 2013 remains a tantalising mirage if the ANC policy of black elite formation is combined with an unwillingness to address the plight of the poor black majority.

Statements such as one made by President Jacob Zuma, quoted in the *Sowetan* on 1 November 2012 (speaking at the official opening of the National House of Traditional Leaders in Parliament), who made the claim that the gap between the rich and the poor in South Africa is widening a 'farce', are out of touch with reality. On that occasion the President argued that people are getting grants that they did not get during the apartheid era and on that score the gap between rich and poor was closing. Such an argument is in effect an admission that the government is unable to solve many of the problems facing the country. Given the high reported level of corruption, bribery, and incidents where young girls who are beneficiaries of child grants misuse such social grants to pay for hairdressing appointments and buy beauty products, it is clearly unjustifiable to say that the gap between the rich and the poor is narrowing on the basis of social grants (*Sowetan* 1 November 2012). According to the survey done by Pondering Panda, Consumer Insight Company, news release of 11 December 2012 45 per cent of teenagers fall pregnant to get government grants. The

government support grant is seen as an incentive for teens from low-income families to have children. It is thus important that the government takes heed of how its hand-outs are viewed by the youth but not as a means of narrowing the gap between rich and poor in South Africa.

Transformation is hard to achieve even if political and community leaders do know what it implies, and what it requires to empower people. If they lack the will to take radical decisions to change the country to be a household where everybody has enough to live on their utterances remain empty rhetoric. Furthermore, if public institutions that should serve as vehicles of transformation do not adjust and comply with the directives of transformative policies, transformation will remain hard to achieve. Institutions such as institutions of higher learning, the judiciary, businesses in the private and public sectors, and the other public services should serve as custodians of an ethos of transformative social relations (Williams 2000:170). In reality, in South Africa, some of these institutions are deliberately sabotaging government measures that would bring about the desired change in our society by ignoring or delaying the effective implementation of such measures, for example, by arguing that people of colour are incompetent (2000:170) and therefore resist policies such as Black Economic Empowerment. In this context, incompetency is 'measured' in terms of colour.

## **Intersectionality and Change**

Transformation should be undergirded by programmes and projects that address the historically created unequal relations of power, accessibility and participation, and it requires a methodological framework to facilitate it. To re-arrange a previous human-designed order into one that actualises participation by all, accountability and empowering symmetrical relations, and that embraces the notion of 'one nation, one destiny', one needs analytical tools that can guide the process. In order to re-engineer, reconstruct and realign the social order in a previously racialised space and in militarised communities, one needs a kind of social analysis capable of detecting shifting societal reconfigurations and reinstitutions. Towards this end, the concept of intersectionality is employed in this paper.

Intersectionality challenges a simplistic categorisation of people based on their race, the colour of their skin, gender and group (Flera 2010:153). It is true that people may be oppressed using categories such as race, sex, gender, ethnicity and class, and within those categories there are further divisions that can make people the targets of specific oppression. Disability, for example, may become a category used for oppression within an oppressed group. Any transformative agenda that fails to recognise this category will liberate only some people, who will in turn oppress others in their midst. An intersectional analysis takes into account the historical, social, political and economic context and recognises the unique experiences of individuals based on the intersection of the identifying grounds for discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission 1995:1).

The intersectionality approach allows a particular experience based on the confluence of the identifying grounds involved to be acknowledged and attended to. In a similar vein, the Ontario Human Rights Commission concludes that human rights claims in Canada should recognise that individuals have multiple identities which shape the experiences of those who are marginalised. Understanding these identities and their intersection can help human rights practitioners to assist those who come before the courts for a remedy (Ontario Human Rights Commission 1995:2). This paper attempts to address the question of the constellation of rich whites and rich blacks in South Africa forming a common identity and how this new order indiscriminately deprives many people across the colour line.

Based on the theoretical lens provided above, this paper argues that there has been vast confluence and reconfiguration of discrimination/exclusion identities in South Africa, even after 1994. A de-racialisation of South African society by repealing suppressive and oppressive Acts has allowed many black people to rise to positions they could not access in the past. Some have moved from rural areas into urban areas, while others have come from a situation of abject poverty to untold of richness. Some sectors of the previous establishment have converged and reconfigured themselves to become even more exclusive of others who do not share their identity. Prof Terreblanche, an economist, describes them as the middle-class who have become 'gated-in behind high walls' from impoverished poor South Africans.

Feminist scholar Yuval-Davis (2011:200) affirms that intersectionality analysis is easier when one investigates specific case studies. An example here is a study of how foreigners are treated and further oppressed in South Africa. As previously disadvantaged black people, they fall into the category of the poor, and suffer additional oppression based on their foreignness. Xenophobic attacks are often carried out on foreign nationals on the basis of their not being citizens of the country, and yet they suffer the same inequalities as citizens of South Africa. People living with disabilities become victims of similar prejudices because they are different, even when they are members of another marginalised group. The reality of discrimination and oppression is fractured, messy and complex, as Ravelli and Webber (2010:215) argue.

Being different within the same homogeneous oppressed group may perpetuate exclusion and discrimination. Marginalisation within communities is a slippery, shifting and multi-layered concept (Kagan 2002:1). Individuals or groups might enjoy high social status at some point in time, but, as social change occurs, they lose their status and become marginalised. The risk of marginalisation, according to Kagan (2002:2), increases or decreases as life cycles continue. A group or individual dominant today may become marginalised in future. This marginalisation occurs as society is reconfigured to effect new changes in groups which were previously defined differently. Leonard (1984:180) defines such social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity or power'. Leonard (1984:181) defines these new groups of people who remain outside the dominant arena as experiencing involuntary social marginality. Their experience of marginality can arise in a number of ways, such as disability, ethnicity, class, race, sex, economic and political status. Leonard (1984:181) argues that marginalisation constitutes exclusion, preventing people from fulfilling individual and group aspirations. Those who are marginalised have very little control over their lives and resources, and they are at the receiving end of negative public attitudes. Unless they are radically liberated and empowered, marginalised people are likely to remain dislocated and alienated from the mainstream of economic resources.

In South Africa, as already indicated in this paper, many people still believe that the demise of apartheid signalled the end of marginalisation and exclusion. However, it is becoming increasingly

clear that the introduction of a new political order in South Africa did not go far enough to empower previously marginalised people so that they have control over their lives. In addition to the racial category resulting in exclusion and marginalisation that existed before, new forms of discrimination, inequality, deprivation and oppression have been introduced and are being maintained. To many people affected by the scourge of the new culture of exclusion and marginalisation their survival rests in waging a struggle against their own government. Hence, new ways to struggle for survival have been devised by those who are excluded and oppressed.

### **Towards a Transcendent Spirituality of Life and Inclusion**

Human beings are often seen as selfish beings that build 'protective walls' around themselves to keep others from entering their space (Schmitt 1995:35). They create a space to ensure their self-preservation and exclusivity (1995:35). It was for this reason that Jesus announced that he had come in order that all might have life – life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Paul is also alluding to this fact when he says Christ has broken down the wall that separated people and kept them enemies (Ephesians 2:14). To view oneself as separate and autonomous for the sake of one's own survival is self-centred and exclusionary to others. It is sin that Christ annulled on the cross. It is clear that those who wield power in any society tend to resist any change that threatens their position of security, those who challenge the establishment. They will always want to influence and shape others' thoughts in order to maintain control over them, as their decisions are always decisive sources of choice and action (Schmitt 1995:38). The decisions made by a person in authority are invariably self-regarding wherever his or her own good is the primary guide (Schmitt 1995:38).

Schmitt (1995:80) argues that any real social transformation starts when the notion of autonomy and private space is invaded and turned around to look at being in relation with others. Only when people are 'opened-up' to others to engage in a dynamic relationship can one hope for lasting peace. An empowering turn-around strategy involves a reconstruction of feeling with the other in such a way that the two parties start to hear one another with more clarity, which

in turn leads to new relationships (Schmitt 1995:112). The strategy includes empathy, which involves sharing feelings in the most intimate way.

Schmitt (1995:84) identifies two different senses of being in 'empathy'. There is empathy between people who act separately from each other, and there is also empathy in relation, which leads to equality in relationships (Schmitt 1995:86). It opens one's security to the other with a view of empowering the other. Empathy that is in relation to and open to the other with a view to empowering the other can prevail between people of different status, races, genders and ages. It is not stereotyped by these categories but transcends them in order to reach out to people on the margins of the groups concerned. Such spirituality goes beyond the boundaries created by prejudices to empower all parties to reciprocate in embracing one another (Schmitt 1995:87).

In South Africa, as in many nations of the world with a history of inequality, there are people in privileged positions who consider themselves as having an innocent relationship with the poor and marginalised. They have a covertly oppressive attitude in relation with others (Schmitt 1995:112). For example, many middle-class white people still think of themselves as leading unprejudiced, open-minded and fair-minded lives that are helpful to black employees. This is also true of a black middle-class which has ascended the ladder of the privileged. In the main, their actions show that they are much less transformed in their relations with those over whom they have more power than they think. Mogapi (2011:123) found that the South African government, for example, no longer perceives social protests as genuine attempts to gain improved service delivery, but sees them as exaggerated complaining and lawlessness. The government's covert denial of the plight of the downtrodden in the country is a betrayal of its own declared policy that South Africa belongs to all the people that live in it. A denial of the reality of the causes of violence in the country could easily provide a covert path to evading responsibility for transformation.

The biggest injury inflicted on the oppressed people by the government and those in positions of control is ignoring or dismissing their complaints as being frivolous (Schmitt 1995:163). When complaints of being systematically ignored, excluded and even

belittled go unheeded, this can eventually lead to alienation and even self-hatred, which can result in indiscriminate destruction of property and life. Alienation, in the sense used by Karl Marx (Kunin 2003:6), refers to the exclusion of people from that which is rightfully theirs. When people are alienated, they have a sense that they are less than human, or have failed to express themselves fully. Karl Marx described another form of alienation, when people are not powerless in the economy and political sphere, but find themselves in a world that they did not create, in which they are constantly reminded that they do not belong (McLellan 1973:10). Such alienation is typical of the perception that many poor communities in South Africa have and leads to a sense that the only 'language' the government hears is violence hence the adage of 'smoke that calls'. Such a path can lead to genocide.

Spirituality of life is the opposite of such a catastrophe. It seeks to empower those who are compelled to live in a reality that has been assigned to them by a dominant society. It resists any 'quarantine' imposed on them by the elite for their protection.

### **Spirituality of Ubuntu**

Another way of explaining transformative transcendent spirituality of life is to compare it with the African-Biblical concept of Ubuntu. Ubuntu as a concept is derived from a transforming intimate relationship between God and his creatures. When God realised that Adam did what God had forbidden him to do and Adam was going to die, God called: 'Where are you?' God showed his humanness and restored the first couple to their original state by allowing his Son to die for them on the cross. Ubuntu thus belongs and resides in the essence of God. Because God is a person with personal attributes such as unconditional love and creative relationship with his creatures, he is able to transcend the boundaries of sin and reaches out to human beings on the basis of Ubuntu. Ubuntu does not impose conditions before it can be demonstrated. His goodness, humanness and Ubuntu were engraved in his creatures at creation, and even the damaging nature of sin did not obliterate it. Thus, Ubuntu emphasises relations and relationality, and can reach beyond limits in order for us to make empowering contact with the other.

The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's (1958:26) 'I-Thou' philosophy of personal dialogue displays a striking congruence with Ubuntu. He argues that in order for a person to be truly in relationship with another, the person must open him or herself up to the other. One's boundaries or 'guard' should be removed in order to allow the other to enter into one's private space. According to Buber (1958:28), human beings become aware of each other as having a unity of being when they are in an 'I-Thou' (subject-to-subject) relation. This is precisely what Ubuntu is about. It elevates individuals from an 'I-Stranger' relationship to a Human-God relationship of mutuality and reciprocity. It is opposed to separateness and detachment. In the present South Africa, I-Thou relationship is no longer confined to I(black)-Thou (white) but it has been conceived as I(rich)-Thou (poor).

Ubuntu owes its origin to the nature of God. Buber (1958:26) argues in this regard that an 'I' which has no 'Thou' has a reality that is incomplete – a relationship without God – and is disjointed, because it lacks reciprocity. An Ubuntu relationship presupposes the involvement of the liberating presence of God. Such a relationship knows no barriers or selfish relations.

The Ubuntu adage 'a person is a person through other persons' stresses the 'betweenness' that relates people to one another in a mutuality that Buber (1958:14-15) calls love. True love does not cling to the constructs of 'I' or 'Thou', but includes an exchange between God and his creatures. This transcendent relationality was espoused by Jesus when he said: 'Unless you turn and become as children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven' (Matt.18:3). Ubuntu breaks out of the circumscribing boundaries erected by a selfish 'I' that establishes a self that is separate from other selves (Buber 1958:27). Ubuntu implies an act of humility, an act that presupposes a self-emptying in order to create primary and foundational relationships. Isolationism, insulationism, separateness and exclusionism need to be overcome before empowerment can occur (Horner 2011:73-76), before an Ubuntu relationship is established.



## **Empowerment Annihilates Alienation and Marginalisation**

Transcendent transformative spirituality takes the annihilation of the alienation and marginalisation of people as its point of departure. It is characterised by the notion of levelling the playing field between those who have power over others and those who are without power. In a situation where one has power over others, there can be no spirituality of transformation. In such a relationship, one dominates others to make them dependent. By contrast, in transcendent empowering relations, one enters a disempowered space in order to empower others to ensure their freedom and self-determination (Myers 1999:116). A transcendent transformative spirituality embraces values such as altruistic love, and adopts a positive attitude to intrinsically motivate the downtrodden, thus increasing their sense of spiritual survival to call them to a life with meaning, one that makes a difference (Liu 2007:4). A transcendent transformative spirituality has no desire to manipulate others, but targets the forces that are designed to rob others of a full sense of wholeness, harmony, well-being, and it is intrinsically related to God. It strives to help the powerless feel enabled to make their own decisions, lead their own life in freedom and accomplish that which they want to accomplish (Liu 2007:4).

Transcendent transformative spirituality is empowering – it aims to give people the confidence, competence, freedom, and resources to act on their own judgments (Ciulla 2005:59). It is different from a bogus spirituality that creates false expectations about change, and then fails to deliver on its promises. An authentic transformative spirituality aims at restorative social harmony by accommodating those who have been excluded, while re-adjusting and restoring them to authentic relations (Liu 2007:10). It aims at changing people's status from one of bondage in which previous relations are defined in terms of power, to one where empowering relationships are defined in terms of shared values and a common destiny (Myers 1999:115).

This paper has attempted to argue that the violence occasioned by the economic, political and social exclusion in South Africa can be addressed and stopped. It does not need military might to bring it to a halt but rather empowering relationships. Authentic transformation has to take root which will reverse all that hinders

empathetic relations, deep coexistence and sharing. The concept of Ubuntu should be a guiding principle for the new order where people humanity and rights are entrenched.

## Notes

- 1 The National Development Plan (NDP) is a government commission that offers a long-term perspective. It defines a desired destination and identifies the role different sectors of society need to play in reaching that goal. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. According to the plan, South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society.
- 2 This is in itself a sign that there is no trust or hope in those who are in power that they would ever turn things around for the benefit of the whole country.
- 3 This is just a perception held. The present situation cannot be compared with that of apartheid.
- 4 Comblin (1998:194) identifies today's violence as the violence of city: the violence of young people with no future, the violence of organised crime, and of drug traffickers. In South Africa, there is another form of violence: the violence of factionalism where 'comrades' fight for power.

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