Immigrants and narrative:
The role of the church

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Abstract

Since 1960 immigration has been mainly intra-continental on the African continent. With more countries achieving independence and the decline of colonization, there has been a significant decrease of intra-continental migration. Compared to the rest of the continent, South Africa has a relatively low emigration rate. The rate of people emigrating to European countries from Africa is higher than those who emigrate within the African continent. The narrative church provides the space for migrants to exercise their agency. Challenging distorted and false identities is one way of exercising agency. Narrative church welcomes migrants as the Other that form identity of both those who participate in the Christian narrative and those who are connected with the narrative through distant ways such as dialogue, virtual or intellectual and practical engagements.

Introduction

Since 1960 immigration has been mainly intra-continental on the African continent. South Africa is one of the only African countries apart from Ethiopia and the Northern African region (Lawrence and De Haas 2016:8-10) where this trend is noticeable. "South Africa, which attracts migrants from elsewhere in Africa but is also an important source of emigration out of the continent, highlighting its major role as a hub linking intra- and extra- African migration" (Lawrence and De Haas 2016:17). This can be ascribed to the strategic location of the country within the two oceans and the colonial history with the Netherlands and England and the large

arrivals of populations from the Indian subcontinent and from China. The phenomenon of emigration from the variety of countries and continents impacts the identity of persons within South Africa. Those from other countries did not necessarily terminate links with family, culture, customs, religions, and traditions from their countries of origin. Racial identities are also a serious phenomenon in the quest for identity and identities. The Bantustans, pass laws and land laws are manifestations of racial divisions. Colonization and populations from other continents are linked to the historical development of racial divisions. Ethnic tension that arises from employment such as the mines industry gave rise to xenophobic violence amongst Africans in the mid-nineties and the early 2000s. Words such as 'white', 'black', 'coloured', 'Indian', 'foreigner' and 'colonizer' became labels to make distinction between rightful citizenship and non-citizenship. Migration is entangled with the South African history of race and colonization.

The 2010 World Migration Report estimates that 10 percent of Africa migrants is resident in South Africa. Africa has about 19 million migrants which puts the number of migrants in South Africa around 2 million. Settler and Mpofu quote from the 10th Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture 2013 Mary Robinson's expanded conception of citizenship, "in the 21st century, we need a new concept of citizenship that embraces all those people who find themselves in the country-nationals and migrants alike … this is particularly relevant to countries like South Africa, a 'go to' country with a strong economy that attracts and continue to attract a large migrant population" (2017:14-15).

Settler and Mpofu observe that there are two strands of engagement of religion/theology and migration. The one is the transporting of their religion from their country of origins to their new spaces of living. The second refers to the theologies of migration that is embedded in the politics of difference and hosting or hospitality. They make the following critical observation: "what these theological analyses have in common is that they rely on an idea of religion that presupposes an idea of the migrant "other" as apolitical and asexual, vulnerable, and ready for incorporation into the host culture. Further issues that emerge from the two sets of interests is that they both submit to, replicate, and rely on the idea of the nation state

as homogeneous, on the one hand, and the migrant Other as victim, the non-national on the other hand" (2017:22).

Rationalization and narrative

Migrants challenge identities constructed in and though narratives told in churches and based on racism and doctrines such as the Imago Dei. Migrants contribute to the identity formation of persons within their new communities, as well as to the economy of the nation where they take new roots. The economic contribution can be within the formal economy activities such as skilled jobs, unskilled labour, or the informal economy such as "street vendors" or those economic activities that falls outside the scope of the recognized economy of the legislative regulation. Within the South African context immigrants contribute significantly to the economy through scares skills and informal economic activities. Immigrants have a positive impact on labour markets, raises income per capita, contribute towards to public finance. Pezzini concludes that "Overall, immigration generates favourable economic effects in South Africa. Immigrant workers have an upward effect on income per capita and a positive net fiscal contribution, while in general they do not displace native-born workers" (Pezzini & Tomei 2018:32-33). The contribution of migrants goes beyond the economy of South Africa. The contribution to the identity of host nations are either not considered as an important development aspect or it is not given the same attention as the material and tangible economic activities. The contributing factor of the minimizing of research of identity and migration is the almost exclusive research from the perspective of the host nation. With regard to religious studies and migration, research has been limited to conceptual studies and theory developing. Within Practical theology and more specifically missiological studies, research is limited to the impact of religion on migrants but the reverse has been neglected. "migration has profoundly changed the religious landscape, both in terms of multi-religious diversity and in terms of intra-religious diversity" (Fredericks 2016:9).

Migration experiences shape the identity of both the host nation and the migrants. The contribution is significant when migration and migrants are treated as independent variables. Migration is an important factor for

identity and its contribution extends beyond the limited notions of identity of nation states. The church as narrative redefines the fixed nationalist identity and challenges the exclusivity and separation of closed citizenship. Church as narrative also challenges the social responsibilities of entities such as states and other institutions and communities. Exclusion, separation, essentialism, and uniqueness are challenged as functionalism and erecting "barbed wire". Church as narrative repositions the migrants as agents of identity formation. This approach does not replace nor suppress the top-down approach that have the interest of the hosts or nation state. This approach compliments the current theory based or rational tradition with autonomy, universality, individual and absolute as core aspects, that has become the custodian of Practical theology and Migration studies. Bruner explains the tension as "two modes of thought". He asserts that:

> A good story and a well-formed argument are different natural kinds. Both can be used as means for convincing another. Yet what they convince of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their lifelikeness. The one verifies by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. The other establishes not truth but verisimilitude (1986:17).

Both reason and narrative are not reduced to one or the other. Reason serves the intellectual history that has found expression in biblical historicism, Greek rationalism, and the new awareness of scientific method from the seventeenth century. Reason is about the autonomous individual, abstract and clear ideas, and objectivity (Gill 1996:119). Narrative is the "implicit knowing" that is represented by the symbolic (Gill 1996:125).

Reason and narrative should not be contrasted as antagonists, nor should reason and narrative be viewed as opposites. "Reason and narrative form part of a more holistic approach, of which critical engagement is the foundation" (Klaasen 2012:113). Rationalizations focus on the economic impact of immigration of the South African society. These economic impacts are not always considered of the scare's skills, tax contributions and informal job opportunities that immigration provide. It also does not consider the contributions on identity formation, the potential, and possibilities that immigration and immigrants bring to the political and social knowledge production in terms of African worldview, African

can philosophical concepts such as Ubuntu and personhood. Narratives of immigrants challenge the rationalized approaches of identity within the South African contexts. The 2008 xenophobic outbursts and the subsequent sporadic attacks on immigrants across South Africa are signs of the limitations of the rational approaches to immigration. The narrative approach creates the space for the immigrants to tell their stories from a position of power and through narration, the hosts are invited into dialogue for mutual enrichment and development.

Narrative and narrative approach

The narrative approach in theology is much more recent than other disciplines within the social science and humanities, such as psychology and religious studies. Within Practical theology narrative has been a growing research topic and methodology. Ganzevoort observes that:

> Notwithstanding narrative's long history, systematic development of narrative approaches in general, and of narrative approaches to religious practices in particular, is much more recent. The narrative turn is evident in many disciplines in the social and human sciences since the second half of the twentieth century; it has also become a central perspective across the field of theology and religious studies (2014:215).

The notable contribution within theology is from two different, yet influential contributions. The so-called German contribution has focused on the doctrinal and systematic perspectives of narrative. Dietrich Ritschl (1981), Herald Weinrich (1973), Johan Baptist Metz (1973) and Hans Frei (1997, 2002) are associated with the critical discussion about whether discursive arguments or narrative best interprets theological doctrines such as Trinity, *Imago Dei* or *Missio Dei*. Put differently one can ask whether people in e.g. Germany understand the history of suffering best through technical and abstract reason or through the narratives of the suffering of Christ and the suffering of current nations and communities (Klaasen 2017:460). The second contribution stems from what became known as the Yale approach. James McClendon Jr. (1974:2002), Stanley Hauerwas (1981:2007, 2012), John Dunne (2014) and H. R. Niebuhr (1941) represent

the postliberal approach which goes beyond the provision of structure to give meaning to and understand reality. These theologians also use narrative for moral actions and character formation. Stanley Hauerwas in particular has provided extensive and persuasive evidence of narrative for moral behaviour. "He is critical of the foundations of the modern project and dismisses the Kantian categorical approach to ethics. For Hauerwas, a narrative approach takes the particular as normative for the universal. It does not abstract principles, but rather embeddedness within a tradition and community that gives structure …" (Klaasen 2017:461). A third contribution comes from liberation theologians who provide a powerful platform for the marginalized through womanist, queer and feminist or other critical perspectives (Ganzevoort 2014:215). Sally McFague (1982:1987) is one of such theologians who make use of biblical stories to address the unequal and oppressive structure reality. "She claims that the structure displayed by parables furnishes the basis for all Christian and indeed all human-understanding of God, self and world" (Goldberg 1982:62). Ganzevoort (2012:2018). has also contributed to the growing corpus of literature of narrative and he is able to use narrative as empirical methodology to address pastoral issues such as teenage pregnancy, health, old age, and gay youth.

South African contribution

Within the South African context Julian Muller is one of the most influential narrative theologians. The narrative to practical theology is evident in his monograph *Om tot verhaal te kom* (1996). Moving from eco-hermeneutics to a narrative approach for pastoral care and family therapy, this book is the clearest indication of the central role that narrative would play within the scope of practical theology, and specifically Pastoral care and counselling. This initial turn towards narrative focused on the unified human experience that is connected through past, present, and future and the less structured, theory-based process of care that is coordinated through facilitation and not procedure (Pienaar 2014:3). Muller continued to move away from the abstract, theoretical, and top-down approach to practical theology. "This approach, although also hermeneutic in nature, moves beyond the hermeneutics. It is more reflexive and situational embedded

in epistemology" (Muller 2011:13). The shift from abstract knowledge to situated or lived experience as an important epistemology resulted in a turn towards social constructionism and the common experience. Muller's meeting with the postfoundationalist theologian Wentzel van Huyssteen resulted in a seven movement approach that includes a description of the actual experiences of persons, listening to the stories, co-researchers interpret the experiences, the experiences are narrated through the lens of the cultures and traditions, religious and spiritual aspects are reflected upon, interdisciplinary investigation of experience expands the description of experiences and re-interpretations are developed beyond the actual community (Muller 2004:304).

Muller's association with van Huyssteen's postfoundationalism also led to a reformulation of reason. Reason, or transversal rationality, is not strictly mechanical or absolute abstract, but socially and culturally embedded. "Transversal rationality can be metaphorically depicted as a holding space for multidiscipline rational engagement without threat of domination or exclusion. All disciplines are valued as legitimate processes of authoritative cognitive engagement with openness towards self-critical reflection" (Klaasen 2017:468). Klaasen asserts that a narrative approach creates space for differences to co-exist through reason. "Rationality manifests itself through encounter and confrontation with rivals. Differences need to be tolerated and settled in dialogue. What is required for the progress of rationality is peaceful co-existence of the rivalries which debate and argue fundamental differences in a non-threatening manner" (2012:115).

Both Muller and Klaasen follow in the shift from abstract rationality to a critical approach to reason that includes the object and subject, social and ideas and the individual and community. The shift from abstract or mechanical reason is further engaged by the narrative approach in Practical theology. Muller's transversal rationality and Klaasen's embedded reasoning also links to the movement towards a more integrated approach of praxis and theory within Practical theology. Browning's practical reasoning is probably the most notable shift towards praxis. Moving away from the Yale's approach which is presented by Tracy's subdivision of theology into fundamental, systematic, and practical theology, Browning opts for descriptive, historical, systematic and strategic practical theology. Continuing where Schleiermacher started, Browning asserts that strategic

practical theology is no longer merely the interpretation of Tracy's divisions of theology. Strategic practical theology is the point at which research has been practical throughout (Browning 1991:57).

Identity is not restricted to abstract reason, but it takes reason as embedded in the experience of persons. Reason becomes one part of the identity of persons without reducing persons to one normative as in the dominant Western notion. The categorical reason of Kant as the norm for individual is challenged by narrative. Reason is that intellectual process that engage critically with tradition, community and particular. Reason interacts with experience as independent and dependent variable. This kind of interaction of reason and praxis is core to the different strands of narrative approach within Practical theology.

Narrative and identity

The question "Who I am" is a good starting point to address the identity (ies) of persons. The question elicits the fundamental issue of migrants and those encountered within the foreign spaces. The question also raises the position of past and present spaces and experiences and how, if at all, the person is impacted by the explicit phenomena that characterizes rivalry and antagonism. More importantly the question confronts the role of agency within the meeting spaces of the familiar and unfamiliar. In short, the question "Who I am" is about what has been a tension within theology and ethics, knowing and doing. Theology as an academic discipline is to do with the conceptualizing of phenomena whereas ethics has to do with action. This tension is found within the debates about whether ethics is part of theology or the other way around.

Taylor describes identity:

> To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (1992:27).

Identity is not fixed and confined to universals that is timeless, but it has meaning within the framework of "commitments and identifications" within specific and different situations. It calls on a person to make decisions or to take positions on issues that is particular. Knowing refers to information that informs the individual about the implicit self-understanding. Knowing about myself is to be aware and accept the traits, identifications, beliefs, and traditions that constructs my self-knowing. It is one thing to know who I am, doing also forms part of who I am. To know myself is as much about information as it is about my conduct, my decisions, and my agency. Within theology this dualism of identity is expressed in vocation. Vocation is about living out what one is called to be and to do. Vocation is both word and deed. A person's identity is both about being created by God and why one is created. Together this constitutes the *Imago Dei*.

The identity of a person constitutes the "frame" or "horizon" within which one makes decisions, evaluate what is good or determine what is acceptable. The horizon or frame drives the commitments or identifications towards preserving the status quo or transformation and change. These commitments and identifications can be expressed in norms or universals or creative and imaginative means that provides and keeps the different pieces of a person together or make up the common of a community or society. With regards to the former (norms and universals), identity is static, confined by barriers and predetermined values. The latter, creative and imaginative means, expands the boundaries, extends the horizon, and transcend the limits of norms. A person or community is oriented through the commitments or identifications within the horizon. Taylor contends that "to answer for oneself is to know where one stands, what one wants to answer. And that is why we naturally tend to talk of our fundamental orientation in terms of who we are. To lose this orientation, or not to have found it, is not to know who one is. And this orientation, once attained, defines where you answer from, hence your identity" (1992:28-29).

Whereas norms and universals limit the inclusion of difference, horizon as orientation indicates the fluid framework that invites and welcomes rival encounters. Rival encounters are the interaction between two phenomena or entities in the spirit of competition and a win-lose outcome. The variety and multiplicity of options creates a space for each person to become an interlocutor amongst a community of interlocutors. The decisive point is

what drives my direction or path within this space of variety and plenitude. Our identity depends on the navigation amongst the landscapes of what we choose to follow (Taylor 1995:29-30).

Theologically person or personhood has been used for identity with regard to human beings. "Who I am" is equivalent to personhood. One of the most critical formulations of the doctrine of *Imago Dei* is by Franciscan Friar Daniel P. Horan OFM (2014:2019). Horan's critique of the traditional Christian doctrine of anthropology can be summarized under three assumptions. Firstly, that the static and complete notions of subjectivity is arguably upset by the poststructuralists use of language. Derrida's use of différance instead of difference refers to the meaning that is delayed or the potential and possibilities that are hidden. According to Horan "Derrida claims that language finds its meaning through a series of other referents (anterior, concurrent, and posterior elements in relationship) and that an expression of language, a sign, or phenomenon also never derives at its complete or absolute meaning, but is instead perpetually deferred or postponed" (2014:103-104). Secondly Horan adds alterity to relationships embedded in personhood. Otherness of humans is challenged by post-structuralists assertion that human's absolute uniqueness is a distortion of history and that the relationship between humans and the rest of creation and also amongst humans is not necessarily based on essentialism and complementarily (2014, 298-299). This perspective is also supported by liberation, feminist, womanist and queer approaches to Practical theology. Thirdly humans are not abstract ahistorical but the past is important for the personhood. Horan concludes that the highly used stewardship model of personhood "is founded on a false narrative of reality-a story about our absolute uniqueness and separatism from the rest of creation, a story that perpetuates anthropocentricism and speciesism" (2019:27-28).

There is long and influential notion of personhood in African culture of a growing and developing personhood. Within the perspective of person, the individual is not a fixed person but a developing entity from a "it" to a person. The "it" refers to status of a child who needs to grow into a person through habits and values that are learnt in the community. Rituals is the passage to transformation from one state to another, from one status to another, from one being to another. Menkiti, who is one of the strongest

and successful proponents of this strand of African personhood contends that:

> full personhood is not perceived as simply given at the very beginning of one's life but is attained after one is well along in society, indicates straight away that the older an individual gets the more of a person he becomes. As an Igbo proverb has it, "What an old man sees sitting, a young man cannot see standing up" (1984:173).

The point is not to support this notion uncritically, but this communitarian approach to personhood assumes that an individual grows into personhood through social interactions and phenomena that contributes to the attainment of personhood.

Another social phenomenon that is indispensable for personhood with African culture is the theological notion of personhood that is formed in community. Battle claims that Tutu's notion of personhood diverts from the dominant African philosophy of Ubuntu. According to Battle, Tutu

> stresses the Christian definition of relationship, as opposed to other social forms of communalism, to define Ubuntu. Influenced deeply by Anglican spirituality, Tutu is able to overcome African philosophy's tendency to go to the opposite extreme of discounting individuals for the sake of community. For him, being properly related in a theological Ubuntu does not denigrate individuality. Instead it builds as interdependent community (1997:42).

Notwithstanding the extreme form of community that is espoused by African philosophers and theologians such as Gyekye (1992:1997), Mbiti (1975:1990) and Menkiti (1984) community is the context within which personhood is fostered. Through relationships between individuals within the community, persons engage with dialogical interaction. Within this shared life, persons are nurtured, formed, and transformed to full personhood.

Identity, when viewed through the lens of narrative, is not static, but fluid and always open to growth and expansion. Identity expands and transcends the normativity such as reason and is formed through dynamic interactions and creative tensions with social, biological, and cultural

aspects. Identity includes reason and imagination, theory, and praxis, present and past, knowing and doing. These perceived opposites are not antagonists, but parts of a whole process of dynamic identity formation. Identity is formed in engagement with the particular lived experiences that has meaning through narratives.

Narrative church

Conradie rightly concludes that "God's work may be understood as a narrative, and immense story, a drama. Christianity is essentially a historical religion. The God of Christianity is a God of history…Christian faith may be understood not as a set of beliefs or propositions, but as an attempt to capture the meaning of the story, to discern the presence of God in history from within our particular situation as it is embedded in history. Accordingly, the church is a story-shaped and story-telling community and Christian worship is the continued recital, proclamation, and celebration of this story through which the 'dangerous memory' (JB Metz) of the passion of Jesus Christ is kept alive. Telling the story is both an act of remembrance and, since the story is still unfinished, also of anticipation" (2008:29). This notion of church is aligned with that of feminists such as Sally McFague's narrative approach to challenge oppressive and dominant structures. A narrative church is a growing and creative body that is constantly interacting with sameness and differences. Narrative church implies critical engagement with dominant stories within the Christian tradition and stories of other important social structures that impact the identity of the migrants.

The Eucharist is the story of Jesus Christ' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. The symbolic and ritualistic presentation of the life and death of Jesus is a retelling and reliving of Jesus' ministry. It is an imaginative depiction of Jesus' interaction with the world. Those who are present are not passive observers but active participants in the past and present mission of Jesus amongst the persons. Cone refers to the church in a way that correlates with his own identity,

> If someone ask me, Jim, how can you believe? What is the evidence
> of truth. My reply is quite similar to the testimonies of the Fathers

and Mothers of the Black Church: let me tell you a story about a man called Jesus who was born in a stable in Bethlehem. He went throughout … Galilee preaching that the Kingdom is coming, repent and believe the gospel. The Kingdom is the new creation where the hungry are fed. The sick healed and the oppressed liberated. It is the restoration of humanity to its wholeness. This man was killed because of his threat to the order of injustice. But he was resurrected as Lord, thereby making good god's promise to bring freedom to all who are weak and helpless … All I can hope or wish to do is to bear witness to it, as this story leads me to openness to other stories (1975:116-119).

The participants of the narrative church include both those who participate in liturgy and worship and those who through other means of dialogue engage with the Christian story. Those whose story is different are not antagonists or separated from the narrative of the church. The church' narrative is open to engage with the experiences of those with different narratives. The church as both functionalist and substantive is inclusive and its boundaries is not absolutely fixed. Unlike some stories that identify migrants as refugees, asylum seekers, foreigners or foreign nationals, the church welcomes each person as created in the image of God. Ganzevoort refers to this aspect of the narrative as *Justification for the audience* (2014: 221)

The plot of the church's narrative is the mission of God and subsequent mission of the church. The plot is the different aspects of God's creative order, reconciliatory love, and restoration. Throughout the plot of the church, freedom of all people is the connecting point of the different episodes. "It is not freedom from migrants but freedom for migrants. Freedom does not imply self-realization, but to be in communion with one's hosts. Freedom in the sense of the mission of the church does not mean difference that leads to alienation or isolation. Freedom means that difference exists and is acknowledged and accepted within the connectedness and interdependence" (Klaasen forthcoming). This aspect of the narrative is called *emplotment* or the *structure* of the narrative (Ganzevoort 2014: 220).

The church as narrative is about salvation for all people and especially the poor, marginalized, the sick, the outcasts and those excluded. The person

telling the story is evaluated from the position they occupy within the power relations of the persons. The storyteller is unmasked by the layers that make up the whole story. The church follows the mission of Christ which is a story of the inclusion and salvation of all persons. The migrants are a layer of the story that sets the point of departure of the story. It provides the lens through which the story is sense making and through which a truthful story is told. Ganzevoort refers to this dimension as the *perspective* (2014:220-221).

Christians are called through their baptism to be faithful to the mission of Christ. The storyteller has a specific role to play and this can include identifying and ascribing specific duties to the characters in the story. These duties can include ceremonial or creative roles that is symbolic or practical activities. The duties can be of a moral nature or exercising a calling. The current migrant situation in South Africa demands a response by the church. The church as narrative welcomes migrants as others who are not a threat to the identity of the host but the Other who share communion with the host. With regard to this dimension of Ganzevoort's narrative, Zizioulus propounds that "freedom is not freedom from the other but freedom with the other. Freedom in this case becomes identical with love. God is love because he is Trinity. We can love if we are persons, that is if e allows the other to be truly other, and yet in communion with us (1994:17). Ganzevoort calls this dimension *role assignment*. Both the identity of the storyteller and that of the listeners are revealed through the duties that they perform or the roles that they perform (2014:221).

In a sense the role of storyteller and that of the participants is not alien or strange, but it is part of the being of Christians. Christians who participate in the story finds their identity in and through their commitments and identifications to the voiceless on the margins. Participating in the liturgy of the Eucharist forms the participants in agents of formation and transformation. This involves both participation in the ever-evolving identity and anticipating the fulfilment of the complete identity of all free persons. "a person's identity is not fully disclosed at any given moment but there is always delayed fullness of the person. These potentialities are somewhat connected to different referents that unlocks the fullness of the person" (Klaasen 2020: 312).

Migrants' agency in the context of the narrative church is that point at which the potential person is unlocked and set in motion. The agency of migrants is part of their identity. Meylahn confirms the close connection between action and narrative when he states that, "For an action to be intelligible there needs to be this close relationship between action and narrative. This close connection is not a new invention but was already present in Aristotle's thinking. Aristotle defined tragedy as the imitation of action and understands action as connection of incidents, of facts, of a sort susceptible to forming narrative configuration" (2003:91).

Agency takes the form of sharing specialized skills, participating the material wellbeing such as the economy of a country, human capital, emotional support and confronting distorted and suppressed potential for identity formation. Migrants confronts the distorted creation of God by the narratives and stories of displacement, domination, and alienation.

The narrative church is open to share her narrative with the narratives and stories of migrants in a mutually enriching manner. The church's narrative is not closed or with fixed boundaries, but within the context of the narrative church, the church narrative is welcoming and inviting of difference. The narrative church is the space for formation and transformation of distorted and false identities. It is the space of encounter participation of discernment and anticipation of wholeness.

Narrative church welcomes those who are different such as immigrants as equal and part of the creation of God. Immigrants is active participants in the re-enactment of the Christian story. Xenophobia or any form of racism is denounced as hierarchical and divided. Such acts of dehumanization oppression are against the call to dismantle the unequal and domination of classical doctrinal interpretations of the *Imago Dei*. From a narrative perspective, the *Imago Dei* is coupled with the call and vocation of stewardship in the Genesis narrative. This call is to breakdown the near Eastern society's divided and domination practices.

Conclusion

Migration is one of the most challenging social, economic, political, and religious phenomena of the twenty-first century. Within South Africa

migration is closely associated with racism, colonialism, and ethnicity. The dawn of democracy has witnessed unprecedented growth in migration. More than fifty percent of migrants are from other parts of Africa. Despite the economic contribution of migrants, violence and discrimination against migrants has escalated. The narrative church provides the space for migrants to exercise their agency. Challenging distorted and false identities is one way of exercising agency. Narrative church welcomes migrants as the Other that form identity of both those who participate in the Christian narrative and those who are connected with the narrative through distant ways such as dialogue, virtual or intellectual and practical engagements.

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