Bowers, N and August, K
Dept Practical Theology and Missiology
University of Stellenbosch

Engaging poverty: The church as an organisation for change[1]

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that while the church as a civil society role player is well-situated to effect social transformation in many contexts of poverty, engagement with the reality of South African society is currently not occurring at all levels and in all parts of the Body of Christ. Many churches continue to wrestle with social apathy over twenty years after the church was identified as an "Organisation for Change" by the Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa. This essay again examines the challenges posed to the church by dualism and its effects in a rapidly changing South African reality that demands holistic action. The essay further examines the harnessing of the local church in partnership as both a generator of community and a catalyst of transformation in communities facing the challenge of poverty in a global society increasingly characterised by inequality.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1980's the Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa[2] proposed that, in the long debate dealing with the creation of strategies for action, organisations (outside of the state) would best be able to transform power relations – to empower the poor and lay foundations, which will help determine the shape of society in the long run (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:261). For this reason, various organisations were identified as "organisations for change": the trade union movement, collective action for job creation, rural development, para-legal clinics and advocacy organisations, business and private enterprise, research and training organisations and religious organisations (1989:276-303). Among them was the church. The identification of such civil society organisations as being a powerful tool for transformation is

1 This material is based upon work supported by the National Research Foundation under Grant number (NRF GUN 2054070). Any opinion, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and therefore the NRF does not accept any liability in this regard thereto.

2 The first Carnegie Commission on the poor white problem in South Africa, conducted during the Depression "spelled out the dimensions of poverty amongst white (particularly Afrikaans speaking South Africans), and drew attention to the process of impoverishment and made recommendations for action." Many years later, in 1980, the Second Carnegie Inquiry on Poverty and Development in Southern Africa would be initiated, which would focus on the poverty and development of the black majority. Rather than merely research poverty, it was decided that there needed to be both real understanding and participation of those communities that have to endure poverty and a focus on the development of strategies for action against poverty (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:xi).

echoed by Batista (1995:227) at the time of the birth of the new democracy. He cites Julio de Santa Ana in arguing further that the "development and consolidation" of civil society is integral to the "construction of democracy in modern societies." [3] Within civil society lies the potential to "resist injustice and to promote alternatives and values" (1995:229). The church, then, could not only play a role in moral transformation, but also in the resistance of domination of the social life "by the functional imperatives of state and market" – particularly in light of the fact that studies further indicate that religious organisations foster the kind of participatory citizenship on which civil society depends (Herbert 2003:92). Myers (2000:66) argues that in light of an expanding global economy and the shrinking role of the state, there is a resultant decline in the socio-economic participation of the poor and therefore a need for civil society organisations such as the church, to assist in expanding access.[4] The particular role of religious organisations – and more specifically the church – in the alleviation of poverty, was recognised by the Second Carnegie Inquiry as being central to this alleviation and is currently recognised by the present government as such – based to a large degree on her historical witness, ecclesiological and societal positioning (Wilson & Rampele 1989:302).

While it was noted at the time of the Second Carnegie Inquiry that the church continued to do good work she had "somehow failed to respond adequately to the challenges which surround it" (1989:302). Sadly, it appears that despite much good work being done, the church has still not fulfilled this role to its fullest ability. At a gathering of over 4 000 church leaders at the second South African Leadership Assembly (SACLA)[5] President Thabo Mbeki challenged the church. Michael Cassidy and Bishop Mvume Dandala, co-Chairpersons of the assembly, interpreted it thus:

> *We have also been reminded by our president, perhaps in implicit rebuke for our silence these last years, that government needs to hear the prophetic voice of the Church again on issues of ethics, morality and social concern. Christians at local levels also should engage political and civic authorities to cooperate in nation-building and to encourage integrity in public life.*
>
> (Dandala & Cassidy 2003:1)

It is a call to holistic action, based on what appears to be a realistic appraisal of the potentials of the church to effect social change and the hope to which she is called. It also presents a question as to why the current situation appears to be one of silence: what indeed are the challenges to the

---

3 Sadly, in South Africa, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Report found that during the 1990's there was both a "demobilization" and "demoralisation" of some of these civil organisations as they either became absorbed into government , were not given the scope to become part of the rebuilding of the nation or were prone to normal factors which are part of democratic transition (Taylor 2000:180)

4 Cf Myers (2000:66) for successful case studies in the USA of churches acting as civil society organisations working to enlarge people's access to economic and political power.

5 SACLA II was a gathering of over 4 000 Christian leaders from throughout South Africa, held from 7-11 July 2003 in Tshwane and sponsored by the South African Council of Churches (SACC), The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA) and African Enterprise (AE). The theme was "Being Real Christians in the Real South Africa," with the mandate to "discern and act together on what it means, according to the scriptures, to be witnesses to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord today." Seven "giants" facing the country were identified as needing attention, namely: HIV/AIDS, violence, crime, racism, poverty and unemployment, sexism, and family in crises (SACLA Programme 2003:8).

church being this prophetic witness? The present challenges that the church faces in answering this call to action will follow.

1. A DUALISTIC SPIRITUALISATION OF THE GOSPEL

The "Church, Poverty and Development" work group of the Second Carnegie Inquiry (in addition to the First Inquiry on the "poor white problem" undertaken in the 1930's) postulated that the reason for such lack of action from the church in facing the challenges of poverty was a "dualistic spiritualisation of the gospel,"[6] which directs "hope to the life hereafter and has the same effects as valium … tends to buttress rather than challenge the status quo" (Nash 1984:38). Nurnburger (1999:373) agrees and lists a "spiritualised concept of salvation, which neglects social concerns" as foremost on his list of the church's weaknesses in being agents of change in society.[7] Latest census statistics indicate that a significant 79.8 % of the population identify themselves as Christian (Hendriks 2003:6). Nevertheless, findings as to the effects (or lack of effects) of such religious identification on social involvement is startling. Siaki (2001:18) notes a South African Human Research Council survey, which asked socio-economic questions "ranging from big governments to socialism to trade unions to immigrants and committing crimes" with the hypothesis that it was a "reasonable assumption to expect cleavages in public opinion might occur between those for whom religious commitment is a serious matter and those for whom it is less serious." Sadly the result was that there appeared to be very little difference in public opinion between the 3 groups: regular church attendee, less regular attendee and those who attended no religious services whatsoever. Siaki (2001:18) then went on to question whether this could in fact be related to what is not taught "every Sunday in and Sunday out" and was, therefore, the reason for rising socio-economic problems, crime, corruption, moral decay and HIV/AIDS. Beukes (2000), in identifying Christian approaches to economic justice in South Africa noted the following. Firstly, churches supporting the conventional economic paradigm (materialistic market economy), despite serious concern over unemployment, poverty and crime "have not really participated in the current search for better options." Secondly, even churches voicing "pro-poor" issues: a culturally and economically diverse group, do not give evidence of that in action at grassroots. Dualism, is often traditionally identified with evangelicalism[8] in light of an emphasis on the evangelism mandate, personal salvation and in the case of Pentecostalism,

---

6 A dualistic worldview assumes that the world is divided into two distinct, unrelated realms: the physical and the spiritual. This separation regards the spiritual world as a private interior place and the physical as an exterior public place – a conception which has led to the perception of religion as interior and private, completely removed from society and others (Kippenberg 1999:888; Gustafson 1998:145,146).

7 Cf Bosch (1991:401) for a discussion on the historical division in the understanding of the mandate of mission: namely the relationship between the two salvation mandates (one spiritual, the other social) which lead to a dualistic understanding and practice of mission across the ages by both evangelicals and ecumenicals alike.

8 Evangelicalism refers to a broad and diverse group, and while commonly identified as having rigidly fundamentalist views which ignore current science and culture and have a dominant focus on the individual and individual salvation, while "assigning peripheral status to questions of discipleship, justice and the shape of the church," many evangelicals affirm evangelism and socio-political action as both part of the essence of the gospel (Wagner 1993:117). Evangelicals may be broadly identified as believing in "the inspiration scripture as the divine rule of faith and practice, the incarnation and virgin birth, substitutionary atonement and bodily resurrection as the ground of God's forgiveness, justification by faith alone, and the spiritual regeneration of all who trust in the redemptive work of Christ" (Henry 1974:359).

premillennialism.[9] Wessels (2001) proposes dualism as one of the key reasons for the lack of involvement in social justice issues by charismatic congregations in South Africa.[10] However, it is clear that dualism may not be confined to these groups.

2. SOCIAL WELFARE VERSUS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This dualism in turn not only determines to a large extent whether or not churches engage in social ministry, but also the character of their engagement. For the most part many churches currently engage in what they themselves term "social outreach". More often than not (on a local level) this may include soup kitchens, food parcels for the poor and visits to old age homes or orphanages, or for some South African denominations ownership or maintenance of welfare institutions – orphanages, schools, old age homes, shelters. Kritzinger's historical categorisation (1996:4,5) identifies and separates the former as the "versorgingsbenadering "(care approach) and the latter as the "institutionale benadering" (institutional approach). However, in line with Korten's generational framework (as interpreted by Swart and Venter) the writer wishes to identify this approach under Swart and Venter's concept of a "First generation" approach in tracing the progress of development work. First generation strategies are identified as relief or welfare which involves the direct delivery of basic services (food, shelter, health care, schools) by an organisation for the community. Clearly this approach has been criticised by those wanting to promote holistic development, as in this paradigm the NGO/agency/church is the doer of development and the people passive recipients (Swart & Venter 2001:287).[11] The church as "doer" of development, according to sociological analysis, results in dependency, not holistic development.

Kritzinger (1996:6) and Swart (2000:27) appear to agree that this is tantamount to paternalism, where things are done for the people and not with them, and which thus presupposes inequality. This then results – in the case of the church – as acting as a dividing agent between the poor on the one hand and the church on the other or perhaps in terms of a handout from above (the church) to the poor below. Dennis (2001:42) makes the point that richer suburban congregations often prefer to donate money and emergency food rather than become involved in holistic development that empowers the poor as they "draw their sense of self worth from the dependency of the needy upon them." A British study on faith communities and community development sadly reveals similar findings. While most congregation members will be happy or active to promote charitable welfare activity in which the givers remain in control of the situation, they are less at ease with notions of community empowerment or radical political action ... (Smith 2002:172).

---

9 Bosch (1985:72) notes that premillennialism, which believes in the literal second coming of Christ, the rapture, first resurrection and tribulation, has lead to an understanding of the kingdom which views "political action as being no more that a means to restore evil, tolerates corruption and injustice, to expect and even welcome them as signs of Christ's immanent return."

10 Wessels (2001) groups Pentecostals, neo-pentecostals, and "third wave" charismatics together in South Africa in his definition of "charismatic". For a converse discussion on Pentecostals in Latin America and their involvement in social justice see Escobar (2000:44).

11 A study undertaken by Swart and Venter (2001:287) – making use of Korten's generations – found that despite national attempts at deliberate institutional transformation in the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA), their findings indicate that of the 22 programmes investigated, only one was not a first generation project. In the case of the Dutch Reformed Church , Swart's analysis (1997:85) refutes their claim of a new development paradigm arguing that upon analysis it remains firmly within a social welfare (first generation) approach.

Here then there would be very little visible understanding of God as the God of the poor who brings justice and peace into the very midst of their situations through an incarnational approach. Furthermore it is in direct contrast to that which Wilson and Ramphele (1989:302) regard as one of the South African church's most powerful tools: empowerment which helps people to "become critically aware of the reasons for their poverty…with a view to controlling their own destinies." What is needed, Smith (:172) argues, is for the development of theologies compatible with community development by religious leaders sand community workers. These theologies exist, however, it is the appropriation thereof that poses a challenge in light of a dualistic spiritualisation of the gospel.

3. HARNESSING THE LOCAL CHURCH AS A VEHICLE FOR TRANSFORMATION

Apartheid served to fragment community in order to keep the various cultural groupings separate and, *ipso fact*, mutually hostile. In light of this a call has gone out from many South African theologians[12] to recognise the church as a generator of "ubuntu"[13] and congregations as both a generator of community and a support for community. The South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) in the call to action issuing from the conference called on "local congregations" in particular to be "effective witnesses to Christ":

> *Vibrant, caring local Churches, functioning as salt which arrests societal decay and light which dispels spiritual darkness, still constitute one of the most powerful agents of change in our world today. We urge all pastors and lay people to evaluate the health of their congregational fellowship in the light of Scripture and then press forward in the power of the Spirit to new effectiveness by being both visible and active in our communities.*
>
> (Cassidy & Dandala 2003:2)

James Gustafson (1998:40) argues that by enabling the local church "to be the resource base for ongoing development in any community, will have more far reaching effects than a development organisation doing it for them." Unlike political institutions (particularly in the Third World) and NGOs (who often face uncertainties with changes in leadership and funding) the church is a fairly stable institution with regular and predictable systems. It's regular and predictable system of governance and availability of resources (people and finances), despite not always being wealthy, are clear. The fact that it is non-partisan and situated in a fixed place (as it serves the entire community and usually has an existing building structure) and furthermore conforms to a moral order of checks and balances, ensures that the local congregation is perfectly situated for community transformation (Oladipo 2000:146,147). Swart (2003:3) backs this up by arguing that "congregations and other faith based organisations are value-based institutions with an effective infrastructure, in touch with realities on the ground and able to reach out to every household in

12 South African theologians such as Nolan, Mpumlwana, Tutu and Botman have clearly connected the powerful concept of *ubuntu* in recent years to nation building, the biblical notion of the "image of God", personhood and the community in their quest to address the challenges of a post-apartheid South Africa contextually (cf Botman 1997:32; Battle 1996:93-94).

13 The Rustenburg Declaration (1990) – representative of 80 Christian denominations and 40 organisations declared Apartheid a sin and, interestingly enough, in their confession (pt 2.7) define *ubuntu* as a "humanness which has held our communities together" and which has been broken by Apartheid (Els 1991:26).

their community." Currently there are 33 000 faith communities. Yet up until today, the para-church group/missions agency remains the key delivery and ministry specialist in the area of community development. Recently, however, their involvement (as being placed above that of the local church) has become an issue of contention with regard to "their theological basis and their relationship to church structures" (Hammet 2000:199). While not wrong in and of themselves, two key results are that the local church support is reduced to the primarily financial (which may in turn lead to alienation from what God is doing) and primary responsibility for being agents of the Kingdom is left to the professionals, rather than where it should be: the laity (Moffit 1987:240). If the local congregation really is "the future of the church" then according to Moltmannn (in Coetzee 1993:155): "The renewal of the church finally depends upon what happens at the Grass Roots level." We need to recognise the apostolicity of the people of God and the role they can play – a role which is interestingly in line with a people-centred participatory development philosophy. Who could understand the needs of a community better than those who are part of these communities? And what indeed does this mean in a country which has over 33 000 Christian faith communities ?

The above has far reaching implications for the nature and vehicle of development as transformation undertaken by the church. The Wheaton Declaration (cf Samuel & Sugden 1999:259-276) declares unequivocally the importance of the local church as "the vehicle for communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ both in word and deed" and the need for the church to be sensitive and responsive to need on her doorstep – ministering both to the poor in their local area and to go beyond this and "rectify the injustice that makes such acts of mercy necessary" (vii: 41). As indicated by the gospels the early Christians, having been transformed by the Cross, incarnated His servant ministry and lived the values of the Kingdom both personally and communally (vi:32). The local church, which is already present in the community, can in many areas be the servant to the community and therefore a source of hope and encouragement as to what God intends and what God offers (Myers 1999:65).

The church as stated above is already rooted in community, which makes the local church an ideal vehicle for development – not only from a theological point of view, but also from a strategic point of view.

4. PARTNERSHIP ACROSS THE DIVIDE

Partnership is clearly the new buzzword of missiology, particularly in the light of the recognition from many sectors that the tasks are too great and complex for any single group to handle alone. Such cooperation surely offers the opportunity for greater mobilisation in confronting the mammoth challenge of poverty effectively, but should also be seen imposed upon the background of the tension between the local and global brought about by globalisation and the challenges of working together with organisations and structures with different value systems and objectives.

4.1 Globalisation: Divide and conquer?

A growing interest in partnership and networks is one, perhaps, birthed by the reality of globalisation. Despite its integrationist thrust within the fields of technology and market, globalisation is identified by Richard Dickenson (1998) as a deepening challenge for Christians as power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few – based on capitalism's inner logic: competition. This concentration of power not only "underestimates the importance of cooperation, mutuality and solidarity in the human community" but also exacerbates the widening disparities of inequality between the "haves" and "have nots" (Dickenson 1998:23). In this global climate of competition a process of exclusion and marginalisation of the poor has taken place.

Within this context of fragmentation and alienation of communities and social anomie, Escobar (2000:33) responds that Christian compassion "will be the only hope of survival for victims of the global economic process." It has already been argued that the new struggle in South Africa is for community in a society fragmented further by her apartheid past and growing economic inequality, and that the church can contribute to creating moral community. Dickenson (1998:27) argues, too, that by enhancing people's participation through fostering civil society, through organisations that represent it (such as the church); space may be created for the emergence of "emancipation and justice." The new struggle, then, is for communities – communities which Rasmussen (1993:127) argues would "cultivate a sense of self that knows that its well-being resides in the well-being of others, and theirs in its" – in essence "ubuntu."

One of the ways of creating community and confronting the challenge of poverty is surely partnership. Within a global context, Escobar (2000:34) refers to the *cooperative model* as one which harnesses the force of globalisation to connect "churches from rich nations to add their material resources to the human resources of the churches in poor nations." As far back as Carnegie II, the challenge facing the South African church was identified as finding creative ways to utilise the resources which were already identified as being available from its global network (Wilson & Ramphele 1989:303).[14] In fact Koegelenberg (2001:103) reports that R30 million of international donor funding is already channelled into South Africa. The "challenge within the challenge" for a global missiology, is that of missionary paternalism – of the kind perhaps illustrated by Swart and Venter (2001:491) in their analysis of the church in South Africa's current approach to development (Escobar 2000:33).

4.2 Uniting for redistribution

Inequality also reaches to within nations. South Africa in fact has the second highest inequality rate – a fact which makes the issue of how resources are being utilised by the church more relevant still (Liebbrandt *et al* 2001:21). Therefore, several further models could be proposed for the local context. An *inter-congregational model* could be employed in some wealthier local congregations where there may be a pool of voluntary professional expertise from which poorer congregations can draw for technical services. In this way, within an understanding of the church as the Body of Christ and the strategic and theological motivation for harnessing local congregations in particular, cross pollination of skills and capacity building could also occur between local congregations (Moffitt 1987:244-246; cf Hammet 2000:204,205; Dudley 1996:95). Another possible methodology is that of a *Servant-Partnership Model* between church and para-church agencies, which sees para-church organisations work as legitimate partners with congregations and the broader church (Hammet 2000:199). These models, in essence, promote redistribution through sharing of resources – whether they are financial, technical or material – could very well be a contextual model of that employed by the Christian believers in Acts (2:42-47; 4:32-36).[15] The gross inequality within our nation surely makes these models highly applicable.

14 It is important to view these global partnerships within the greater missiological debate concerning indignity. Fox (2001:301,302), however, raises the point that the Three Selves theory (self-governing, self- supporting, and self-propagating) may be based more on a westernised understanding of the final goal of the church, rather than a biblical one – believing togetherness and interdependence to be a biblical ideal.

15 The power of the generous and united witness in Acts 2:42-47 of the early church, is viewed as leading both to favour "of all the people" as well as "the Lord adding daily to those who were being saved."

Nevertheless, Myers (2000:67) notes that "churches too often find it difficult to work in partnership with other churches." However, in light of an understanding of partnership as an expression of God's nature, there is a definitive call to a restored united witness. Fox (2001:296) points out that God himself dwells within triune community and in what he interprets as a "discernible image of the triune God" – He made humanity to dwell within relationship. Furthermore, as agents reconciliation, we are given a biblical mandate by Christ to witness and model community (2 Cor 5:18-19; Jn 17), over and against the social, political and spiritual forces which would seek to alienate and fragment community further. Apartheid has indeed served to alienate and fragment. SACLA II highlighted the fact that within post-Apartheid South Africa, there are still "many rivers to cross" in terms of racial, gender and generational unity, but that a definitive call for a united witness on the part of the church, nevertheless needs to be sounded (Dandala & Cassidy 2003:1,2).

4.3 Cross-sectoral partnerships

A framework of holistic transformation, which views poverty as having spiritual, social, political and economic dimensions inherently, assumes that all these dimensions are included in the scope of God's redemptive work. Furthermore, in South Africa, Siaki (2001:18) cites the research of the Human Science Research Council, which found that the church received the highest level of trust from any institution in society at 74%. This understanding then "increases the challenge to work with secular institutions, profit-making institutions and even non-Christian faith based institutions" (Myers 2000:67).[16] Furthermore, according to Escobar (2000:33), governments and social planners throughout the world "have come to see churches as the source of hope from which the urban poor gain strength, courage and a language to cope with poverty." A clarion call to action by the church in the combating of poverty is clearly being sounded by the South African government, who believe that the key means to greater effectiveness is partnership. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may also, in the light of "new political and social environments" need to begin with religious organisations such as the church (Swart & Venter 2001:486). The background and motivation for a project being proposed by the Department of Practical Theology and Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch[17] highlights the dire necessity for an inclusive model in mobilising action against poverty:

> *The success of combating poverty and underdevelopment will largely depend on the extent to which existing and new networks of trust, cooperation and care (in short the social capital) within and between communities can be mobilized for strategic action. Social networks, therefore, are an indication of people's self-development and the quality of the solidarity relationships amongst themselves and with others. They reflect the quality of a society's institutions and constitute the medium through which communities can collectively mobilize their resources and assets to solve their social problems.*
>
> (Swart 2003:4)

16 Documents such as *The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* , paragraphs 63 & 64,(Samuel & Sugden 1999:343) recognise the church as a mediating structure between government, communities and the marketplace.

17 The title of the project is : "Developing a praxis for Mobilising Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) for Social Capital and Development in the Western Cape" and involves the study of the social development needs of "local communities and to empower the faith-based organizations" (Swart 2003:2)

Allen (1999:5) argues in an urban context that the most effective way of the church impacting for social change is to be what he labels a *church with the city* – namely an incarnational approach in which the church "enters into the life of the community and becomes partners with the community in addressing the community's needs." This kind of partnership, however, requires sacrifice and risk which brings new challenges such as race, socio-economic differences, culture and religious pluralism – all of which are incidentally characteristic of South Africa. The consultation report of 34 Christian Relief and Development Agencies from sixteen nations in June 1996, noted that in light of a world trend towards tolerance of religious pluralism, the church will be required to play down faith or else be excluded from funding (Samuel & Sugden 1999:396). While no part of a community's institutional life should be, in the words of Meyers (2000:67) "left to the devil", fears that such partnerships will lead to a compromise of the church's prophetic character and witness are bound to surface.

Sugden (1999:215), in a discussion on the relationship between Kingdom ethics and dialogue with non-Christians, highlights the tension between the extremes of imposing Christian ethics on a mixed society and abandoning those ethics to secularisation. He argues that when Kingdom ethics are abandoned by Christians, so too is the Lordship of Christ over all aspects of life and living. This, by implication, reduces faith to the personal and internal belief promoted by a dualistic spiritualisation of the gospel. Ethics are relational and partnerships create opportunity for dialogue through which the renewal of community relationships may occur. What implication, then, does this have for a religiously pluralistic society such as South Africa, which includes traditional African religions, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism?[18] Covell (1993:170), an evangelical, argues that the first priority in witnessing to a pluralistic context is to foster this, and that even "evangelicals may be called upon to join with those of other religious affiliation to meet common needs related to poverty, injustice and exploitation." A withdrawal from community life could conversely once again promote a privatised religion of dualism, which shies away structural injustice. In effect then, both extremes compromise the holistic message of the redemptive gospel, which seeks the redemption and restoration of all relationships. In arguing that the motivation for social ethics in Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom is love of neighbour (which is "integrally linked with love of God"), Sugden (1999:215) states that this means that "Kingdom ethics has no choice, but to be available to all neighbours." He adds that this "is the witness of Christians as they dialogue with non-Christians about how love of neighbour becomes a reality in any society" (1999:215).[19]

The South African government, currently appears to be calling the church to active partnership with the State. Zola Skweyiya, Minister of Social Development, stated: "we can only succeed to eradicate poverty … if we can build effective partnerships between the state, the religious sector and other institutions of civil society" (Koegelenberg 2001:108). President Mbeki stated in 1999 (:10) that what was needed was "a message from religious leaders that they were willing and ready to engage generally, and with us, the government … in the social issues …" Bosch (1993:93), in providing guidelines for Christian mission with regard to God's reign and the rulers of this world

18 It is interesting to note, however, that Hendriks (2003:7) points out that a mere 3.8% in total were shown by the 2001 Census to belong to a faith other than Christianity.

19 The consultation for Christian Relief and Development Agencies into the 21st Century (1996) noted that while we will often need to cooperate with other religious groups in advocacy actions, clear policies for cooperation in working with other religions should be employed. With regard to culture, "we must always ensure that cultural traits and practices should be judged on the grounds of biblical truth and values" (Samuel & Sugden 1999:396,397).

– such as government – makes the point that what is needed is *world-formative* faith, based on an understanding of the Kingdom of God and the doctrine of common grace, which teaches that God not only uses Christians to execute his will, but all of humanity. Sugden (1999:219) explains this in the light of judgement in the New Testament, which points towards grace, but adds:

> *… We do claim that the Lordship of Christ is exercised beyond the church as God acts in judgement and (unacknowledged) grace in the world. The difference between unacknowledged grace lies not in the manner of God's activity but in the nature of man's response. Where men respond to judgement and grace they receive Christ; where men do not respond they incur judgement on themselves.*

In light of this, Bosch (1993:95) cautions that we should "adopt a positive, but sober attitude towards the civil realm." We should neither view any particular manifestation of the civil order as God's kingdom on earth nor regard what we consider to be falling short of the ideal as a manifestation of the Beast.

The church, as salt and light, should always be present and engaged in the life of the community – yet always with "open eyes and open bible", aware of the reality of sin and evil in corporate and individual life (Meyers 2000:67). The Lordship of Christ needs to continue to be witnessed to in the public arena of the civil realm, and partnership with other sectors of civil society and government create an opportunity for this.

CONCLUSION

The proposal by Carnegie II, in creating strategies for action against poverty, of the church as an "organisation for change" is one which affirms the need for the church as an active moral and prophetic agent in South African society. Within a South African community increasingly pressured by both the effects of globalisation and scarred by the legacy of Apartheid and their resultant effects such as the liberalisation of the economy, fragmented communities and a growing inequality gap between the rich and poor, religious organisations such as the church can "create space" for the voices of the poor to be heard and addressed. The "challenge within the challenge" of partnership is that while partnership could create a powerhouse for the mobilisation and distribution of resources in combating poverty and underdevelopment, it could also compromise the church's prophetic character and witness. It is within such tension that confronting these challenges must take place if the church is to confront the ultimate challenge of poverty effectively.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, D 1999. The Role of the Diaconate in Urban Church Revitalization. *Mission Bulletin.* XIX(1). pp 3-7.

Batista, I 1995. *God's People in Civil Society*. In R. Koegelenburg (Ed). Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP): The Role of the Church, Civil Society and NGOs (pp 223-249). Bellville:EFSA

Battle, M 1996.*The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*. In L Hulley, L Kretzschmar & L Pato. Archbishop Tutu: Prophetic Witness in South Africa. Cape Town: Human & Rousseau

Beukes, P J 2000. Engagement with Babylon: a Christian Perspective from South Africa on Unemployment, Poverty and Economic Justice. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif.* 41 pp 160-175*T*

Bhorat, H & Liebbrandt, M 2001. *Fighting Poverty: Labour Markets and Inequality in South Africa.* Landsdowne: UCT

Bosch, D J 1993. *God's Reign and the Rulers of this World*. In C van Engen, D S Gilliland & P Pierson (Eds). The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium (pp 89-95). Maryknoll: Orbis

Bosch, D J 1985. *In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding*. In B J Nicholls (Ed). In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans

Bosch, D J 1991. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll: Orbis

Botman, H R 1997. Who is "Jesus Christ as Community" for us Today ? The Quest for Community: A Challenge for Theology Today. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa.* July(95): 30-38

Cassidy, M & Dandala, M 2003. *Pastoral Letter*. Distributed at the "South African Leadership Assembly," Pretoria, SA.

Coetzee, D 1993. *Diakonale Pastoraat Binne 'n Konteks van Armoede*. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Stellenbosch

Covell, R 1993. *Jesus Christ and the World Religions: Current Evangelical Viewpoints*. In C van Engen, D S Glilliland & P Pierson (Eds). The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium. Maryknoll: Orbis

Dennis, J 2001. *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress

Dickenson, R (Ed)1998. *Economic Globalization: Deepening Challenge for Christians*. Geneva: World Council of Churches

Dudley, C 1996. *Next Steps in Community Ministry*. New York: Alban Institute

Escobar, S 2000.*The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century*. In W D Taylor (Ed) Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassau Dialogue (pp 25-45). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic

Els, P J J S 1991. Editorial. *Apologia*, 6(1). pp5-10.

Fox, F F 2001. Partnership – More than a Buzzword. *Evangelical Missions Quarterly.*37(6). pp 294-304.

Gustafson, J W 1998. The Integration of Development and Evangelism. *Missiology*, XXVI(2):131-142.

Hammett, J S 2000. How Church and parachurch Should Relate: Arguments for a Servant Partnership Model. *Missiology*, XXVII(2):199-207

Hendriks, J H 2003. *The Future of the Church/The Church of the Future*. Paper presented at inaugural lecture, University of Stellenbosch, SA.

Herbert, D 2003. *Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World*. Burlington: Ashgate

Kippenberg, H G 1999. Dualism. In *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Vol. 1, pp 888-889). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans

Koegelenberg, R 2001.Social Development Partnerships Between Religious Communities and the State: Perspectives from the National Religious Association For Social Development (NSRAD).*Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July(110):97-109.

Kretzschmar, L 1996. A Holistic Spirituality: A prerequisite for the Reconstruction of South Africa. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, July(95):63-100.

Kritzinger, J J 1996. Die Stryd Teen Armoede. *Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie*. FI (340). pp1-19.

Moffit, R 1987. *The Local Church and Development.* In V. Samuel and C. Sugden (Eds), The Church in Response to Human Need (pp 52-61). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans

Myers, B L 2000. The Church and Transformational Development. *Transformation.* 17(2). Pp 64-67

Nash, M 1984. Church, Poverty and Development in Southern Africa: *Second Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty & Development.* Paper No 242. Cape Town

Nürnberger, K 1999. *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster

Oladipo, J 2000. The Role of the Church in Poverty Alleviation in Africa. *Transformation.*17(4):146 –151.

Rasmussen, L L 1993. *Moral Fragments and Moral Community: A Proposal for Church in Society*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press

2003. *Programme: South Africa Christian Leadership Assembly*. Distributed at the South African Leadership Assembly. Pretoria, SA.

Samuel, V & Sugden, C (Eds) 1999. *Chapter 16: The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics, January 1990*. In V Samuel & C Sugden (Eds). Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel. California: Regnum

Siaki, P 2001. *Surveying the Land: A Current Assessment of the South African Church in Context*. Weltevreden Park: Africa Ministry Resources

Smith, G 2002. Religion, And the Rise of Social Capitalism; The Faith Communities in Community Development and Urban Regeneration in England. *Community Development Journal*.37(2). pp167-177

Swart, I 1997. The Dutch Reformed Church and Development: A Response to J J Kritzenger. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa.* 98(1997). pp 64-80

Swart, I. 2000. NGOs, Churches and the Challenge of Fourth Generation People-Cantered Development Strategies in South Africa. *Scriptura*. 75(2000). pp 449-464

Swart, I & Venter, D 2001. *NGOs and Churches: Civil Society Actors and the Promise of Fourth Generation Development in South Africa*. In J K Coetzee, J Graaf, Hendriks, F & Wood, G (Eds), Development : Theory , Policy and Practice (pp 483-496). Cape Town: Oxford

Swart, I 2003. *Developing a Praxis for Mobilising Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) for Social Capital and Development in the Western Cape.* Unpublished funding proposal application.

Taylor, V 2000. *South Africa: Transformation for Human Development 2000*. Pretoria: United Nations Development Programme

Wessels, G F 2001. Charismatic Christian Congregations and Social Justice – A South African Perspective, retrieved 5 January 2001.

http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/8409/wessels.htm

Wilson, F & Ramphele, M 1989. *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge*. Cape Town: David Philip